

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bill Allowing Government Employees To Participate In Government-Owned Vehicles Auctions Clears Hurdle

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ST. THOMAS -- Senators who make up the Committee on Government Services, Veterans and Consumer Affairs on Wednesday approved a measure sponsored by freshman Democrat Marvin Blyden, that seeks to allow government employees to participate in government-owned vehicles auctions.

The measure, [bill No. 31-0129](#), received strong support from senators present at the hearing, chief of them non committee member Sen. Blyden, who decried the current law barring government employees, many of them low income families, from participating in what could be their only chance of purchasing a vehicle.

"As a public servant, I intended to correct this injustice done to the overlooked government employees," said Blyden in a release following the hearing, held at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall here. "The truth of the matter is many of our government employees don't have vehicles, they hitch rides, take buses and safaris. This became a concern of mine. How could public employees be prohibited from a public auction? This was totally unacceptable in my opinion."

Senator Tregenza A. Roach, who supported the measure, contended that limitations should be placed on how many vehicles could be purchased by one person. And Sen. Myron Jackson asked that language in the bill specifying that government employees should only participate in vehicles with a retail value of \$5,000 or less, be removed.

Property and Procurement Acting Commissioner Randolph Bennett, who was invited to testify on the bill and also a strong supporter of it, said he agree that the \$5,000 limitation should be abolished, as it's sometimes difficult to gauge the value of a vehicle. Bennett echoed the sentiments of Blyden, and lauded the measure as the type that demonstrates the government's care for its people.

"I wholeheartedly support the concepts of allowing government employees the opportunity to bid on government vehicles for auction," Bennett said. "I firmly believe that government employees, many with low incomes, should be able to afford the opportunity to bid on used government vehicles in an attempt to help their families with transportation needs in a cost-effective manner."

Bennett made known that auctions will be held here and in St. Croix in October, and that DPP has 64 used government vehicles it plans to sell to the highest bidder.

The bill was later amended to satisfy the requests of Senators Roach and Jackson, and received universal support from committee members, including Blyden, Committee Chair Justin Harrigan, Sr., Sammuel Sanes, Roach and Terrence "Positive" Nelson. Janette Millin Young and Neville James were absent.

Other measures that gained approval at yesterday's hearing include bill No. 31-0105 -- an act requiring the director of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to transmit to the director of the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission all information pertaining to the cancellation of any insurance policy -- sponsored by Senator Sammuel Sanes. And bill No. 31-0158, which designates the last Sunday in September as Golden Star Mother's Day (more info [here](#)), sponsored by Harrigan Sr.

Of the aforementioned two measures, the only no vote came from Roach on the measure sponsored by Sanes.