

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Property And Procurement To Auction 64 Government Vehicles On November 14 In St. Thomas

VIC News / **Published On November 02, 2015 12:13 PM /**

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ST. THOMAS -- The Virgin Islands Department of Property and Procurement will be auctioning 64 government-owned vehicles on November 14, P&P Commissioner Randolph Bennett revealed to The Consortium this morning.

According to Mr. Bennett, the auction will be held in St. Thomas at Property and Procurement's motor pool location in Subbase. A similar auction will be held on St. Croix in December, however a solid date hasn't been identified because vehicles there are still being collected.

And while a current law forbids government employees from participating in the auctions, Mr. Bennett told The Consortium that Governor Kenneth Mapp supports a recently approved bill, sponsored by Sen. Marvin Blyden, that removes that barrier, and said he's leaving the option of government employee participation open in hopes that Mr. Mapp will sign the measure into law before November 14.

The measure, [bill No. 31-0129](#), received strong support from senators present at a late September hearing, chief of them freshman Democrat 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."

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., Samuel Sanes, Roach and Terrence "Positive" Nelson. Janette Millin Young and Neville James were absent.