

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sen. Francis Says ArcLight Agreement Signals That St. Croix Is Open For Business

Business / **Published On December 30, 2015 10:59 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **December 30, 2015**



ST. CROIX -- Senator Novelle Francis, Jr. late Tuesday hailed the ArcLight operating agreement as a sign that St. Croix is open for business, a press release Mr. Francis' office issued makes known. The senator commended his Senate colleagues for their favorable vote on the agreement, which he hopes will spur development and economic activity on that island.

Mr. Francis, who is the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Economic Development, Planning and Agriculture, also called for all pertinent government agencies to do their part to enforce the terms of the agreement.

The first-term Democrat says the discussions that have taken place since the Agreement was introduced have reinforced the critical need for diversification of the St. Croix economy.

“For too many years, we put all of our eggs into the HOVENSA basket,” Mr. Francis said. “We didn’t develop other industries or invest in the infrastructure needed to build the private sector. The state of our economy and the economic challenges that St. Croix residents continue to experience are an unfortunate testament to our overall failure to expand our economic base.”

Mr. Francis added that the agreement should not be viewed as the cure-all to the territory’s economic ills, but instead as an important step forward in the territory’s transition to a more diversified economy.

“Diversification is no longer an option, it is a must,” he said. “In my opinion, the best way to create jobs is by capitalizing on opportunities to build the private sector. We must remove barriers to entrepreneurship and welcome light industry and manufacturing to St. Croix.”

According to Mr. Francis, planned projects such as road repair and the construction of the Paul E. Joseph Stadium in combination with terminal operations should give St. Croix a much needed economic boost. He says, however, that the territory cannot afford to rest on its laurels now that the Agreement has been ratified.

“We need to stay focused on our goal – which is to attract the businesses needed to employ our residents and diversify our economy. From this point forward, there should be no doubt that St. Croix welcomes and is open to business,” he concluded.