

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sen. Janette Millin Young Calls For Aggressive Government Response To Zika Virus

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ST. THOMAS -- Senate Vice President Janette Millin Young is calling for an aggressive governmental response to the Zika virus, citing recent events when hundreds of Caribbean people, [including Virgin Islanders](#), fell ill due to various mosquito borne viruses. She called on Virgin Islands government officials to develop an action plan to protect residents and the islands' tourism product.

That's according to a press release Mrs. Millin Young issued on Thursday, [following a recent alert issued by the Centers for Disease Control](#) that added the territory and the Dominican Republic to a long list of destinations that Americans should avoid, specifically those who are pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant. The three-term Democrat also

referenced a recent Associated Press article that included the territory among travel destinations that airlines were refunding customers who had already paid for tickets, because of the alert.

Mrs. Millin Young, who chairs the 31st Legislature's Committee on Economic Development, Agriculture and Planning, said she wrote to Tourism Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty and then-Acting Health Commissioner Juan Figueroa Serrillo. She urged them to implement an action plan to inform and protect residents and the territory's tourism product.

The senator noted that Virgin Islanders are a resilient people and urged residents to implement precautionary measures to prevent from contracting Zika. She stated that while she understands there is no need to panic, relevant government agencies must respond with pesticide initiatives and pertinent details to allay fears.

"This has the potential of causing mass cancellations of travel to the territory due to casual readers believing that a travel ban has been extended to the Virgin Islands. This does not appear to be the case when reviewing the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) website," Mrs. Millin Young stressed in her letter to Commissioner Nicholson-Doty.

"Please advise me what actions DOT envisions undertaking to prevent the impression of a travel ban to the USVI from spreading across the travel world. As a government, we spend millions of dollars attracting visitors, especially honeymooners to our territory. The spread of this erroneous information could have a very negative effect on tourist arrivals and therefore, the V.I. economy," Mrs. Millin Young wrote.

"We must do everything in our power to protect the lives of Virgin Islanders, our tourism product and our economy. I am calling on all stakeholders who play a critical role in the health and welfare of this territory to come together and create a plan of action that will be beneficial to all concerned," the senator concluded.

Feature Image: A woman walks through the fumes as Health Ministry employees fumigate against the Aedes aegypti mosquito to prevent the spread of the Zika virus in Soyapango, six km east of San Salvador, on January 21, 2016.