

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sen. Positive Nelson Vows To Continue Hemp, Medicinal Marijuana Push

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ST. CROIX -- Senator Positive T.A. Nelson (the senator revealed that his name has been officially changed to Positive T.A. Nelson), was dealt a serious setback in his efforts to see a hemp industry here, when senators who make up the Committee on Rules and Judiciary indefinitely tabled his measure, [essentially killing the legislation](#). Mr. Nelson, speaking to reporters during a press conference held at the Central High School Curriculum Center on Thursday, said as long as the people wanted it, he would continue to push.

The senator said while the bill was handed a death sentence by Senate Democrats, the real losers of Wednesday's hearing were the people of the territory, contending that they

were the ones who voted in favor of a hemp industry during a referendum tied to the 2012 elections.

"That bill was based on a referendum voted by 57 percent of the people, so when you write, write that," Mr. Nelson said, referring to the hemp bill. "It's not my initiative, it's the people's initiative that was knocked down yesterday. So the people should answer to that."

"And yes, as long as the people have already stated their position -- and they have -- I believe it's something we need to pursue. Albeit it may not be a measure that might bring in a billion dollar industry. However, people who sell ice pops pay their bills and feed their families with the monies they make. Some people see that as too small for them, but if that works for some people, then there is enough of an industry to allow some people to live off of a viable hemp industry here," he said.

The senator was also asked whether he expected an uphill battle during hearings of his upcoming medicinal marijuana bill in light of the failed hemp effort. Mr. Nelson acknowledged that the fight would indeed be difficult.

"It's always a challenge -- every bill is a challenge. I'm not a Democrat and I'm fighting against a Democratic majority. Just like President Obama is up against a Republican House, the same politics is being played here. Just like I told you that there was no good reason why they held the [infrastructure reconstruction bill](#), other than that I'm not a Democrat.

Mr. Nelson said Democrats have asked him to join their party, but he has refused, stating, "I don't need that label to represent the people. Lets just sit down, put our heads together and do the people's business."

The veteran senator sees himself as a "forward-thinking, courageous leader, who understands the desires of the people, and have the courage to move forward with it." But he has had trouble moving his measures forward, incessantly, he said, being disrupted in the Senate by his colleagues -- even though some of his measures stand to benefit the territory. And he assailed Attorney General Claude Walker for bringing his biases into hemp and medicinal marijuana discussions, stating that he would not be comfortable if Mr. Walker had to represent residents against the federal government in a case involving hemp or cannabis, another name for marijuana.

"When the attorney general stated -- and it shows bias towards the Rastafarian culture also -- he made a statement that application of the law towards white hippies in Vermont is going to be very different than it is for black Rastafarians in the Virgin Islands, that is proof that if you have a bias attorney general, some sectors of your community can be subjected to bias application of law. And that concerns me that our attorney general, because of his bias, can sit in a public forum and make unfounded, unsubstantiated statements on record, and was able to influence supposedly sensible senators who did their research to not vote in favor."

Mr. Walker did not explicitly say that the federal government would apply the law differently to members of the Rastafarian religion here than they would hippies in Vermont. Attempting to make a point on Wednesday, Mr. Walker said just because the

feds may allow hippies in Vermont to smoke marijuana, doesn't mean that they would allow members of the Rastafarian religion to do the same in the Virgin Islands.

At the press conference, Mr. Nelson spoke of other measures that he has introduced but were stuck in the process, including a bill that would reconstruct the way the Senate is structured -- from 15 to 11 senators, three representing each district and the five others running as at-large senators. He also spoke about his spirituality, calling himself a Christian who belong to the Rastafarian sect -- which he says is part of Christianity.

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