

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Nelson Bill Calls For 11 Senators; 3 Per District And 5 At-Large

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ST. CROIX -- Senator Positive Nelson is pushing legislation that would cut the amount of senators in the territory from 15 to 11, a move the veteran lawmaker said would better represent the electorate while accomplishing what many Virgin Islanders have called for: a reduction in the number of legislators in the Senate.

With eleven senators, three would represent the St. Croix district, while another three would represent the St. Thomas-St. John district. The remaining five, Mr. Nelson said during a press conference held at the Central High School Curriculum Center on Thursday morning, would be at-large senators elected by the people, a setup he contends would help fulfill the people's desire of having better representation.

Residents have long called for change in the way its leaders, particular senators, are elected. For example, St. Croix residents have complained that senators who are voted in by residents from the St. Thomas-St. John district, make decisions that affect St. Croix all the time -- even while St. Croix residents have no say in these senators' election. A glaring example of this frustration came to the fore during the last HOVENSA refinery debate, when Senator Janette Millin Young [outlined](#) why she did not support [the deal](#) to sell the facility to ArcLight Capital Partners, LLC.

Her stance caused Consortium website and Facebook users to buck.

"So tell us Janette, what exactly would be good for St. Croix, as you see it from your senator's perch in St. Thomas. You don't have a clue what it is like to live and survive on this island. So be specific, tell us what what you want. And don't start with that nonsense about more jobs," wrote a website user named Dooreo.

The frustration was even more pronounced on Facebook: "St. Thomas is flourishing with their 5-7 cruise ships a day! In St. Croix we are suffering! Believe me, my little GVI job has me holding on by a thread but I have one. Too many families are apart. We have to start somewhere," [wrote](#) Angie X Brathwaite, receiving multiple approvals by readers.

And Vaughn Hewitt wrote: "The days of oil companies are over. Sen. Young does not live on St. Croix therefore she need not to worry about getting ill from what we experience for years. Maybe she should ask those big hotels on St. Thomas to give more."

Mr. Nelson said the measure was introduced in the 29th Legislature, but progress has been slow, as the bill has been held, he said, for reasons unknown to him. The senator did say, however, that his office received some sample language recently, "but that's because of pushing," he pointed out, adding, "we haven't received an official blue copy, and there was a mistake in that draft."

He went on: "One, the bill will reduce the body, and two, it will have a tighter race for the districts and of course the at-large race will open up to five instead of one. And it does not prescribe that you need to be from any one area."

Following the stinging rejection of his hemp industry bill by senators who sit on the Committee of Rules and Judiciary, Mr. Nelson [vowed to continue](#) his push to see hemp and medicinal marijuana sectors here.

For now, though, Mr. Nelson will have to wait -- at least as it relates to his hemp industry efforts -- as the bill was [indefinitely tabled](#) in the 31st Legislature.

Feature Image: Senator Positive T.A. Nelson, speaking during a press conference held at the Central High School Curriculum Center on Thursday.

Image Credit: VIC.