

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp And Nine V.I. Senators Travel To Annual Cruise Ship Conference In Florida

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ST. CROIX -- Nine Virgin Islands Senators -- Neville James, Kenneth Gittens, Almando Liburd, Positive Nelson, Novelle Francis, Kurt Vialet, Myron Jackson, Clifford Graham and Jean Forde, along with the territory's governor -- recently traveled to Fort Lauderdale, Florida for the three-day annual Seatrade Cruise Global Conference.

Held every year in March, Seatrade is the world's largest gathering of who's who in the cruise industry. It brings together cruise line executives, media, speakers, port representatives, ship builders and vendors to discuss most aspects of cruising.

Governor Kenneth Mapp, at last year's event, said he felt very optimistic after meeting with cruise line executives. "When you're meeting with heads of companies as opposed to their staff, and they're underscoring the importance of the Virgin Islands to the industry, and their continued commitment to bring passengers to the territory, that's very comforting," he said [last year](#).

And in a press release issued on Monday, Mr. Gittens said Seatrade offered a great opportunity to network and also remain current with latest industry trends.

"The tourism atmosphere and specifically the cruise industry is rapidly changing and this conference is just one of the ways that we can continue to remain abreast of the changes. Attending these conferences and the innovative workshops offers opportunities to network with the top executives in the industry and gain exposure of how we can be proactive in driving our tourism product upward," Mr. Gittens said.

The second-term Democrat added that the event is a great tool as it is made up of almost two dozen workshops that focus on all aspects of the industry, from improving port destination appeal, capitalizing on climate for seasonality, transforming tourist experiences, terminal design and security, and even using social media to market destinations.

Following a welcome reception in Miami on Sunday that was co-sponsored by the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism, the event workshops began on Monday and are expected to draw more than 11,000 registered attendees from around the world, as it runs through the end of the week.

"This is truly an event where we can connect globally. There is a great global market out there waiting to come to our territory and enjoy our rich heritage and natural beauty. Our islands are a perfect combination of diversity, a gem waiting to be shown off and our laws and marketing strategies have to change with the needs of tourists to create a product that will be beneficial to our economy, our residents and the people who visit our shores," Mr. Gittens said.

The conference's tradeshow floor opens Tuesday and will feature close to 800 exhibitors from 83 countries. Among them will be representatives from destinations including the Virgin Islands, Amusement & Recreational Attractions, Design & Refurbishment Groups, entertainment, food and drinks and more.