

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Ferry Companies Get 15-Year Contract For Operations Between St. Thomas And St. John

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ST. THOMAS -- Senators on Thursday approved a 15-year exclusive contract for Varlack Ventures and Transportation Services, allowing the companies to continue operation of ferry services between St. Thomas and St. John. The original long-term lease was 20 years, but the bill authorizing the operations -- [No. 31-0332](#) -- was amended because of concerns from Department of Public Works Commissioner Gustav James, who said the 20-year exclusive deal would be a hard sell for to federal government, whose funding is relied on for the service.

"That was coming on the heels of the testimony from the commissioner of Public Works that said that federal funding may be in jeopardy if we have a franchise more than 20

years," said Senator Clifford Graham, who offered the amendment to the Senator Almando Liburd-sponsored measure.

All 15 senators voted in the affirmative.

In other action, the Senate overrode Governor Kenneth Mapp's veto of a Senator Sammuel Sanes bill that allocates funds derived from traffic fines directly to the Virgin Islands Police Department instead of the government's general fund. The governor said in his veto message that the revenues currently go to the Government Insurance Fund, and he said the bill would eliminate a necessary source of revenue.

And, among other actions, the Senate approved bill No. 31-0361, which appropriates \$135,000 from the Department of Tourism Revolving Fund to the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation, which will aid in financing the territory's Little League regional tournaments participation.

*Feature Image: From left to right: Clifford Graham, serving his last few months as a senator, and Jean Forde, who is set to announce his reelection bid at his headquarters today (Credit: VI Legislature).*