

The Virgin Islands Consortium

New Law Requires All Guns To Be Registered At V.I. Ports Of Entry

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ST. THOMAS -- If Governor Kenneth Mapp signs into law a bill sponsored by Senator Tregenza Roach, all guns coming into the territory must be registered at ports of entry including sea and land, a measure -- special-ordered to the Senate floor at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall during a Wednesday session -- that Mr. Roach says was forged based on complaints by Virgin Islands Police Department officials, who argue that weapons that are not registered eventually fall into the wrong hands and cannot be tracked.

"One of the authorities that's given to the [police] commissioner or his designee upon the registration of the weapon, is also for them to make the determination whether such a

weapon is legally allowed in the territory," Mr. Roach said. "And so you have the issue of immediate registration and you do have the issue of confiscation of weapons that are not legally allowed in the territory."

The law calls for at least three government agencies -- Department of Planning and Natural Resources, V.I.P.D. and the V.I. Port Authority to collaborate in an effort to ensure the law's enforcement. And it mandates proper signage at the territory's ports directing gun owners to location of registration; what is required as a gun holder in the territory; and the penalties of not abiding by the law's demands.

Failure to register, Mr. Roach said, would be a felony, with the law leaving in place penalties already in V.I. Code.

The bill was supported by the entire Senate, with all legislators signing on as co-sponsors, according to Mr. Roach.

The Senate took action on a myriad of other measures. It approved the [\\$1 million hotel study bill](#), which also calls for research to be conducted on the viability of a small hotel near the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport in St. Croix. Senators Tregenza Roach, Janette Millin Young and Positive Nelson voted against the measure, pointing to the questionable nature in which they contend it was written, and the lack of abuse mechanisms.

"At least three times that I recall during that hearing, the question was raised by members of the committee about whether there had been any budget or any projections as to what budgetary amounts would be attributed to each phase, and in each instance the response was that there was no budget prepared setting out how this million dollars would be spent, and that it would actually achieve the objectives of bringing such a project to fruition," Mr. Roach said on Tuesday.

And senators tacked on multiple amendments to the hotel study measure amounting to over \$2.5 million, including a Senator Sammeul Sanes amendment appropriating \$1.5 million -- taken from the territory's road funds -- to the Department of Public Works for road repair. It also contains another Sanes amendment appropriating \$1 million for the constructing of steel roofs at the Emile Griffith Ballpark here, and the Estate Profit and Estate Grove Place basketball courts in St. Croix.

Smaller amendments attached to the hotel study bill included an appropriation of \$6,000 to the [USVI Stars and Stripe Poker Run](#), sponsored by Senator Marvin Blyden; and a measure that would allow baby-sitting services in commercial areas allowing parents to drop their children off while they shop and conduct other business.

Correction: June 30, 2016

Because of an editing error, a previous version of this story stated that the session in which the firearm registry bill was passed was held on Thursday; when in fact it was held on Wednesday. We have updated the story to reflect the correct information.