

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bill To Delay Tipping Fees Heads To Mapp

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Senator Novelle Francis announced today that Bill 31-0471, which would mandate a delay in the implementation of tipping fees was unanimously passed by members of the 31st Legislature.

Mr. Francis's bill would move the implementation date of the tipping fees from October 1, 2016 to January 1, 2017. The delay is intended to allow the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority to raise public awareness about the fees. The bill will now be forwarded to Governor Kenneth Mapp for his consideration.

The first-term Democrat proposed the delay earlier this month after hearing the concerns of trash haulers and residents who felt they had not received adequate information and

were broadsided by the sudden move to implement the fees on October 1.

Mr. Francis says the territory's transition to better waste management must be supported by strong public education.

"Our plans to become better stewards of our islands hinges on the support and participation of the public. They are our biggest stakeholders and should be treated as such."

All of Mr. Francis's colleagues signed on in support of the measure. Francis thanked his colleagues for their support in passing the bill and their hard work over the three day legislative session in moving critical pieces of legislation forward.

"I appreciate that my colleagues recognized that the community was generally uninformed about the tipping fees," he said. "I believe that it's important for the community to not only understand the new fees and disposal methods, but also to prepare for these changes."

Mr. Francis was not the first lawmaker calling for a delay. [Earlier this month](#), Senator Kenneth Gittens issued a press release urging W.M.A. to decrease the fees -- which range anywhere from \$31 per ton to as much as \$65 per ton -- as well as delaying implementation.

"The way I look at it, if someone is doing some yard work or demolition and rents a bin for a few days for \$100, that price can easily double or triple. With the implementation of the new fees, each haul will be weighed and charged based on the content, type and rate," he said.

It is well documented that the authority requires revenue to assist with efficiently operating the territory's landfills, according to Mr. Gittens, but he said it is something that has to be done without stifling the small business owners by shocking their customers into not using their services.

"As we look towards increased recycling and reducing our waste in our territory, we need to comprehensively come up with an alternative means of raising revenue for the authority," he said.

"Additionally, we must look at a flat rate or gradually introducing and scaling up the tipping fees over the course of several years rather than what is considered an abrupt implementation. We have to look at what will be good for our government, but we cannot lend a blind eye to things that could possibly cause a hardship on our residents and business owners. I am pleading with the PSC and VIWMA to reconsider the stop/drop implementation and consider a gradual implementation," Mr. Gittens concluded.

The bill was amended by Senator Neville James to include funding for the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority to address revenue shortfalls created by the proposed delay.