

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Letter To The Editor: Senate Should Empower Virgin Islands Caretakers By Passing Guardianship Bill

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Staff **November 17, 2016**



Dear Editor,

On Friday, November 18th the Virgin Islands Legislature will be meeting in the Fritz Lawetz Conference Room in the Rules and Judiciary Committee to hear testimony on Bill Number 31- 0184; the Virgin Islands Uniform Adult Guardianship and Protective Proceedings Jurisdiction Act (UAGPPJA).

You may wonder why the State Director of AARP Virgin Islands has taken the time to write a letter to the editor advising all Virgin Islanders that this is happening. What makes this Bill so important?

In the VI there are estimated to be over 12,600 caregivers who provide a wide variety of services to their loved ones. Many of these people are also legal guardians to their loved ones and many haven't yet taken the time to actually go through the process of establishing guardianship but intend to assume that legal responsibility when the time becomes convenient.

Unfortunately, very few people understand what being a guardian in the VI entails. Did you know that today that legal guardianship is only recognized in the VI?

Did you know that if your mom or dad had a stroke and need extended medical care you would have no choice but to take them off island for care? There simply are no skilled nursing home beds available in the Virgin Islands. If the stroke caused them to be incapacitated, you would need to establish guardianship here in the VI before you could move them elsewhere.

But here is the important part: today, even if you had legal guardianship in the VI, you still would have to reapply for legal guardianship in the area where you took your loved one for care.

What makes Friday so important? Friday is when this situation could change. Passing Bill Number 31-0184 will empower Virgin Islanders to retain the legal guardianship they established in the VI – when they take their loved one stateside for care.

On Friday when the Rules and Judiciary Committee moves this bill forward to the Committee of the Whole for a final vote, the VI will be just one step away from joining 45 other United States jurisdictions that will have created binding agreements to recognize uniform guardianships from other areas. This will be HUGE for all 12,600 caregivers in the VI.

AARP VI urges anyone who currently is a caregiver or may potentially become a caregiver in the future to watch or listen to the hearing, familiarize themselves with this important legislation and to urge all VI Senators to support the bill in both the Committee of Rules and Judiciary and in the Committee of the Whole.

Don't let 'red tape' prevent your loved one from getting the emergency care they need – when they need it. Tell Senators to pass Bill Number 31-0184 out of committee on Friday, November 18th and move it along toward enactment.

Submitted on Tuesday By: Troy de Chabert-Schuster, AARP State Director