

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Roach, Alarmed By Centennial Commission's 11-Member Trip To Denmark On Public Funds, Calls For Senate Hearing

VIC News / **Published On May 23, 2017 11:25 PM /**

Staff **May 23, 2017**



ST. THOMAS -- Senator Tregenza Roach said on Tuesday that he's asking Senate President Myron Jackson, in his role as the Legislature's representative to the Virgin Islands Centennial Commission and as the Chair of the legislative Committee which has oversight of the commission's activities, to call a hearing to discuss the financial state of the commission.

Mr. Roach said he was making the request in light of reports that the commission is poised to spend up to \$55,000 to send a delegation to Denmark for an upcoming festival.

The senator said he became alarmed when he read of the commission's decision regarding this expense in local media reports. He said a financial report from the Centennial Commission and perhaps more oversight by the Legislature appears necessary, as the commission will have at its disposal in excess of \$1 million to fund other Centennial-related activities.

"No one disputes the connection of Denmark with the territory's history and culture, but you cannot convince me that sending a delegation of up to 11 persons, allotted up to \$5,000 each of public funds, is a necessary expense in observing this milestone in the territory's history," Mr. Roach said.

The Virgin Islands Daily News, citing an invitation from the Danish West Indian Society, reported that the commission would be in Denmark from June 11, with commission officials stating that members would probably remain in Denmark until June 16th or 17th. The events are part of the USVI/Denmark yearlong Centennial commemoration. Committee Chair Pamela Richards told the paper that the trip would cost between \$30,000 to \$40,000.

"I am concerned that these kinds of decisions are being made at the same time we announce the closing of the one public library on St. Thomas for repairs to its air-conditioning system and while we tell the working men and women of this territory that other critical needs cannot be met due to financial constraints," Mr. Roach said.

It was revealed at the commission's Monday board meeting that there was roughly \$128,000 remaining from the Department of Tourism fund, as well as about \$255,000 from the U.S. Department of Interior. Another \$750,000 from D.O.I. could also become available to the commission.

If the \$750,000 were to become available, it would bring the commission's balance to roughly \$1.13 million. How the commission would spend the remaining funds remains unclear. According to its website, the commission has one event scheduled for June, the Baja El Sol - "Different Developments" in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas. In July, it lists Emancipation Day as an activity, as well as St. John's Carnival, although there was no information detailing the commission's involvement. From July 24-29, the commission lists the St. Croix Archeology Society's International Association for Caribbean Archaeology Congress as a Centennial event, again giving no details as to the commission's participation and projected expenditure of funds.

The following months include one activity each: Centennial Storytelling and Folklore on September 2; Centennial Storytelling and Folklore on October 7; Centennial Storytelling and Folklore on November 4; and Centennial closing ceremonies on December 29. There were no activities scheduled for August, [according to the website](#), as of today.