

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bill By Senators Roach And Hansen Would Dismantle Centennial Commission And Use Funds For Youth Programs, Territory's Hospitals

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Senators Tregenza Roach and Alicia Hansen -- two members of the 32nd Legislature's Minority Caucus -- have joined to author a bill that would dismantle the Virgin Islands Centennial Commission and use all unobligated funds appropriated to that body to support youth programs and to address dire needs of both of the territory's public hospitals, according to a release Mr. Roach's office issued Wednesday.

The move comes [following media reports](#) of a trip to Denmark that commission members are set to embark on from June 11, with the cost estimated to be between \$30,000 and

\$40,000, with each of the 11-member delegation receiving \$5,000 to support travel. The commission is slated to receive additional funding from the Department of Interior that would bring its total funding to \$1.13 million -- with over \$128,000 of that sum coming from the local government. But [with scant events planned for the remainder of the Centennial year](#), how the remaining funds should be used is an open question.

The bill request was submitted to the Legislature's Legal Counsel's Office today.

Both Mr. Roach and Mrs. Hansen say they question the need for any more financial support of the commission if the trip is any indication of its priorities. The body will still have at its disposal in excess of \$1 million to fund other centennial related activities.

"I am appalled that with all the pressing needs we have in the territory that the commission would vote to squander public funds in such a way. Even our hospitals are asking support in buying medication to treat our people," Mrs. Hansen said.

Mr. Roach, who on Tuesday requested of Senate President Myron D. Jackson that a hearing be called on the matter, said he does not believe that a timely response will come to address what Mr. Roach described as an "urgent situation."

"I joined in this bill because I do not want to be sending our people mixed signals," Mr. Roach said. "If we are in a financial crisis we ought to act like we are and be more responsible with scarce resources."