

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Measure Authorizing Retailers To Use Plastic Bags Until August 28 Is Forwarded To Mapp

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ST. THOMAS -- A plastic bag ban law [that took effect in October 2016](#) and called for the end of plastic bag use in most cases by businesses in the territory on April 1, 2017, has been amended to give retailers who had inventory to exhaust until August 28, 2017 to do so.

The amendment, sponsored by Senator Kurt Violet during an all-day Senate session on Thursday that went into Friday morning, was tacked onto Bill No. 32-0040 -- an Act commemorating June 26-July 3 as Virgin Islands Freedom Week -- and is an effort to make lawful what was already taking place, according to Mr. Violet, who said retailers already have an agreement in place with the Waste Management Authority (W.M.A.).

"There were store owners in the Virgin Islands -- both St. Croix, St. Thomas and also St. John -- that purchased trailer loads of bags before we were able to implement the bill," Mr. Vialet said. "The shipments arrived on island a month before the bill was enacted and those establishments now have trailers full of bags." The second-term Democrat said instead of having the stores dump the bags in landfills, the law would allow them to exhaust the inventory.

There are criteria that businesses must meet to be in compliance with the amendment, which Mr. Mapp is expected to sign into law. They include providing an invoice, bill of lading, bank statement or documents similar to either of the aforelisted, proving that the bags were purchased before October 7, which is when the law took effect. If the store can provide such proof, W.M.A. will be mandated to refund any plastic bag ban law-related violations, according to Mr. Vialet.

The plastic bag ban law requires businesses and organizations to utilize reusable bags or recyclable paper bags with the goal of eliminating plastic bags at point of sale check-outs. Plastic bags still will be allowed where no acceptable substitute exists, such as for wrapping prepared foods or meats, according to the law.