

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Signs Into Law Slew Of Bills, Among Them Funding For Hospitals

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp recently took action on at least 15 bills forwarded to him by the 32nd Legislature, signing into law 14 of them while vetoing 2, and line-item vetoing a section of another. Among the measures signed into law were bills relating to funding for the territory's hospitals as well as the approval of additional funds for the Paul E. Joseph Stadium.

Below, a list of the bills either signed into law or vetoed by the governor.

Approved bills

Bill No. 32-0038, an act amending certain provisions of the Virgin Islands Code for the acceptance of a REAL ID as a valid form of identification for various senior citizens' discounts.

Bill No. 32-0087, an act authorizing the Government of the Virgin Islands through the Department of Property and Procurement to purchase certain real property on behalf of the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands to start Phase II of the Frederiksted Economic Revitalization Project ("FERP") on the island of St. Croix.

Bill No. 32-0088, an act to provide for the reprogramming of funds appropriated from the Community Facilities Trust Account authorized under Act No. 7012 for certain capital projects through the of Sports, Parks & Recreation. Repair, renovation and construction at the Kirwan Terrace Ballpark, the Joseph Aubain Ballpark, and the Emile Griffith Ballpark will now begin.

Bill No. 32-0090, an act amending Act No. 7897 to increase the Department of Human Services' appropriation in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017 to address the increase in matching funds for the Medical Assistance Program (MAP); to provide for an appropriation to the Department of Education for the Summer Maintenance Program; and to provide an appropriation to the Department of Labor for the Summer Youth Program.

Bill No. 32-0091, an act amending Act No. 7911, section 1 increasing the amount of the appropriation from the Internal Revenue Matching Fund to the General Fund and reprogramming \$3,000,000.00 from any available funds in the Gross Receipt Tax Bonds, Matching Fund Bonds, or the Community Facilities Trust Account to fund emergency repairs and line replacement at the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center on St. Croix.

Bill No. 32-0113, an act ratifying Major Coastal Zone Permit No. CZT25-16W issued to Sanctuary Holdings, LLC for the installation of eight moorings to be completed in two phases at No. 23 Estate Frenchman's Bay, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Bill No. 32-0114, an act ratifying Major Coastal Zone Permit No. CZT-316(W) issued to RC Hotels (Virgin Islands), Inc. for the continued use and occupancy of an existing 8" diameter x 130' long seawater intake line to the RO Plant seaward of Parcel Nos. 1 & 3 Estate Nazareth, and the installation of six swim buoys and four moorings at Great Bay, St. Thomas U.S. Virgin Islands.

Bill No. 32-0115, an act ratifying Minor Coastal Zone Permit No. CZT10-16W issued to Anchorage Condominium Association for the continued use and occupancy of a 120-foot, three-inch seawater intake line that services its reverse osmosis plant and the continued use and occupancy of the submerged lands for six swimming buoys all at the submerged lands off Parcel No. 8-57-4 Estate Nazareth, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Bill No. 32-0116, an act ratifying Major Coastal Zone Permit No. CZT05-15W issued to Reef Ecology Foundation for the continued use and occupancy of permanent moorings for day use only at frequently used dive site locations in the territorial waters surrounding the islands of St. Thomas and St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Bill No. 32-0117, an act ratifying Minor Coastal Zone Permit No. CZT33-16W issued to True Crew VI, LLC to install a private mooring and operate a "food boat" at the Christmas

Cove area of Jersey Bay, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Bill No. 32-0118, an act ratifying Major Coastal Zone Permit No. CZT416(W) issued to St. Thomas Yacht Club Owner, Inc. for the continued use and occupancy of a 110'-9" by 7'-8" dock with a 39'-6" by 8'-6" "I" and a 335 sq. ft. concrete bulkhead with a length of 58 linear feet, 3500 sq. ft. of submerged land surrounding the dock, and one wooden pile located seaward of Parcel Nos. 8-1-1 and 8-58 Estate Nazareth, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Bill No. 32-0121, an act providing an appropriation of \$201,200.00 from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund for the U.S.V.I. Little League Association to host the 2017 Senior League Regional Tournament.

Bill No. 32-0094, an act reprogramming the sum of \$545,634.52 from any available funds in the Gross Receipt Tax Bonds or the Community Facilities Trust Account to fund emergency infrastructure repairs and replacements at the Schneider Regional Medical Center ("SRMC").

Mr. Mapp line-item vetoed Sections 2 (a), (b), and (c). This measure not only seeks to provide funding to address the infrastructure concerns of the SRMC, but now seeks to add funding for the increase of RN salaries and an additional \$830,000.00 for maintenance repairs.

"It must be noted that salary increases at our hospitals are governed by Collective Bargaining Agreements, and the measure only refers to RN's at the SRMC and makes absolutely no reference to salary increases for RN's at the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center," noted the governor. "Do the members of the Legislature where 7 of the 14 members hail from the island of St. Croix wish of us to pay the St. Croix RNs at a lower rate of pay than their counterparts in the District of St. Thomas/St. John?"

Vetoed bills

Bill No. 32-0021, an act amending the Virgin Islands Code to replace the Government Employees Services Commission ("GESC") with the Public Employees Relations Board and the Division of Personnel or the Commissioner of Education where appropriate.

Reasoning behind veto: "While this measure appears to administratively make changes and technical, non-substantive amendments, Section 5 of the bill requires that I veto this measure in its entirety," Mr. Mapp said.

He added, "Section 5 of the bill repeals Title 23, V.I.C. § 11 in its entirety, which provides that the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department may temporarily suspend any employee of the force who engages in misconduct, dereliction of duty, or violation of rules and regulations. Why are we repealing this most important authority of the Police Commissioner who is managing an agency staffed with armed peace officers, and where at a moment's notice he may need to exercise this authority to protect the public?"

"While the Legislature may have intended to change the entity to which an aggrieved employee may appeal a Commissioner's decision—from the GESC to the PERB—what the Legislature actually did was change the entity and repeal a vital authority of the Police Commissioner to act in a time of crisis. The Bill repeals 23 V.I.C. § 11, and such a

repeal would have a detrimental effect on the Department's ability to address issues of misconduct, dereliction of duty and/or violation of its rules and regulations. Therefore, because a line-item veto is not an option under this bill, I have no choice but to veto the bill in its entirety."

Bill No. 32-0020, an act amending the Virgin Islands Code relating to the composition of the Government Employees' Services Commission ("GESC") and re-designating the GESC as the Government Employees and Retirees Health Insurance Board of Trustees.

Reasoning behind veto: "I took this action because Bill No. 32-0020 is inextricably linked to Bill No 32-0021. If I were to veto one and sign into law the other, I would create substantial conflict in the law. Bill No. 32-0020 is laudable as it seeks to streamline the GESC; however, for it to be effective, Bill No. 32-0021 must be corrected and both returned to my desk for approval," the governor said.

The governor also acknowledged Resolution 1840 (Bill No. 32-0051), a resolution to honor Allan Haynes, Sr. for his contributions to the community as a police officer and a healer.