

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sen. Roach Introduces Bill To Create Office Of The Disaster Advocate

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Senator Tregenza Roach (Credit: VI Legislature)

ST. THOMAS -- Senator Tregenza Roach has introduced a proposal to create the Virgin Islands Office of the Disaster Advocate intended as a central agency solely to assist residents in addressing their recovery needs following a natural disaster and a territorial declaration of a state of emergency, Mr. Roach's office announced Thursday.

"As it stands now, Virgin Islanders are pretty much on their own in the case of a natural disaster and as they attempt to navigate a mounting bureaucracy in order to obtain the

necessary assistance with their recovery needs,” the senator said. The Office of the Disaster Advocate would assist residents in supporting and advocating their claims before both federal and local agencies, according to the release.

“When you consider that the Public Finance Authority has just entered into contracts exceeding \$100 million to do just this for the Government of the Virgin Islands with regard to public infrastructure projects, then it begs the question of who will do the same for an average resident who may not have the skills or other resources to navigate the recovery maze on his own,” Mr. Roach said. “If stronger and more destructive storms are now going to be our reality, then we have to take drastic steps to address the needs of our residents, especially as our population is an aging one and a vulnerable one in any number of ways.”

Mr. Roach said his idea for the bill has resulted from the numerous calls and complaints made to his office by residents just trying to use the processes which are supposedly designed to assist them.

“As an example, suppose a resident needs a power of attorney, should they then have to find resources to go to an attorney to have this done? Suppose an elderly person is not computer literate and is unable to go stand in line at some recovery center? Someone should be legally designated to assist such a person, at no cost. This is how I envision this office,” he said.

The senator said he is asking his colleagues to support and properly fund the measure because it is a way to alleviate the frustrations of our residents as they confront difficult challenges and would facilitate the flow of recovery resources to those who need them most.

Feature Image: Senator Tregenza Roach (Credit: VI Legislature)