

The Virgin Islands Consortium

In Release, Senators Say Seatrade Taught Ways To 'Cultivate Ultimate Passenger Experience'

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The 11 senators who traveled to Seatrade Cruise Global in Fort Lauderdale, Florida this year, issued a release through Senate President Myron Jackson on Friday that seeks to allay the community's ire with the high number of lawmakers who attended, while making available no information relative to their itinerary or cost of their expedition. The release came hours after The Consortium published a story that [highlighted the lack of information](#) provided to the public one week following the conference.

"We learned about various ways to cultivate the ultimate passenger experience," Mr. Jackson said. "This year's theme explored ways to maximize the experience of millennials and understanding how they spend to maximize revenues in this age group."

The visionary keynotes and more than 25 sessions enlightened us to the state of the global cruise industry and tomorrow's trends."

The release sounded similar to past reports given by lawmakers following their trip to the annual event, but with little results to show. Cruise ship visits to St. Croix, for example, has been in decline for multiple years, and the St. Thomas cruise sector is seeing steep declines. This trend is not new; while St. Thomas's cruise tourism market share loss is projected to be between 20-30 percent in 2018 [according to](#) Department of Tourism Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty, the product [was already in decline](#) before Hurricanes Irma and Maria struck the territory in September.

According to Mr. Jackson, some of the topics discussed included understanding regional markets such as Asia and Europe; how to develop luxury experiences that still amaze the savvy traveler; and emerging trends and business outlook as analyzed by Wall Street's financial analysts.

The senators who attended the conference according to Mr. Jackson, were Marvin Blyden, Janelle Sarauw, Tregenza Roach, Bryan Smith, Mr. Jackson and Jean Forde from the St. Thomas-St. John District. Those who attended from the St. Croix District were Neville James, Novelle Francis, Sammuell Sanes, Alicia Hansen and Kurt Vialet.

"From these training opportunities, fruitful legislation can be created. The body can also learn to speak the language of the tourism industry and create better partnerships in government as well as entice corporations to come to the territory," Mr. Jackson said.

Mr. Jackson said other sessions examined how to create the ideal customer experience through an interactive survey with actual cruise consumers; how biometrics and video analytics are revolutionizing the industry; and best practices in safety and security.

Representatives from the Department of Tourism, Virgin Islands Port Authority, the West Indian Company and the Office of the Governor, including Governor Kenneth Mapp, participated this year.

Calls placed to Mr. Jackson to ask whether a smaller cadre of senators could have attended, in light of the territory's strained financial position, were not returned at time of writing.

Mr. Jackson did not say how many participated in a workshop that was mentioned in the release, but those who did, "were exposed to information on the latest cruising developments in information technology; amusement and entertainment; ship design; hotel operations; environmental sustainability; ports and destinations; and shipbuilding and equipment," he said.

"We participated in meetings with potential partners wanting to bring corporations and companies into the territory to both island districts, attended workshops, and networked. Our days were early and nights were long, some days," Mr. Jackson said. "Attending had numerous benefits that included improving communication skills, gaining expert knowledge, networking with others and renewing motivation, confidence, and versatility in our product. If this is our main industry, we need to remain abreast and in touch with market trends."

With the territory grappling for ways to revive its economy, the senators -- with their newly gained skills and freshly gleaned knowledge -- are expected to introduce legislation that would help quell the decline in cruise ship tourism. Mr. Jackson did not, however, say whether any lawmaker had such plans.

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