

The Virgin Islands Consortium

As Conferee To Conference Committee, Plaskett Will Help Influence Legislation Affecting USVI SNAP Recipients, Farmers And School Lunch Program

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett has been named as a conferee to the conference committee on the \$867 billion farm bill dubbed H.R. 2, which at one point included an amendment to ban cockfighting in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico -- an amendment that the Senate version of the farm bill has excluded. Ms. Plaskett and her Puerto Rico colleagues in Washington have been staunchly opposed to the ban, and have been advocating for the amendment's removal from the bill. (The House version of the bill still has the cockfighting ban amendment, so it remains to be seen what will be its final fate during the reconciling of the Senate and House versions.)

But even without the controversial amendment, the bill has huge implications for residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Ms. Plaskett is hoping that being party to the conference committee, whose job is to resolve disagreements on major legislation, will benefit the territory.

"I look forward to joining the other conferees to work on hopefully negotiating adjustments to the Farm Bill which can then be passed in Congress and signed into law that protects our farmers, ranchers and consumers," Ms. Plaskett said in a statement issued Wednesday.

She added: "With America's farmers, producers and ranchers facing plummeting prices, rising retaliatory tariffs, and natural disasters, we need a Farm Bill that puts their needs and our economy first more than ever. The Senate version of the bill was much more sensitive to the needs of Americans who rely on the Farm bill for sensible nutrition programs which fund SNAP and school lunch programs and is utilized for our own farm to school program.

"The most vulnerable members of our community – children and our elders (along with many working families) rely on these program which were cut enormously in the Republican House version of the Farm Bill. I look forward to being a part of the diverse House Democratic Conferees who will bring the strength of our values and wide-ranging expertise to the work of crafting a bipartisan Farm Bill that honors our responsibility to the farmers and people of the Virgin Islands."