

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Lawmakers Approve Slew Of Bills During Session, Including Measure They Say Will Make Salary Increases Implemented By Mapp Permanent

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ST. THOMAS -- Senators who make up the 32nd Legislature met for what may be one of the body's last sessions as election season takes hold and campaigning kicks into high gear, approving well over a dozen measures and giving the affirmative nod to two Horse Racing Commission nominees chosen by Governor Kenneth Mapp for the St. Croix District, along with one individual for the St. Thomas-St. John District.

Among the measures approved was Bill No. 32-0237- An Act amending Title 3 V.I. Code, Chapter 25, Subchapter V, Section 555b to provide for minimum wage for employees of

the Government of the Virgin Islands and its semi-autonomous agencies and independent instrumentalities.

If this sounds familiar, it's because the legislation is selfsame with [an executive order Mr. Mapp issued raising the base pay and minimum wage of government employees](#)

. Senators, however, said their measure would assure that Mr. Mapp does not revoke the executive order once the election season is over. The governor has never indicated he would take such action, and has said the funds to cover the increases were already provided for in the budget, and new dollars spurred by economic growth in the construction industry, along with the opening of the oil refinery on St. Croix through the Limetree Bay Terminals agreement, would ensure sustainability.

Even so, lawmakers said they were taking no chances.

"This bill ensures that the executive order is made into law even after the election is over," said Senator Alicia Hansen.

"This bill prevents the governor from issuing an executive order to revoke the salary increases," said Senator Tregenza Roach. Both Mr. Roach and Mrs. Hansen are seeking elected office in this year's gubernatorial race.

Senators also approved Bill No. 32-0119, which amends title 33 V.I. Code, chapter 81, section 2301 (e) by slashing in half the property tax base rate for senior citizens, people with disabilities and veterans from \$360 to \$180.

Relative to the Racing Commission nominees, lawmakers approved three of four -- Henry Schjang and Ronald Phillips for the District of St. Croix, and Sheldon Turnbull for the St. Thomas-St. John District.

The nomination of Dr. Laura Palminteri for the STT-STJ District was sent back to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further vetting. "Dr. Palminteri must decide because if she serves on the Commission, she will not be permitted to continue working as an equine veterinarian," said Senator Kurt Vialet.

Lawmakers also approved the following bills: