

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bill Making It Easier To Pass On Real Property As Inheritance Among Measures Approved During Rules Committee Hearing

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A bill sponsored by Senators Novelle Francis and Myron Jackson that simplifies the transfer of real property from owner to beneficiary was among three measures favorably approved in a Committee on Rules and Judiciary hearing held on St. Croix at the Cardiac Center Thursday. All approved measures were forwarded to the full body.

The real property measure, Bill No. 32-0327, has five components:

Component 1: Provides not only for improved pay-on-death deposit accounts but also for transfer-on-death investments securities.

Component 2: Enables an owner of real property to pass the property simply and directly to the beneficiary on the owner's death without probate.

Component 3: "Provides definite, tax-sensitive rules governing refusals to accept transfers of property by gift or inheritance and identifying who takes in the event of a disclaimer.

Component 4: Allows any person to create a custodial trust by executing a simple statement.

Component 5: Addresses a problem faced by many middles to lower-income families who inherit real property and may face dispossession of their land through forced sale.

Troy de Chabert-Schuster, state director of AARP USVI, said all five of the Uniform Acts contained in [Bill No 32-0327](#) would benefit all property owners and their heirs in the Virgin Islands, and is of special benefit to seniors and lower to middle income persons.

In other action, lawmakers voted to favorably forward to the full body [Bill No. 32-0241](#), An Act amending Virgin Islands Code relating to the territory's Emergency Management Plan and the Virgin Islands Territorial Management and Homeland Security Council.

Testifier Dr. Nicole A. Craigwell-Syms, deputy commissioner of Public Health Services at the Department of Health, said as it relates to D.O.H., inserted in V.I. Code should be both the Dept. of Health and the Department of Human Services as members of the established V.I. Territorial Emergency Management and Homeland Security Council.

The third measure to receive favorable action was [Bill No. 32-0247](#), An Act amending Virgin Islands Code to change all references to mental health to behavioral health. The measure amends VI Code relating to the Citizens Council on Mental Illness Alcoholism and Drug Dependency, and appropriates \$3 million for the establishment of a behavioral health care facility on the island of St. Croix. It also establishes requirements for the operation of in-patient treatment programs at the behavioral health care facility.

The bill was sponsored by Senators Novelle Francis, Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, Kurt Vialet, and co-sponsored by Janelle Sarauw.