

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Medicinal Marijuana Bill Clears Rules Committee

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Positive Nelson's medicinal marijuana measure that has been heard in the Senate on a number of occasions, will be voted on today in the full Senate, bringing the measure's time in the Legislature to a climax just before Mr. Nelson leaves office. Its passage would be vindication for the veteran senator, whose tenure has been defined by his efforts over the years to bring to the forefront the benefits of medicinal marijuana. Mr. Nelson has also advocated for the legalization of recreational marijuana, but that attempt has yet to gain traction amongst the territory's lawmakers.

Today, the full Senate is expected to pass the measure and forward the bill to Governor Kenneth Mapp, who has signaled his intent to sign the measure into law.

Introduction of Medicinal Cannabis Patient Care Act

In May 2015 following an expedition to Washington State and Colorado, Mr. Nelson introduced the Medicinal Cannabis Patient Care Act during a press conference at the Curriculum Center on St. Croix, after meeting with government officials, leaders in the field of medicinal marijuana, and other advocates on his expedition.

“This trip took me on a spiritual expedition,” Mr. Nelson said at the time. “I’m having a spiritual experience, people, and it’s beautiful. Nelson said before embarking on the journey, he thought he was liberal in his thinking, “but I’ve experienced it at another level. I mean, it’s changing and it’s causing me to recalibrate my position on some issues.”

The expedition, he added, was useful in helping draft a better bill — taking away the good parts of what has worked on the U.S. mainland, while steering clear from what has not.

At one point during his talk, Mr. Nelson held up a small canister containing a liquid form of medicinal marijuana, as seen in this article's feature image.

“Should somebody be locked up for this?” Mr. Nelson asked. “This is cannabis oil, this isn’t smoking weed. This is cannabis oil that’s been proven to work — made from a plant.”

Mr. Nelson said the oil was made by pressing marijuana leaves, and repeatedly asked the question: why should someone be locked up for marijuana oil, when “it’s not something you smoke,” but rather a liquid applied underneath the tongue.

It's been a long and arduous journey since [May 2015](#). The measure was once tabled and left to languish in a committee held by Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, who stood in adamant opposition of the bill. And during testimonies over the years, the measure faced stifling criticism to the point where some thought it would be years before anything to do with marijuana could become law in the USVI. Now, however, opposition for the Medicinal Cannabis Patient Care Act, seen [here](#), has greatly diminished, and the measure is expected to win the support of a majority of lawmakers today.