

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Letter to the Editor | Thank You, Senator Dwayne DeGraff

Opinion / **Published On January 22, 2019 12:09 PM /**

Staff **January 22, 2019**



To the editor:

I take this opportunity and use this medium to publicly thank Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff for sponsoring Bill No. 32-0241 and shepherding it through the process to passage. Bill No. 32-0241, now Act 8151 amends Title 23, Chapter 10, sections 1006 and 1007 of the Virgin Islands Code to provide that the Virgin Islands Emergency Management Plan include a protocol for medical patients and others who need to be evacuated off-island. It further provides that long-term plans be provided for these persons upon their return to the territory.

On April 10, 2018, speaking on behalf of a number of families whose loved ones had been evacuated in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria, as well as several patients who themselves had been evacuated, I brought our concerns to the Legislature at a hearing of the Legislature's Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services. At the time of my testimony, over 50 Virgin Islanders who had been evacuated, including my son-in-law, Police Sergeant Aaron K. Hodge, Sr., had died. Senator DeGraff listened, asked questions, and, more importantly, took action. The result of his diligence is Act # 8151 which will hopefully prevent the chaos and heartache that was visited upon scores of Virgin Islands families in 2017 and 2018. Unfortunately, the pain and agony continue, as within the last three weeks, one of the persons whom I mentioned in my testimony, has joined the roll of the evacuees who have died.

Again, we thank Senator DeGraff for his attention, his diligence and his action in addressing this matter. I also thank those senators who co-sponsored the bill, all the members of the 32nd Legislature who voted for its passage, and Former Governor Kenneth E. Mapp for signing it into law.

The passage of this measure demonstrates true government in action, when the voices of the people are heard, and appropriate actions are taken.

Submitted by: Ruby Simmonds Esannason, D. A.