

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Anti-Loitering, Backseat Seatbelt Bills Among Slew Of Measures Approved During Senate Session

VIC News / **Published On September 17, 2019 10:08 AM /**

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Senators who make up the 33rd Legislature on Monday approved a myriad of bills during a Senate session. The measures will be forwarded to Governor Albert Bryan for his approval or veto.

Among them is the controversial loitering measure that has stirred the angst of many Virgin Islanders who see the bill as infringing on residents' constitutional rights. But the measure is expected to be signed into law by the governor, after Mr. Bryan [expressed unwavering support](#) for it following a shooting incident in Frederiksted during a family event that left a number of individuals injured.

“The loitering law is not to harass people. The loitering law is to take criminals off the street. To stop the ascendancy of gangs and warring factions in places where good children go to have a good time,” the governor said.

Sponsored by Senator Novelle E. Francis Jr., who is a former V.I. police commissioner, if the measure is signed into law, penalties for misdemeanor loitering would include fines of up to \$5,000 and a much harsher one-year jail term. Current law sets penalties at a fine and up to 90 days imprisonment.

Among other things, Title 14 of the Virgin Islands Code already permits police questioning anyone who “ ... loiters, remains or wanders in or about a place without apparent reason and under circumstances which reasonably justify suspicion that he may be engaged or about to engage in crime...”

The senators approved the following measures on Monday:

- Bill No. 33-0011 – An Act amending title 14 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 60, section 1191 relating to strengthen the loitering law and increasing the penalty for loitering.
- Bill No. 33-0092 – An Act amending title 4, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new section 7 to provide for the continuing operation of the Judicial Branch of the Virgin Islands in the event of natural disaster or other emergencies.
- Bill No. 33-0061 – An Act amending title 29, chapter 12, section 705 of the Virgin Islands Code relating to the powers of the Economic Development Commission (“EDC”), sections 713a and 713b relating to tax reduction benefits for EDC beneficiaries, and title 29, chapter 23, section 1308 relating to the Hotel Development Trust Fund.
- Bill No. 33-0080 – An Act amending title 2, chapter 9, section 154, subsection (b) of the Virgin Islands Code regarding the expiration of the appointment of members to the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.
- Bill No. 33-0085 – An Act amending title 2, chapter 9, section 154, subsection (a) of the Virgin Islands Code by increasing the number of days for the appointment of members to the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.
- Bill No. 33-0098 – an Act amending title 12A of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new chapter 8 requiring that businesses offer at least two payment options to their customers, and matters related there.
- Bill No. 33-0104 – An Act amending the Hotel Development Act, title 29, chapter 23, of the Virgin Islands Code by making technical amendments to sections 1302 through 1309 and inserting new sections 1312,1313,1314, and 1317, regarding the Economic Recovery Fee and matters related thereto.
- Bill No. 33-0156-An Act to rezone Plot No. 25 Estate Concoridia, West End Quarter, Frederiksted, St. Croix, from R-2(Residential-Low Density-One and Two Family) to B-3 (Business-Scattered) to allow for restaurant and retail uses on the property
- Bill No. 33-0154 – An Act approval of the Governor of the Virgin Islands of Major Coastal Zone Permit Co. CZX-18—18(L&W).
- Bill No. 33-0086 – An Act amending title 19 of the Virgin Islands Code by inserting a new chapter 52 requiring all restaurants and establishments that sell food to post signs that demonstrate appropriate first aid for choking.
- Bill No. 33-0040 – An Act amending title 20. Part II, chapter 41, section 466, subsection (b) of the Virgin Islands Code to require each passenger in the rear seat

of a vehicle to wear safety belt.

Senators did not approve Bill No. 33-0142, an Act to rezone Plot Nos.11, Remainder Northern Portion and Remainder Southern Portion, Estate Longford, Company Quarter, St. Croix, from A-1 (Agriculture Zone) to A-2 (Agriculture Zone) to allow for the plots to be subdivided into two-acre parcels.

And they voted to remove from the agenda: Bill No. 33-0036 – An Act amending title 7, chapter 1, subchapter 1, section 2 of the Virgin Islands Code by including horses in the definition of livestock; and amending title 32, chapter 11, section 203 of the Virgin Islands Code by establishing a definition of “horses” for the purpose of horse racing.

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