

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bill Requiring Businesses To Prominently Post Labor Laws Moves Forward

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Senators who make up the Committee on Government Operations, Consumer Affairs, Energy, Environment, and Planning met on Thursday in the Cardiac Center on St. Croix to take action on two bills, including a measure that requires businesses to prominently post labor laws at their establishments.

Committee members received testimony on Bill No. 33-0091, "an Act amending the Virgin Islands Code by requiring businesses post the required labor law posters in a conspicuous place inside the business and if there is more than one site, then at all locations."

If the measure becomes law, it would also include penalties for multiple violations each year along with an appeal process. Senators voted to approve the measure and it was forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further vetting.

Gary Molloy, Department of Labor commissioner, said D.O.L. favored the intent of the proposed measure, stating it ensures that businesses provide notice to employees of their rights under local and federal law. However, Mr. Molloy suggested that the Department of Licensing and Consumers Affairs should be given an opportunity to provide testimony on the measure since it directly impacts D.L.C.A.

Some of the suggestions Mr. Molloy recommended were: 1) that the enforcement of labor laws be placed under the authority of DOL; 2) that upon previous notice and an opportunity for a fair hearing, if the law is still not adhered to, an imposition of fines for violations of the rules, regulations, and orders should be in place. He added that such fines should not be less than \$25 nor more than \$5,000, and 3) that any business found in violation of the law should be allowed to have their appeal processed through an administrative hearing review.

Senator Alicia Barnes, chairman of the committee, said while some employees are very skilled in their given profession, some struggle with reading and comprehension. She suggested that the Dept. of Labor should therefore develop some form of oral orientation rather than take literacy for granted.

The committee also took testimony on Bill No. 33-0127, "an Act posthumously honoring and commending the men and women who lost their lives while serving in the United States Armed Forces; naming the roundabout road circle located in downtown Cruz Bay, St. John after them. Testifiers in support of the measure were Patrick D. Farrell, director of the Office of Veterans Affairs, and Veterans Harry Daniel and Henry Powell."

The roundabout road will be named, "The Veterans Circle". The bill also appropriates \$20,000 to the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts to commission a monument in the memory of the Veterans.

The measure was favorably approved and sent to the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation and Aging for further consideration.

It was sponsored by Senator Athneil Thomas, who thanked his colleagues for their support in honoring the Virgin Islanders who served on behalf of the territory.

Committee members at Thursday's hearing were Chairwoman Senator Alicia V. Barnes, Myron D. Jackson, Marvin A. Blyden, Allison L. DeGazon, Javan E. James, Sr., and Athneil "Bobby" Thomas. Non-Committee members were Senators Novelle E. Francis, Jr., and Stedmann Hodge.