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# BMV in St. Thomas Receives Funding Through Sarauw-Sponsored Bill For Renovation of Facility to House Bureau

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**Senator Janelle Sarauw** By. VI LEGISLATURE

ST. THOMAS — Senators in the Committee on Finance on Wednesday unanimously supported a [bill](#) sponsored by Senator Janelle Sarauw that makes available up to \$800,000 to renovate a building in Crown Bay to house the Bureau of Motor Vehicle until the bureau's original facility — which is woefully deteriorated — is demolished and rebuilt.

It was a swift hearing, with all senators deeming the measure indelible to the viability of the bureau in St. Thomas. All members of the Finance Committee signed on as co-authors of the measure.

"The long and short is it just needs to move. It needs to relocate so that we can have a nice facility," said Finance Committee Chairman Kurt Vialet, who stated he had been receiving complaints about the condition of BMV in St. Thomas.

"I think it's unconscionable for us as a government to have those employees working in the conditions that they are, in fact, working in," Senator Donna Frett-Gregory said.

Senator Marvin Blyden — a frequent visitor to the bureau — saw the measure as a "no-brainer" and "straightforward."

BMV Director Barbara Jackson-McIntosh said the bureau was set to receive \$566,000 in reimbursements from FEMA for monies used from the general fund of the local government to purchase trailers and to perform other work related to the storms of 2017. She said around \$200,000 was available and that the remaining amount would come online by the end of this month.

Asked by senators for an exact figure relative to how much the bureau will need for the renovation of the temporary location, Ms. McIntosh was not able to furnish the requested information at the time, and she is expected to have further discussions with Finance Committee leaders for clarity before the bill is heard in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary in a week.

The Dept. of Public Works, which estimated the job to renovate the temporary facility to be just over \$700,000, rounded off the figure to \$800,000 to make room for unforeseen costs, Ms. Sarauw said. Work on the temporary BMV is projected to start in October.

As for the original BMV facility, Ms. Jackson-McIntosh said it "must be demolished and replaced." She said funds were originally requested from FEMA following the 2017 storms to repair the building. However, the bureau has since requested funding to replace the facility, a change that Ms. Jackson-McIntosh said caused "significant delays" of the final funding award from FEMA, which has yet to be released.

"We are in the finally stages of this process, and an award notification will be received within the next 30 days," she said of the funding to demolish and replace the original building, adding that the funding will be enough "to rebuild the ideal BMV facility."

Even so, the new building is not expected to come online for a while, which makes the investment in the temporary facility a need.

Ms. Sarauw, the chief sponsor of the legislation, said the bill stemmed from a call she received sometime back from her mom, stating that she was at BMV in St. Thomas outside and in the rain waiting for service. Ms. Sarauw, furious, hustled down to BMV for an explanation. "I was mad. Livid," Ms. Sarauw said.

But her anger turned into concern for the bureau after speaking to an assistant director at the time and realizing that "the BMV is trying but they didn't have the resources to really move things along, and as a policymaker, we cannot just continue to beat up agencies without proposing solutions," Ms. Sarauw said.

She then went inside the facility. "I saw the column of the wall separating from the wall. And then I saw other areas that flood, and I saw papers piled up. And in the midst of total physical chaos within the BMV, I saw hardworking employees trying to register cars, deal with licenses, and I don't know how they wake up every single day with the wages that we pay them, and they report

to work," Ms. Sarauw said.

Funding for the measure was identified through surpluses in the current fiscal year's budget.

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