

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Territory May See Veterans Cemetery Through DeGazon-Sponsored Bill

VIC News / **Published On November 10, 2019 09:54 AM /**

Staff **November 10, 2019**



Senator Allison DeGazon said on Saturday that she is spearheading legislation to assist the Virgin Islands Office of Veterans affairs by developing a State Veterans Cemetery in the Virgin Islands.

Currently, there is no established Veterans Cemetery in the Virgin Islands. The nearest cemetery is located in Puerto Rico.

Representatives from the VA office in Washington, D.C told Patrick Farrell, director of the Virgin Islands Office of Veterans Affairs, that for the VA in the Virgin Islands to receive assistance for burials, a state cemetery must be established.

“We need to have legislation signed by the governor of the Virgin Islands stating that you want to establish veterans’ cemeteries and expand and improve them in the future. We can/will do expansion grants as needed,” said Tom Paquelet, project manager and landscape architect for the VA’s Veterans Cemetery Grants Program, according to Ms. DeGazon.

According to the VA, the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement VA’s National Cemetery Administration. The program assists states, territories and federally recognized tribal governments in providing gravesites for Veterans in those areas where VA’s national cemeteries cannot fully satisfy their burial needs.

At the moment, the Virgin Islands doesn’t qualify for assistance due to the missing legislation, and Mr. Farrell said the project was long overdue.

“I see it as another step in the right direction as it relates to equalizing our Veterans with the rest of the nations’ Veterans. Yes, there are a few more steps to go, but this is a very significant one,” he said.

Ms. DeGazon said she is working with her colleagues such as Committee on Finance Chair Sen. Kurt Vialet and Senate President Novelle Francis Jr on this measure to support veterans in the Virgin Islands.

“It’s an honor to work with Senator Vialet and the senate president on such an important measure to recognize and salute our veterans. Finding the funding became a priority to ensure we produce an honorable resting place for those who gave their lives to serve and protect us. I echo Director Farrell in stating this is a step in the right direction for the entire community,” DeGazon said, noting that this bill is just one of several to come in support of Virgin Islands veterans.