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Senators Send Over a Dozen Bills to Governor Bryan, Override 4 Vetos and Approve Board Nominees

Government / **Published On September 26, 2020 07:08 AM /**

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Senators Donna Frett-Gregory and Myron Jackson during Friday's all-day session. By. CHAUNTE HERBERT, LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Senators spent all day Friday acting upon legislation during a Senate session at the Earl B. Ottley Legislature in St. Thomas, approving over a dozen measures while leaving eight more for next week. They also overrode four of Governor Bryan's vetoes and approved a number of board nominees.

The four vetoes senators overrode include [Bill No. 33-0054](#), which seeks to bring relief to minority-owned businesses in the territory; [Bill No. 33-0335](#), which seeks to restructure the Virgin Islands Cannabis Board; [Bill No. 33-0217](#), an Act authorizing the Department of Property and

Procurement in conjunction with other agencies to refurbish the building located at No. 1 Norre Gade on the island of St. Thomas and convert it into public restrooms to be used by the public, including tourists; and [Bill No. 33-0102](#), which seeks to include graduates of the Adult Education Center among those eligible to receive scholarships as valedictorian and salutatorian, among other related changes.

Other measures approved:

Bill No. 33-0103 (Janelle Sarauw) provides for behavioral assessments of children from ages 3 through 18. It also authorizes postpartum screening before mothers of newborn babies are discharged from a health care facility, and sets minimum standards of health care for incarcerated women and men.

The bill also provides a new procedure for obtaining an initial birth certificate; prohibits the use of corporal punishment in public schools; provides GVI employees, both parents and legal guardians of children with two hours off of work per month, per child to attend their school. And lastly, it authorizes that no later than January 2020, each health care facility with birthing facilities must hire a discharge planner.

Bill No. 33-0254 (Dwayne DeGraff, Javan James, Marvin Blyden, Steven Payne) allows the V.I Water and Power Authority to reprogram monies appropriated from section 16 of Act No. 7233 to be used to expand the Bovoni Waterline project.

Senator Blyden told his colleagues that even before he ran for the Senate, he advocated for the waterline expansion in Bovoni. "Waterline expansion does many things. Number one it drives down the cost of development and building at your home. Two, it brings in revenues for WAPA, and three, it brings in revenues in terms of taxes for the government of the Virgin Islands," he said.

WAPA began working on the expansion project on February 3, 2020, with an initial completion date of July 6, 2020. However, as a result of Covid-19, the authority had to suspend the project. Giving testimony during an August hearing, WAPA CEO Lawrence Kupfer said the expansion project was only 10 percent complete. WAPA has since revised the completion timeline to January 31, 2021.

Bill No. 33-0111, (Novelle Francis) directs the Waste Management Authority to designate waste tire disposal sites throughout the territory; requires tire retailers to charge a tire disposal fee and obtain a permit for the collection, storage, transport, and disposal of waste tires; imposes fines for improper waste tire disposal, and creates the Waste Tire Management and Disposal Fund.

Bill No. 33-0322, An Act conditionally rezoning Plot No. 102 and Plot No. 103 Estate Peter's Rest, Christiansted, St. Croix for the authorization of a car wash business.

Bill No. 33-0115, (Kurt A. Vialet), transfers and establishes the Virgin Islands Labor-Management Committee (VILMC) as a division under the Public Employees' Relations Board (PERB) to streamline operations and save costs.

Bill No. 33-0246, (Allison DeGazon), an Act relating to maternal mental health. A portion of the bill reads, "The Commissioner of Health shall work with health care facilities, licensed health and mental health care professionals, the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, mental health advocates, consumers, and families in the Territory to develop materials and information about postpartum depression, including treatment resources, and develop policies and procedures to

comply with this subchapter."

Bill No. 33-0211, (Alicia V. Barnes, Kenneth L. Gittens, and Javan E. James), seeks to establish minimum criteria for Public Services Commission members and changes the number of members on the commission.

Bill No. 33-0223, (Steven Payne, Oakland Benta) requires that the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor approve any proposed Youth Transitional Employment Program within three months after receipt of the application.

Bill No. 33-0358, (Kenneth Gittens, Novelle Francis), authorizes the transfer of government-owned real property located at #51 Hannah's Rest, Frederiksted, St. Croix, owned by the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority to the Virgin Islands Police Department for the construction of a police station in Frederiksted, and for other related purposes.

Bill No. 33-0267, (Donna Frett-Gregory, Allison DeGazon), seeks to provide pathways to students' career readiness in the public high schools of the Virgin Islands. The measure also seeks to build on the career and technical (vocational) education program that allows high school students to gain exposure in their desired vocational career field, obtain national qualifications, and offer incentives for qualified local businesses territory-wide to participate.

Bill No. 33-0272 (Alicia Barnes, Kenneth Gittens), seeks to enact the Virgin Islands Ratepayers' Bill of Rights, giving the Public Services Commission jurisdiction over customer complaints. This bill also requires that the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority comply with the Virgin Islands Ratepayers' Bill of Rights.

Bill No. 33-0299 (Novelle Francis, Janelle Sarauw) would designate the South Shore of St. Croix as an Enterprise Zone.

Bill No. 33-0325 (Alicia Barnes) prohibits the unconscionable pricing of goods and services during a state of emergency declaration.

Bill No. 33-0342 (Kurt Vialet) amends the Virgin Islands Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation's duties and responsibilities. It also adds new definitions necessary for members to complete their mandate. The bill also removes the accreditation agency from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals to any applicable regulatory body.

The Senate will return on Tuesday to vote on the remaining eight bills from yesterday's legislative session. All the bills that were favorably voted on now heads to Governor Bryan for further consideration and action.

The Senate also approved nominees, including the following:

Lionel S. Jacobs Virgin Islands, Port Authority Governing Board District of St. Croix; Reginald O. Vigilant, University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees District of St. Croix; Ian Tomlinson, University of the Virgin Islands Research Park and Technology Board of Directors; Jeffery G. Webster, University of the Virgin Islands Research Park and Technology Board of Directors; Denise T. Jeremiah, Virgin Islands Board of Public Accountancy District of St. Thomas; Yolanda Samuel-Deterville, Virgin Islands Board of Public Accountancy District of St. Croix; William J. Tobias, Virgin Islands Commission on Aquaculture and Mariculture Marine Biologist Representative; and Alvin D. Burke, Jr., Virgin Islands Public Broadcasting System Board of Directors District of St. Croix.

