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AARP VI Expresses Gratitude as Beach Access for the Disabled, Commission of Aging Bills Become Law

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AARP in the Virgin Islands said through a release it had a "triumphant welcoming of the New Year" with the successful signing of two pieces of legislation this month.

The nonprofit said it has been advocating and working with the 33rd Legislature for passage of bills for the Commission on Aging and for Beach Access for the Disabled.

On December 11, the two measures were approved by the Senate and both were signed into law by Governor Albert Bryan on January 4.

AARP thanked all of the members of the 33rd Legislature, especially the bills' primary sponsors, along with committee chairs. The nonprofit also thanked Governor Bryan for approving the bills.

"We also thank AARP members, government agencies representatives, and all of the people in the Virgin Islands who in some way supported these bills," AARP said.

The Commission on Aging Bill, Bill No. 33-0367, is an act amending the Virgin Islands Code to change the composition of the Commission on Aging. The passage of this Act allows for the re-establishment of the commission and the establishment of partners, which will develop and provide programs and services for older adults and the aging population in the Virgin Islands. These programs and services will also allow Virgin Islanders to be able to age in place. AARP will have a permanent seat in the commission and will continue ensuring that our older adults will benefit from the re-establishment of the same, according to the release.

Bill No. 33-0220 is an Act providing ramps or walkways on the beaches for the disabled. The Beach Access for the Disabled Act will allow seniors, older adults, and the disabled to have free access to the sea at two beaches in each island district. Walkways will be installed and ramps leading into the sea will be built. Seniors and the disabled will be able to get to the beach and into the waters easily and safely. This will encourage more trips to the beach by older adults and the disabled, AARP said.

"The passage of these Acts means that the Virgin Islands is on its way to becoming a livable community," said AARP. "These Acts fulfill the goal of making the Virgin Islands an age-friendly territory, a commitment made by Governor Albert Bryan when he enrolled the territory in the AARP Network of Age Friendly States and Communities, in May of 2019."

"This is a historic day for the Virgin Islands and AARP as these bills have been signed into law," said Troy de Chabert-Schuster, state director of AARP in the Virgin Islands. "The enactment of these bills is a result of AARP's continued work in the Virgin Islands to make our communities more livable for people of all ages."

The nonprofit said it will continue to work with community stakeholder organizations and government agencies as programs are developed, improvements are made, and projects are executed under these Acts.