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Bill Halting Development of Gas Stations in USVI For 5 Years Now Law

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A bill sponsored by Senators Janelle Sarauw and Kenneth Gittens limiting the development of gas stations in a territory replete with them was [signed into law](#) by Governor Albert Bryan Thursday, announced Ms. Sarauw's office.

In simple terms, the law places a five-year moratorium on gas-station development in the towns of Christiansted and Frederiksted on St. Croix, and the St. Thomas-St. John District. It also establishes a numerical system that determines how many gas stations will be allowed after the five-year moratorium.

In a release issued Friday, Ms. Sarauw said, “The Virgin Islands is oversaturated with gas stations, and the manner and frequency in which we continuously permit their development will eventually

deplete our limited land resources with no regard for the comprehensive needs of the people of this Territory – both now, and in the future."

The intent of the moratorium serves to halt the spot permitting and licensing practice, during which time legislation will be introduced to establish a new zone [Zone G] for gas stations, according to the release. In order to effectively achieve this, Ms. Sarauw intends to collaborate with her colleagues, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, community members and other stakeholders, to comprehensively study, review and determine the permissible conditions, areas/mapping, and limitations needed for gas stations.

In 2019 D.P.N.R.'s Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning conducted a location survey of gas stations to determine their proximity to each other. "This survey revealed 75 percent of gas stations surveyed are less than one mile from another," said D.P.N.R. Assistant Commissioner Keith Richards during a Senate hearing in September. "The survey also revealed that on St. Croix, the stations are mostly found along Centerline Road and Northshore Road, and on St. Thomas, the stations are mostly found along Veteran's Drive, Weymouth Rhymer Highway, Bovoni Road, and Redhook Road."

As of Sept. last year, the territory had 52 retail gas stations, according to D.P.N.R.: 26 on St. Croix, 23 on St. Thomas and 3 on St. John.

During the then-bill's [first hearing](#), D.P.N.R. cautioned lawmakers to tread lightly with the measure, as moratoriums are for a short period of time tied to a direct threat to public health, safety and general welfare.