

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett Introduces Several Measures Aimed at Improving Economic Conditions in USVI

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett By. SAUL LOEB/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

USVI Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, last week introduced several pieces of legislation aimed at improving the economy in the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to her office.

"These bills, along with several others to come, will—aside from improving economic development—address transportation and infrastructure, as well as greater access to education and healthcare for Virgin Islands residents," Ms. Plaskett said.

The measures include:

Territories College Access Act - This bill would establish a college access program for students in the U.S. territories, including the Virgin Islands. The Governor of the Virgin Islands would be awarded grants by the Secretary of Education to pay for the difference between the tuition for in-state students and out-of-state students at participating mainland U.S. institutions of higher education that enroll eligible students from the territories.

Extend Basic Allowance for Housing to service members in the Virgin Islands - This bill authorizes the basic allowance for housing for members of the uniformed services in the Virgin Islands (instead of the overseas housing allowance).

Hire A Hero Act - This bill would allow small businesses a work opportunity tax credit for hiring a member of the Ready Reserve or the National Guard, and makes such tax credit permanent with respect to the hiring of servicemembers in the Ready Reserve or the National Guard, and with respect to the hiring of qualified veterans.

Territorial Tax Parity Act - This bill modifies the income source rules that apply with respect to the taxation of income from U.S. territories, including the Virgin Islands.

Territorial Tax Equity and Economic Growth Act - This bill modifies the residence and income source rules that apply with respect to the taxation of income from U.S. territories.

Territorial Economic Recovery Act - This bill restores favorable tax treatment of investment in U.S. territories, including the Virgin Islands. Specifically, it provides for a limited exemption from new taxes on global intangible low tax income (GILTI) imposed in U.S. territories in 2017.

Tax parity of investments by U.S.-owned companies in the Virgin Islands - This bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code to provide for an exclusion from the tax law's definition of "United States person" for bona fide residents of the Virgin Islands, similar to the existing exclusion for bona fide residents of Puerto Rico, in order to bring tax parity to investments in the territories by companies owned by U.S. persons, and to prevent unwarranted diversion of capital investments from the Virgin Islands.

Dictionary Act amendment to define Territories as a State in Federal programs - This bill creates a rule of construction in the U.S. Code to include the U.S. territories in the definition of the term "State" for purposes of all federal laws and programs (except where special treatment has been explicitly provided).

National Statuary Hall Parity - This bill permits each of the U.S. territories to provide and furnish statues honoring their citizens for placement in Statuary Hall in the same manner as statues honoring citizens of the States are provided for placement in Statuary Hall.

"Getting these bills passed will protect jobs and the livelihood of our small business owners and increase the amount of revenue generated in the territory," said Ms. Plaskett.

She also spoke on the importance of her seat on the House Ways and Means Committee. "It is an honor to be the first Member from a territory to serve on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee," she said. "Seats on the Ways and Means Committee are highly sought after by lawmakers because of its jurisdiction over key economic policy issues like tax, trade and health care issues."