

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Rules Committee Approves 4 Bills, Including Measure Giving Preference to Seniors and Those Terminally Ill in Court Proceedings

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Lawmakers on Tuesday forwarded four bills to the full Senate, including a measure aimed at giving preference to seniors and those terminally ill in court proceedings.

The measure, sponsored by Sen. Janelle Sarauw, further states, "Upon the granting of such a motion for preference for an elderly party, the court shall set the matter for trial not more than 180 days from that date that the elderly party moves for preference. There shall be no continuance beyond 180 days from the granting of the motion for preference except for physical disability of a party or a party's attorney, or upon a showing of good

cause stated in the record. Any continuance shall be for no more than 30 days and no more than one continuance for physical disability may be granted to any party."

Ms. Sarauw spoke to the high volume of backlogged cases, stating that the matter presented an unfair situation for the elderly population and terminally ill.

Attorney General Chief Deputy Carol Thomas-Jacobs said such decisions should be left to the judiciary, though similar legislation have been enacted in California and New York.

AARP of the Virgin Islands State Director Troy de Chabert-Schuster said civil cases in the territory average roughly five years to resolve, and that the bill seeks to bring unprecedented change to the legal system by streamlining the judicial process and reducing the length of civil proceedings.

Lawmakers ultimately approved the bill.

Separately, senators voted favorably for the following:

- Bill No. 34-0066- An Act amending Title 33, Virgin Islands Code, chapter 89 subchapter III, section 2541 to allow the Lt. Governor to collect unpaid property taxes and unpaid public sewer fees from the sale of delinquent taxpayer's real property. Sponsored by: Senators Dwayne M. DeGraff and Franklin D. Johnson. Co-Sponsored by: Senators Novelle E. Francis, Jr. and Marvin A. Blyden
- Bill No. 34-0071- An Act amending Title 28 of the Virgin Islands Code, by adding a chapter 36 to enact The Virgin Islands Timeshare Act. Sponsored by: Senators Kurt A. Violet and Donna Frett-Gregory
- Bill No. 34-0077- An Act amending Act No. 8365, the Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget, and Act No. 8348, the Legislature's Fiscal Year 2021 Budget, to restore the 8% reduction in salaries to the employees of the Government of the Virgin Islands and for other related purposes. Sponsored by: Senators Kurt A. Violet, Donna A. Frett-Gregory, Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Janelle K. Sarauw, Milton E. Potter, Alma Francis Heyliger, Franklin D. Johnson, Javan E. James, Sr., Steven D. Payne, Sr., Samuel Carrión, Marvin A. Blyden, and Genevieve R. Whitaker

Senators in attendance: Chairman Milton E. Potter, Kurt A. Violet, Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Janelle K. Sarauw, Genevieve R. Whitaker, Franklin D. Johnson, Dwayne M. DeGraff, and Carla J. Joseph.