

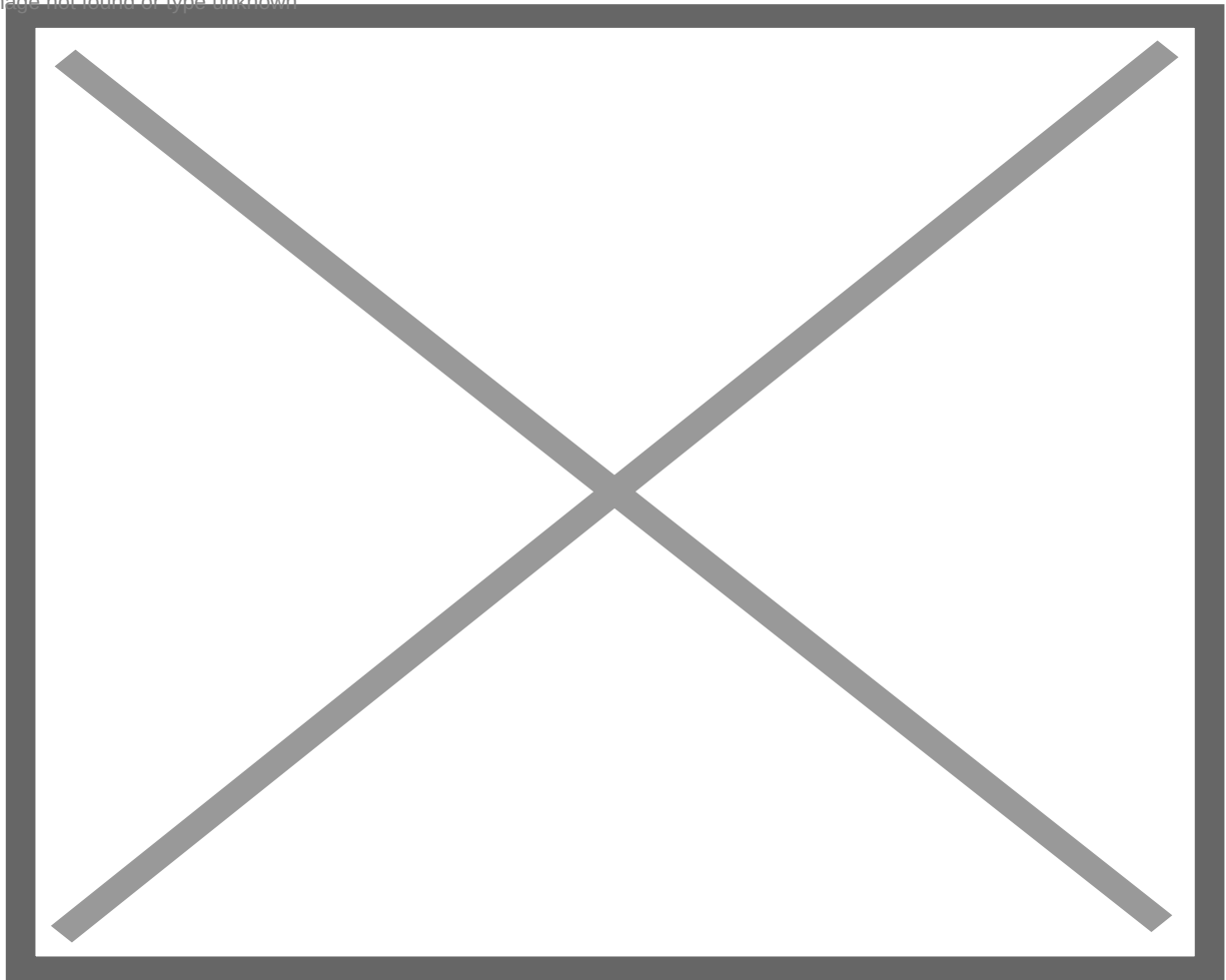
logo not found or type unknown

Latest Snake Bill Imposing Fine of Up to \$10,000 Moves Forward, But Enforcement Remains Nonexistent

Government / **Published On August 29, 2021 06:31 AM /**

Kyle Murphy **August 29, 2021**

Image not found or type unknown



Eastern Brown snake (*Pseudonaja Textilis*) which is a native species in Australia and the second most deadly snake in the world. By. GETTY IMAGES

Last updated on Sun., Aug. 29, 2021 at 10:12 a.m.

The Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection on Friday favorably forwarded three bills to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, among them a measure that would see lawbreakers being fined up to \$10,000, instead of the previous strict "not less than \$10,000" fine codified by [the prior measure](#) for importing snakes and other non-indigenous invasive species into the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Bill No. 34-0085 also seeks to amend VI Code relating to the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Fund to extend the fund to include the regulation of the importation and control of non-indigenous invasive species. The measure was sponsored by Senator Javan James.

According to Mr. James, since 2012 there have been more than 420 snakes caught in the USVI. Additionally, female Boa constrictors can reproduce asexually (without a male) and give live birth to up to 60 snakes. The babies can survive in the womb for a period even after the mother has died.

A technical amendment added to the measure clarifies that if an animal is brought into the territory without a valid veterinary certificate, "it is the owner's responsibility to pay for any expenses to quarantine the animal until a valid certificate of veterinary inspection is issued."

A concern was raised by Dept. of Agriculture Commissioner Positive Nelson and Senator Novelle Francis, who contended that \$10,000 was too high.

Mr. James said the original snake bill measure includes language that says the fine should be "not less" than \$10,000, and that his measure actually seeks to allow for more wiggle room. "...What I am trying to impose here today is a fine of up to \$10,000."

Some senators were concerned about the lack of enforcement regarding the invasive species measures. "I think one or two of my colleagues asked before... how many fines have we imposed over the course of the past year or so? What I gathered is that the answer is probably zero."

Mr. Potter explained that the Department of Planning and Natural Resource's perspective is that it does not have the authority to impose invasive species-related fines, and that the department has taken more of an educational perspective. Mr. Potter said V.I. Code seems to indicate that the Dept. of Agriculture has the power to impose these fines. "However, the commissioner rightfully advised us that he doesn't have an enforcement arm," Mr. Potter said.

Mr. James asked Mr. Nelson how could the issue be rectified. Mr. Nelson said a position would need to be added to the Department of Agriculture to increase enforcement.

Other measures that were forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary

Bill No. 34-0063

Bill No. 34-0063 is a "resolution honoring and commending St. Clair Alphonso "Whadablee" DeSilvia for his invaluable contribution to continued development of Calypso music in the Virgin Islands."

Bill No. 34-0064

Bill No. 34-0064 is "An Act honoring and commending Athniel C. "Addie" Ottley for his tireless years of informing and educating the public on current and past community issues and by keeping the radio waves open in times of imminent danger to the community and for naming a roadway in his honor.

© Viconsortium 2026