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Bill Focused on Dental Health of School-Aged Children Passes Committee on Rules and Judiciary

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A bill that seeks to establish a full dental program in public schools while lowering the required minimum amount of fluoride in fresh water distributed for public consumption was approved in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary on Tuesday.

The measure lowers the required minimum amount of fluoride from not less than eight-tenths of one milligram per liter to not less than seven-tenths. "This level is set to promote public health benefits of fluoride for preventing tooth decay while minimizing the chance for dental fluorosis and other side-effects of excessive fluoride intake," according to a summary of the bill.

"Tooth decay is the most chronic childhood disease, even more common than asthma, and impacts a child's ability to carry out normal everyday activities," said Senator Novelle Francis,

who sponsored the measure. He said a “growing body of research have identified a connection between oral and chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's, diabetes and other serious conditions that are affecting millions of people.”

The senator said that on a national level, research shows school-based fluorization programs reduce the incident of childhood decay by 30 percent.”

The measure is an "attempt for us to be able to ensure that there is a fluoride rinse in our school environment from K-3, specifically," Mr. Francis told colleagues. "What we are trying to do is make sure we're minimizing the opportunity for tooth decay throughout our youngsters. We know that if they are not taken care of at an early age, you'll pay for it in the long run through various decay and cavities as well as gingivitis and other gum diseases."

Senator Milton Potter, who expressed support for the measure, said, “Oral health is the key to physical health and wellness.”

Senators Francis, Franklin Johnson, Potter , Kenneth Gittens, Carla Joesph and Steven Payne voted in favor of the measure. Senator Genevieve Whitaker did not vote.

Other bills that were forwarded on Tuesday were:

- Bill No 34-0061 A Resolution honoring and commending Mr. Hillary “Baga” Rezende for his many contributions to steel pan music and his dedicated service to the people of the Virgin Islands
- Bill No. 34-0063: 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: 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
- Bill No 34-0065: An Act honoring and commending Elridge Blake for his outstanding accomplishments in sports and contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands; naming the University of the Virgin Islands Sports and Fitness Center in his honor and appropriates \$10,000 to cover the cost and up-keep of the signage
- Bill No 34-0040 An Act amending title 27, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new subchapter Va. establishing the Nurse Licensure Compact to create a multistate nursing license
- Bill No 34-0053 An Act amending Virgin Islands Code, title 17chapter 5 by adding section 41i to establish the Emergency Medical Services Program; amending title 33, chapter 111 by adding section 3099a to establish the Emergency Medical Services High School Program Fund; and making a \$160,000 appropriation from the Centennial Special Fund to the Department of Education to fund the Emergency Medical Services basic EMS education program.
- Bill No. 34-0078 An Act to transfer certain real property from the Government of the Virgin Islands to the Virgin Islands Port Authority; to require the Virgin Islands Port Authority to pay certain sums to the Education Maintenance Fund
- Bill No. 34-0085 An Act amending the Virgin Islands Code, title 14, section 192, relating to the importation of snakes and invasive species, to increase the fine for the unauthorized importation of snakes and to make technical amendments; amending title 12, section §81d, relating to the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Trust Fund, to extend the use of the fund to the

regulation of the importation and control of non-indigenous evasive species; and amending title 19 section 2709, relating to the prevention of the introduction of contagious or infectious animals, to provide that the quarantine of animals is at the owner's expense

Additionally, Bill No. 34-0083, an Act making an appropriation of \$100,000 from the St. Thomas Capital Improvement Fund to the Department of Agriculture for the Humane Society of St. Thomas to be used as matching funds for the construction of an animal clinic, was held in committee.

The Committee on Rules and Judiciary forwarded the following board nominations to the Committee of the Whole:

Dr. Denese Marshall, Psy.D., MSCP, MS VI- VI Board of Psychology Examiners

Semaj J. Johnson, Esq VI- Board of Medical Examiners

William Newbold: VI Historic Preservation Commission

Laurence J. Richards, P.E., MSC, MBA: Board of General Construction Contractors