

Image not found or type unknown

# Simplified Revised Organic Act eBook Published by UVI Scholars

Caribbean / **Published On October 29, 2021 03:46 PM /**

Staff Consortium **October 29, 2021**

Image not found or type unknown



Scholars from the University of the Virgin Islands have published a user-friendly version of the founding documents of the U.S. Virgin Islands, the university announced today.

According to the release, the easily accessible, plain language version of the Revised Organic Act of 1954 is now available to the public in the form of a 185-page eBook thanks to the collaboration of UVI professor emeritus, Dr. Paul Leary; professor of political science and history, Dr. Malik Sekou; and UVI alumna, Attorney Patricia Welcome.

The project was supported by a \$20,000 grant from the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to raise public awareness of the Revised Organic Act and provide access to it via the territory's schools, libraries, civic

organizations and/or institutions. Its publication auspiciously coincides with Liberty Day, the Virgin Islands holiday commemorating the institution of free press in the former Danish West Indies.

“This publication is designed to develop awareness of government and the ability of the people of the islands to participate in it. It is an important step towards our quest for self-determination and better government,” said Mr. Sekou, the project’s director. “I would like to give high praise to my colleague Dr. Leary who served as one of the pioneering scholars on this subject as well as Attorney Patricia Welcome for her expert support.”

Commending the project, UVI President Dr. David Hall stated, “As the only institution of higher learning in the U.S. Virgin Islands, our mission is to educate and empower the U.S. Virgin Islands not only through teaching but also by community engagement. This project embodies our mission to the fullest, bringing to the forefront a subject that impacts all Virgin Islanders now and for generations to come. I congratulate Dr. Sekou, Dr. Leary, Attorney Welcome and all contributors for creating this tremendous resource.”

The Revised Organic Act of 1954 declared the Virgin Islands to be an unincorporated territory, and completely reorganized its government, abolishing the two existing municipalities with their separate municipal government councils and joint legislative assembly, and creating a single territorial government with a single legislature. This act of U.S. Congress made comprehensive and complete provisions for the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, defining their duties and imposing many specific limitations upon them.

“Despite its importance in the political life of the Territory, until now there was no version written in plain English that would enable the average person to understand the 1954 Revised Organic Act and no explanation of the historical and political context that explains why the islands are organized by a law passed by the U.S. Congress rather than a locally drafted and approved framework of government,” said Dr. Leary who served as professor of political science at the University for 25 years before retiring in 1997. “For the first time, Virgin Islanders will have convenient access to the document that serves as our equivalent to a constitution. It not only contains a version written in plain language, but also background information and answers to basic questions. With the prospect of a new constitutional convention focused on adopting the Revised Organic Act as our local basic law, the publication is especially timely and important.”

To access the eBook, visit <https://www.uvi.edu/academics/lib-arts-and-sciences/research-and-outreach/osdcd.aspx>.