

The Virgin Islands Consortium

\$350 Billion Competitiveness Bill Passes House and Heads to Senate; Plaskett Says Measure Includes Provisions for USVI

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Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett announced Monday that passage of the America COMPETES Act of 2022 in the House of Representatives includes significant legislation sponsored by her office. The measure now heads to the Senate, where [heated debate over its contents](#) is expected to unfold. The Senate passed its own version of the bill in June with a total cost of \$250 billion.

The \$350 billion measure is aimed at boosting U.S. competitiveness with China and other rivals, and while both bills provide for substantial new federal incentives to help bring

advanced semiconductor manufacturing back to the U. S.—another bipartisan priority — differences with the Senate and emerging partisan divides signaled struggles ahead in reaching a compromise, according to the Wall Street Journal.

“The America COMPETES Act of 2022 includes bold, smart and strategic investments to power the success of America’s workers, businesses and economy – based on bipartisan bills, many of which have already passed the House with bipartisan support,” Ms. Plaskett said in a statement. “I am extremely pleased that the House agreed to my amendment to include my and Rep. Don Young’s proposal for a new \$10 billion NOAA grant program to implement projects that restore a marine, estuarine, or coastal habitat in the United States, create jobs for fishermen in the United States, or facilitate climate change adaptation along U.S. coastlines.

Among other notable features, the bill contains the following provisions for the Virgin Islands and the broader Caribbean:

- extends the trade adjustment assistance for workers program to the Virgin Islands and other U.S. territories;
- expands apprenticeship opportunities in the Virgin Islands;
- includes funding for STEM education at HBCUs;
- directs the U.S. State Department to submit a multi-year strategy for increasing U.S. economic competitiveness and promoting good governance, human rights, and the rule of law in Latin American and Caribbean countries;
- promotes U.S. regional cooperation with Caribbean countries for improving energy security, grid reliability, and energy efficiency, as well as reforming energy markets and investing in cleaner energy technologies;
- promotes long-term resilience in the Caribbean to natural disasters, severe weather events, and a changing ocean environment by authorizing appropriations in support of the U.S. Caribbean Resilience Partnership launched in 2019; and
- updates and creates programs to address climate change, ecosystem loss, disease outbreaks, and other threats to coral reefs.

“The America COMPETES Act reflects bipartisan work across committees: its major components include many bills that have already passed the House by strong bipartisan votes or have bipartisan cosponsors,” Ms. Plaskett said. “My team and I continue to work diligently in order to secure provisions that will bolster our territory and the Caribbean region across every sector—energy, climate change, disaster recovery, our economy, technology and education. My colleagues and I look forward to swiftly going to conference with the Senate so that we can put a strong bill for America on the President’s desk to sign into law.”