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Three Community-Minded Virgin Islands Identified for Senate's Highest Award in Bills Up For Consideration

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A shot of The Earl B. Ottley Legislature Building in St. Thomas, USVI. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

A former senator credited for promoting visa waiver status for Caribbean citizens and who fought for the proper treatment of migrant workers in the U.S. Virgin Islands is in line to receive the Legislature's highest honor, if a draft bill to that effect makes its way into law.

Once Bill No. 35-0006 – filed by Senator Carla J. Joseph - passes all legislative and executive processes, former Senator George E. Goodwin would be awarded the V.I. Medal of Honor, recognition for his socio-economic contribution to the territory.

When the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection met this week, testifier Donna Christiansen, a former Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress said it was a “long overdue recognition” for a great advocate who worked tirelessly towards alleviating the plight of immigrants who were under the bonded system in the Virgin Islands.

“George was determined and untiring in working with then Delegate Ron DeLugo to secure the passage of the Virgin Islands Non-Immigrant Alien Adjustment Act of 1981,” she said, recalling his testimony as president of the Caribbean Development Coalition at the House Committee on the Judiciary’s Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law in 1981.

“His work did not end there; he assisted thousands with the required paperwork and continued his relentless efforts to open doors and to foster full integration into the community. As a culmination of those efforts, he dedicated much of the rest of his active political life to an effort we hope will finally come to fruition — extending visa waiver status to citizens of the Caribbean,” she said.

To further recognize his expansive contributions to the U.S.V.I., the committee also voted to rename the cricket field located on Parcel H of Tract 1, Estate Nazareth, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands the “George E. Goodwin Cricket Grounds” in his honor.

Rev. Dr. Bentley Thomas, pastor at the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, recalled that Mr. Goodwin used activities like cricket and soccer to help migrants who were suffering from depression. “He is among the many humble and helpful Virgin Islanders who seek mainly that others be promoted and become faithful citizens of these Virgin Islands. He is one who seeks no personal recognition,” he stated.

Mr. Doyle Jones, president of the St. Thomas Cricket Association said in addition that Mr. Goodwin made substantial contributions to the sport of cricket throughout the territory. In his quest to promote and develop the game, Mr. Doyle said he organized the travel of numerous teams from the Eastern Caribbean and retired international cricketers to St. Thomas to play. He contributed to the development of players by organizing clinics and training sessions to advance players’ techniques.

“In 1985, he led the Virgin Islands delegation to Antigua, where he advocated and convinced the Leeward Islands Cricket Board that the Virgin Islands should be recognized as a full member. His advocacy afforded the Virgin Islands Cricket Board the opportunity to have a seat at the table setting policy for cricket in the Leeward Islands region and provided our cricketers the opportunity to participate and showcase their talent in organized tournaments,” Mr. Jones explained.

As a senator, Mr. Goodwin appropriated funding to make sure that the sport's long-term viability remained a top priority. The former senator's sponsorship of regional and international cricket games provided an opportunity for cricket lovers in the Virgin Islands to enjoy first-class and international cricket games on local television, he added.

In his prime, Mr. Goodwin also served as a GERS administrator, chief of staff to Lt. Governor Luz James and an advisor to Governor Charles Turnbull.

The six committee members and six other senators also voted unanimously for the posthumous recognition of former senator Horace A. Callwood, Sr.

Mr. Callwood, who passed away in 2020, will have the street running north to south alongside Windward Passage Hotel in Charlotte Amalie renamed in his memory. Bill No. 35-0011,

sponsored by Senators Marvin A. Blyden, Angel L. Bolques, Jr., and Carla J. Joseph aims to honor Mr. Callwood for his dedication, service, and commitment to the people of the Virgin Islands.

Mr. Callwood served the people of the Virgin Island in his capacity as senator in the 7th Legislature between 1967-68 and the 8th Legislature 1969-70.

“He mentored many up-and-coming political leaders, some sitting in this chamber listening to me today. He was always willing to give useful and pertinent advice and was always there generously giving. We are better people because of it,” offered James O’Bryan, Jr., former state chair of the Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands.

“Horace Callwood urged us never to rest, preached, and insisted that we as a people prevail in economics, job opportunities, health, technology, and individual freedom. Honor his memory by passing this bill, following his example, and fulfilling the dreams of those who came before, and we will prove worthy of the honor of being called the heirs of those who came before,” he testified.

Eduardo Carneiro, hair of the Horace Callwood Breakfast Club also testified to Mr. Callwood’s dedication and commitment to serving the people of the Virgin Islands continued for decades after his tenure in office. “Horace lobbied for the peoples’ concerns and challenges both outwardly behind the scene continuously,” he remarked.

According to Mr. Callwood’s daughter Chaneel Callwood-Daniels, her father loved the V.I. and wanted to build up the territory. He was also a great strategist, she said, who was always planning.

“I am most proud that he was always our backup – mentally, physically and emotionally. He was, in a word – reliable. You could go to him with any problem and he would help you, whether you were his child, family, friend or associate,” she remembered.

Apart from the two senators, draft legislation was also passed to honor Boyd “Boyzie” Orlanzo Todman for providing a positive environment to the youth of the Virgin Islands by founding the basketball team Zero Tolerance. Zero Tolerance promotes discipline, sportsmanship and teamwork while simultaneously discouraging the use of drugs, alcohol and negative behavior.

The bill, which started as a resolution was amended by Senator Donna Frett-Gregory. She requested that the Oswald Harris Court be renamed the Boyd “Boyzie” Orlanzo Todman Basketball Court and that \$5,000 from the General Fund be appropriated to the Virgin Islands Housing Authority to erect a sign with the new name.

Senators Dwayne M. DeGraff and Angel L. Bolques, Jr. were sponsors of the bill. All three bills will now go before the Committee on Rules and Regulations for further debate.

Correction: March 3, 2023 at 8:04 p.m.

A previous version of this story credited Sen. Milton Potter for an amendment that renamed the Oswald Harris Court to the Boyd “Boyzie” Orlanzo Todman Basketball Court, and provided \$5,000 from the General Fund to the Virgin Islands Housing Authority to erect a sign with the new name. However, it was Sen. Frett-Gregory who offered the amendment. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.

