

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senate Committee Advances Bills on School Infrastructure, Federal Home Loan Bank Access, and More

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Federal Home Loan Bank. Bill No. 35-0026, an Act to allow insurance companies based in the USVI to have access to the Federal Home Loan Bank on Tues. April 11, 2023 was forwarded to the Committee of the Whole.

The Committee on Rules and Judiciary approved a number of measures on Tuesday, bringing several draft bills one step closer to becoming law in the U.S Virgin Islands.

Among the bills passed were Bill No. 35-0050 which [establishes](#) the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance; Bill No. 35-0026, an Act to allow insurance companies

based in the USVI to have [access](#) to the Federal Home Loan Bank; Bill No. 35-0054, which would allocate a \$5,000 [lump sum](#) to USVI residents on their 100th birthday; and Bill No. 35-0055, an Act which [reverts changes](#) made to the teaching of VI and Caribbean History for elementary and secondary schools.

All senators present voted affirmatively for the bills, barring bill No. 35-0055 – Senator Angel Bolques voted against the measure in the absence of an amendment, while Senator Carla Joseph abstained from that vote.

The move to integrate VI and Caribbean history into the school curriculum has had its share of contention since being proposed in the 34th legislature by former senator Genevieve Whitaker. Apart from deciding how the subjects should be taught at the grade levels, the most recent amendment, Act 8684 passed last December, voided a decade-old civil court case.

Despite reservations expressed by some, the majority voted to roll back Act 8684 to allow the court to rule on the matter which has been before it since October 2013.

The committee also approved leases for the Virgin Islands Telephone Corporation better known as Viya, Suntech Group, Inc. (St. Thomas Gas), Ace Trucking and Trash Removal and A-9 Trucking Enterprises Inc., Sarnelli Bros (VI Recycling), and an Act amending the Local Food and Farm Council.

Meanwhile, the appointment of Acting Attorney General Carol Thomas-Jacobs as V.I. Superior Court Judge for the St. Thomas district has to go through one last hurdle before being sent to the governor for approval. Ms. Thomas-Jacobs received unanimous support from the seven committee members who voted to forward her appointment to the Committee of the Whole.

Aloy “Wenty” Nielsen is also closer to having the Christiansted Bypass renamed in his honor for his contributions to the Virgin Islands community. Senators Bolques, Novelle Francis, Kenneth Gittens and Marise James all want the Legislature to approve a one-time allotment of \$10,000 to have a sign erected in his name.

One tentative and highly anticipated bill did not make it on the agenda, as Tuesday’s legislative session was cut short to allow senators time to attend an event on St. Thomas. Bill No. 35-0013, which would provide undocumented immigrants in the territory with a [restricted driver's license](#) and identification card was not debated on Tuesday, and therefore was not forwarded the Committee of the Whole.

The bill was supported by a number of organizations including the V.I. Police Department, the V.I. Justice Department, the V.I. Division of Banking & Insurance, the V.I. Bureau of Motor Vehicles, the V.I. Insurance Association, and representatives from various ethnic associations such as the St. Lucia, Dominica, Haiti, Venezuela, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Dominican Republic, and the Philippines Associations when it was [approved in Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety](#) last month.