

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett Introduces Legislation to Establish Virgin Islands Constitution

Government / **Published On May 06, 2023 05:53 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **May 06, 2023**



Washington, D.C. – Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett introduced H.R. 3026 this week, a legislation to adopt the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands, along with its amendments, as the Constitution of the Virgin Islands.

The bill aims to provide the Virgin Islands with the ability to amend its governing document without requiring congressional approval, thus promoting self-determination and autonomy.

The Virgin Islands has held five constitutional conventions in the past, with the most recent one taking place between 2007 and 2010. In May 2020, the Virgin Islands

Legislature passed Bill 33-0292, which included a referendum to adopt the Revised Organic Act of 1954 as the local constitution. This proposal was approved by 72 percent of voters when placed on a referendum.

Ms. Plaskett's legislation provides three avenues to amend the constitution: through the Legislature of the Virgin Islands, ballot initiatives proposed by voters, or a constitutional convention. Plaskett has consulted with national and local Virgin Islands scholars, including Gerard Emanuel, who supports the adoption of the Revised Organic Act as the first draft of a local constitution for the USVI.

Dr. Malik Sekou, another supporter of the bill, suggests that the current commemoration of the 175th anniversary of the emancipation of USVI ancestors could be made more meaningful by taking a positive step towards ratifying a new constitution.

Governor Albert Bryan has expressed his strong support for Congresswoman Plaskett's efforts, stating that the ability for Virgin Islanders to establish and amend its own governing document without petitioning Congress is long overdue and essential to their right to self-determination.

Congresswoman Plaskett said she looks forward to H.R. 3026 moving through the legislative process, including votes on the House Floor and the Senate, and ultimately being signed into law by the president. She hopes for the support of Virgin Islands residents, the Legislature, and members of the diaspora living in the mainland to advocate for the bill and lobby their congressional and Senate representatives for support.