



# Legislature Of The Virgin Islands

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THE HONORABLE

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Committee on Government Operations &  
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## MEMBER

Committee on Rules & Judiciary

Committee on Education & Workforce Development

Committee on Disaster Recovery & Infrastructure

Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks & Recreation

## Press Release

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## COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION RECEIVED TESTIMONY FROM STAR-STUDDED LINE UP AT FRIDAY'S MEETING

ST. THOMAS, USVI - The Senate Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection, chaired by Senator Carla Joseph, met Friday, August 27, 2021, in Fritz Lawaetz Conference Room on St. Croix. Two (2) resolutions and a bill on the importation of snakes and invasive species were unanimously passed by the committee.

In Block I, the Committee received testimony on Bill No. 34-0063- a resolution honoring and commending St. Clair Alphonso "Whadablee" DeSilvia for his invaluable contribution to the continued development of Calypso music in the Virgin Islands. The bill sponsored by Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff was unanimously approved.

The Resolution to honor Whadablee was a star-studded line-up. Testifiers included Mr. DeSilvia's youngest son Khamoi DeSilvia, a former Jr. Calypsonian, Virgin Islands Cultural Icon Glen "Kwabena" Davis who delivered his testimony in song, well-known radio personality and Calypsonian Reginald "Ras Regg" Martin and former Governor Charles W. Turnbull. All testifiers shared glowing accolades on Mr. DeSilvia's calypso history, his character and service to the Virgin Islands community.

Mr. Desilvia credited with assisting young people in getting into calypso offered the following advice to young people- "Try a ting. You never know what can happen." Former Governor Turnbull gave insight on the lyrical art of calypsonians. Of Whadablee, Turnbull said he is a true calypsonian who sang some negative as well as positive songs about the political landscape in the Virgin Islands.

In Block II, the Committee received testimony on Bill No. 34-0064- an act honoring and commending Athniel C. "Addie" Ottley for his tireless years of informing and educating the public on current and past community issues and by keeping the radio waves open in times of imminent danger to the community

and for naming a roadway in his honor. The bill sponsored by Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff was unanimously approved and moved to the Committee on Rules. Testifiers on the measure included Mr. Ottley's stepson, Robert Brown, recognized radio personality Peter Ottley and Brigadier General Timothy Lake.

Senator Joseph commended Ottley for championing young people in the community from her personal encounter and experience. Other senators also credited Ottley for his selfless service for the people of the Virgin Islands. The proposed roadway to bear his name runs from the entrance to subbase near the Motor Vehicle Bureau to the road immediately below the entrance Ottley Communications' Radio Station WSTA in Subbase where Mr. Ottley continues to serve the community.

In Block III, the Committee received testimony on Bill No. 34-0085- an act amending the Virgin Islands Code, title 14, section 192, relating to the importation of snakes and invasive species, to increase the fine for the unauthorized importation of snakes and to make technical amendments, amending title 12, section §81d, relating to the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Trust Fund, to extend the use of the fund to the regulation of the importation and control of non-indigenous evasive species; and amending title 19 section 2709, relating to the prevention of the introduction of contagious or infectious animals, to provide that the quarantine of animals is at the owner's expense. The bill sponsored by Senator Javan E. James, Sr., was unanimously approved and moved to the Committee on Rules.

Senator's expressed great concern over the release and capture of dangerous and invasive species of snakes to the Territory, especially on the island of St. Croix. The snakes are having an impact on wildlife and nature lovers who are cautious and or hesitant to explore the islands with knowledge of a great number and size of snakes that have been caught.

Senator Joseph highlighted the importance of community, government agencies and environmental organizations working together to address issues that impact and affect local engagement with natural resources in the Territory. "It starts as a government-based initiative that is then supported by the community," Joseph said. In the instance of the Lionfish, the joint effort lead by the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, environmental groups and community volunteers has led to the reduction of the species in shallow waters of the Virgin Islands.

In the last Block of the agenda, the Committee heard from Mr. Patrick Farrell, Director of Virgin Islands Veterans Affairs. Senators questioned Director Farrell on several matters to include access to available benefits, support for travel to VA medical facilities off-island, homeownership opportunities, the status of burial plots for veterans and the establishment of the 100% federally funded Veteran State Cemeteries on all three islands in the Territory.

We have met all requirements of the VA Cemetery grants program application process and are patiently awaiting the results of FY 2022 priority list to be published," Director Farrell said. Another initiated announced was the establishment of a charter flight for veterans traveling to and from San Juan Puerto Rico for VA Medical appointments. "Eligible veterans will now have a bit of an ease while traveling for their appointments," Director Farrell said.

Committee members present at Friday's hearing include Chair: Senator Carla J. Joseph, Members: Senators Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Marvin A. Blyden, Alma Francis Heyliger, Javan E. James, Sr., Franklin D. Johnson and Milton E. Potter. Non-committee member present was Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff.

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