

YOUTH AGENDA FOR POLICY ACTION

On Monday, December 7, sixty-one high school students from St. Croix and St. Thomas came together in St. Thomas to develop a youth agenda for policy action to present to the Senators of the 31st Legislature.

After a two day intensive investigation of a variety of pressing political issues, we sixty-one students developed a set of policy proposals to address concerns in a set of six broad policy areas: Education, Labor and the Economy, Government Budget and Crime, Technology Natural Resources and the Environment, Health, and Youth Issues.

The agenda below represents our consensus recommendations for policy makers on the United States Virgin Islands.

PROPOSALS PRESENTED TO AND PASSED BY THE CONVENTION

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT, BUDGET, AND CRIME

Issue: Gun Violence

Issue Statement:

Gun violence has a major impact on the Virgin Islands. The cause of the increase in crime rates is due to the neglect of streetlights and highway lighting. Along with the neglect of lights, there have been major problems in the rural areas in the territory, pertaining to overgrown grass, which causes commuters to feel unsafe. These neglected areas are breeding grounds for gangs and their hideouts, instilling fear in children and adults who have to walk home at late and/or early hours of the day. There have been over 200 gun related cases throughout the territory, making them 70% of all crimes committed on all islands.

Legislative Proposal:

On February 17, 2015, bill number 31-0028 was proposed in the Legislature of the Virgin Islands that would amend a portion of the Virgin Islands Code relating to the protection of victims of gun violence. We think that this bill should be pushed and approved by the Senate and Governor of the Virgin Islands. This bill would aid the victims who have been affected by the vicious criminals who have no regard for human life. The bill was proposed by Senators Sammuell Sanes and Novelle E. Francis and established the "Crime and Gang Prevention Fund". Bill number 31-0028 was proposed with the intent to outlaw criminal street gangs and their associates. So far there has been improvement but no absolute outcome.

We call upon the legislature of the Virgin Islands to reintroduce and pass the Bill NO. 31-0028 in the act of legislative session.

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH ISSUES

Issue: Youth Abuse

Issue Statement:

Abuse is a problem that affects teens. Physical, emotional and substance abuse has been a growing problem affecting teens in today's society. Abuse affects the teen's self-esteem, confidence, and performance in school, oftentimes victims do not know how to deal with the abuse and may express it in a negative way.

Legislative Proposal:

Abuse comes in all forms, such as physical, emotional, and sexual or substance. Teens are major victims of this abuse. Abuse is an on-going issue due to the fact that victims do not voice themselves and seek help. Many factors can also prevent victims from seeking the desired help such as threats and lack of knowledge.

Bill NO .31-0075 provides help to female teens for the following issues: Teen Pregnancy, Substance Abuse, Gang Involvement, Physical Abuse and Education.

Bill NO. 31-0110 provides help for young men facing the following issues: School Dropouts, Gang Involvement and a combination of other issues.

However, these organizations are located in one area. We propose that multiple buildings and organizations be established throughout the community in multiple neighborhoods. Abuse should also be a topic of focus. Substance abuse should receive counseling. Sexual abuse victims should also receive special care and attention; they need to feel secure and comforted. Their feelings should be able to be respected in a stereotype free zone.

We call upon the Legislature of United States Virgin Islands to adopt and pass a new law The Youth Abuse Prevention Act in the current legislative session.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Issue: Inadequate Teaching Staff

Issue Statement:

The many schools in the Virgin Islands Department of Education are suffering from an inadequate teaching staff. Teacher quality, quantity, and their teaching methods are all factors that are plaguing and dismantling our education system. The territory is currently experiencing a teacher shortage. As of December of 2015, the St. Croix District has reported vacancies in 22 areas such as physical education, English, math, Spanish, and school monitors. As of December of 2015, the St. Thomas-St. John District reported vacancies in 28 areas, including foreign language, art, and English. One attempted solution was to recruit 38 teachers from the Philippines and the Dominican Republic. According to the 2013-2014 NCLB Report Card, 46.1% of teachers lack proper certification. Many students complain of negative treatment from teachers. The Virtues Project which aimed to instruct teachers on positive ways to speak to and encourage teachers, attempted to amend this in 2013, but as we approach 2016, few teachers have implemented the program's doctrine. These issues will trickle down and corrupt the education of our students if they are not rectified.

The quantity of our teachers is another dilemma, we're currently facing a shortage of teachers which is leaving many students without mandatory classes. There have been efforts to bring in teachers from other countries to help quell this problem. However the drafting of these teachers primarily brought teachers that don't speak English as a first language. This causes a misunderstanding between student and teacher, causing many to fail and end up having to repeat the class or in some cases the entire year. We propose that the legislature continue the draft, but we ask that they be more diligent when picking the teachers.

Legislative Proposal:

Currently, one of the biggest issues with the education system the quality of the teachers, quality meaning one's abilities to teach a specific subject. For example, there are instances in certain schools where a teacher would have a degree in say forensic science, yet they are a World History teacher. This causes confusion within the classroom. How can students learn something their teachers do not know? Our proposal is that the department of education issues a certification test to any prospective teachers to ensure their capabilities in a specific educational field.

The teacher's methods on relaying information is yet another problem with education. Some teachers rush through sections of work which leads to students leaving a class without first achieving a true grasp of the information. We suggest that school work should be lessened in an attempt to allow the students to actually be able to not only understand what their learning, but to be able to apply it in the real world as well. In order to ensure that the students of the Virgin Islands have the strong education needed for success in their prospective careers and institutions of higher learning, they must have the proper teachers.

A Teachers Support Fund should be established. This fund would take care of expenses that increase the efficiency of teachers, such as ensuring they have an appropriate salary they can live off of, assessing teachers to make certain that all acting teachers have the proper certification before entering a classroom, and providing sensitivity training.

We call upon the legislature to create a bill that will establish a teacher's support fund.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT, BUDGET, AND CRIME

Issue: Tax Returns

Issue Statement: Tax Returns

Citizens of the Virgin Islands are not getting their tax checks or getting them on time due to the government's unnecessary spending. This is an issue that affects everyone. It takes approximately between two or more years to receive tax checks. When the checks are distributed it is reduced to what is fairly earned. An example of such a case of unnecessary spending would be Governor Kenneth Mapp spending money on bed sheets that costs \$5,000. Another example was when he first entered office and spent \$12,500 taxpayers' dollars on a rented house.

Legislative Proposal:

We believe that the government should own up to their actions and change it for the betterment of our society by developing a taskforce. The government should create a taskforce that will keep track of the funding being spent. This will allow the people of the Virgin Islands to receive their tax checks on time. It will be efficient to the community because we will know where the money is being spent. An update should also be requested. An update will let the residents know how the money is being spent.

Supporting Argument:

The taskforce should be an independent group that uses taxpayer's money appropriately and according to what the public needs instead of for the personal gain of government officials.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Issue: Smarter Balance/Common Core

Issue Statement:

We are concerned with the effect that the common core standards have on students. The Common Core Standards expects every student to have basically the same level of knowledge, no matter the grade. With every student learning at their own pace, it's impossible to expect all students to know the same thing, and to excel. For example, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress Results for 2015, with 3,154,463 students tested, only 28% met the standard, 25% nearly met the standards, and 31% did not meet the standards for English. For math, 3,169,239 students were tested, only 19% met the standards, 29% nearly made the standards and 38% did not meet the standards. The test scores reflect badly on the students when they do not meet the requirements needed for the Common Core Test.

Legislative Proposal:

The bill, BILL NO. 31-0154 mandates that the department of education will create a committee composed of 19 members that will review and assess the Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balance Test, for a period of 180 days. We support this bill because, The Common Core State Standards are standards established in the United States which determine what students in grades K through 12 should learn in each grade. Whereas, it is created for college preparation and career readiness; whereas a committee is established under the Department of Education for administrative and funding purposes only to conduct a comprehensive review and in-depth analysis of the Virgin Islands' standards and curriculum development. The Committee is composed of 19 members; this bill helps the Board of Education determine if The State Common Core is effective in determining what students in K through 12 should know.

We call upon the legislature to continue passing this bill on to the Governor.

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Issue: Pot Holes

Issue Statement:

Poor street conditions are a progressive problem in the USVI. Locals are constantly complaining because quite often, the potholes compromise the alignment of their cars and cause them to have to pay for repairs that are quite unnecessary in places where roads are maintained well. Official sometimes try to deprecate the situation but the evidence is quite visual. Some cars shocks are so damaged by the pot holes that you would have to be blind and deaf to see past the issue.

Legislative Proposal:

Over the past years, the government has been able to fix specific roads over and over, but they neglect to fix the roads most commonly used by locals. It is evident that the projects have been directed towards areas where tourist frequently travel. All the former bills pertaining to fixing roads that locals frequently have been vetoed due to "lack" of funding. A bill, or even a plan, to create an account to save money for the road preservation project could be extremely helpful in this endeavor. Locals will be ecstatic and the tourist would be able to access certain beautiful points on the islands that were previously not available to them because of the extent to damage that has been allowed to deteriorate roads.

We call upon the 31st Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands to introduce a saving plan that would hold funds for road condition conservation in the current legislative session.

Amendment: An account will be set up where the government will religiously place money in. This money cannot be removed unless an exact plan for the use of the money is put into place.

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT, BUDGET, AND CRIME

Issue: Prison Conditions

Issue Statement:

The conditions of prisons in the Virgin Islands has become a problem that has worsened over the years. A primary contributing factor of this is insufficient supervision which gives the opportunity for escape, possession of contraband and sexual harassment amongst prisoners. We believe that an aspect of this insufficiency is the low staff number; for example, in St. Croix there are only 36 corrections officers when there is a need for 80.

Legislative Proposal:

It is understood that corrections officers are not only outnumbered by the inmates but also lack an understanding of basic security concepts. Therefore, training for the officers should be increased before they are employed. Training would include physical training, negotiation skills to quell hostile inmates, anger management to prevent inappropriate behavior between officer and inmate, emergency training, and search procedures. Improved knowledge in search procedures is especially important to prevent prisoners' possession of contraband.

If these standards cannot be met, however, then it is advised that the prisoners be transferred to different facilities elsewhere in the territories - if not on the mainland - which may have the staff and security to accommodate a large population of inmates.

To correct the problem with inadequate staffing and security in prisons, we call upon the legislature to increase staff numbers, staff training, and procedures.

Supporting Argument:

Some may have concerns with funding, the amount of time training takes, and how long it will take to employ qualified officers to fill vacancies. Nonetheless, it is important to realize that the crime rate in the Virgin Islands is increasing and therefore prisons will need to advance. It is also important to remember that the purpose of improving the prison conditions is safety for not only inmates and personnel but for the community as a whole.

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH ISSUES

Issue: Activities for Youth

Issue Statement:

Lack of productive activities is a problem for teenagers because teens tend to do things that can harm them in life rather than things that benefit them. By teens being involved in extracurricular activities, it will offer an opportunity to let students engage in academic curricular. Their benefits are many and meaningful consisting broadly of the inherent rewards of extracurricular participation, as well as advantages tied to the particular activity type, and the age and ambition of each participant. We believe that the United States Virgin Islands government must act to address this issue.

Legislative Proposal:

Adopt a new law for creating extracurricular activities that will affect the well-being of adolescents. This law is to be ensured for the leisure time of adolescents that will promote academic success. In 2015, the Crime Prevention Act, through extracurricular activities, would keep the youths of the U.S.V.I. busy within the community. By this bill being passed, it will decrease underage drinking, drug use and abuse, teenage pregnancy, and violence to a minimum.

We call upon the Legislature of United States Virgin Islands to adopt and pass a new law The Youth Productive Act in the current legislative session.

AMENDMENT: Extracurricular activities are free to the public and distributed throughout the communities.

PROPOSALS PRESENTED TO AND NOT PASSED BY THE CONVENTION

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND THE ECONOMY

Issue: More Businesses to Generate Funds

Issue Statement:

The unoccupied buildings in the Virgin Islands are a problem for local business owners and the economy. We have the space to build local markets, however, we lack the necessary funds in order to create these businesses.

Legislative Proposal:

Sunshine Mall located in St. Croix, Virgin Islands, is a vacant mall with space for multiple stores as well as a food court that can be accessed to bring money back into the community. This is one example of a wasted opportunity to enhance and advance the economy and allow it to begin to flourish. We are blind to all the possibilities that opening businesses in unused buildings can bring to us.

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Issue: Waste Management

Issue Statement:

The inappropriate funding for the waste management of The Sewer Fund is affecting the ocean life in which the sewer leaks. No one regularly informs cruise line passengers or hotel and villa visitors about the safety of beaches where they might want to swim or snorkel. These conditions could be unsafe to swim. People can become ill from swimming in raw untreated sewage and water ecosystems can be destroyed. The Sewer Fund has been receiving approximately \$3 million towards VIMWA.

Legislative Proposal:

The waste treatment systems are leaking sewage into the coastal areas. Unless this is stopped it will affect our beaches and this will then affect tourism. VIWMA did not receive the amount of money that would go toward the Sewer Fund as written in the statement on July 6, 2015, "Of \$8.5 million appropriated from Special Funds, we have not received our Sewer Fund ... appropriations...." We also call upon the legislature to assist the Coral Bay Community Council's program to help rectify the illegal dumping and solid waste. So far the CBCC has received \$30K in grant money to stop illegal trash dumping. There are also a lack of employees.

We call upon the 31st Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands to provide more funding towards the upgrading of waste management.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Issue: The Spreading of STDs

Issue Statement:

The spreading of STDs in the USVI is greatly affecting everyone in our territory. The territory's rate of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, Chlamydia, and Gonorrhea are among the highest in the nation. In 2009, the positive rate for Chlamydia among 15 to 24 olds was at 15.5 percent which was the highest in the nation. That same year the gonorrhea rates among the same group were at 2 percent ranking the fifth highest percent in the nation. Along with the previous stated statistics, the territories rates for HIV and AIDS per capita are also the second highest rates in the nation. The high numbers of infected Virgin Islanders show a lack of education and knowledge about the effects and spread of STDs. These skyrocketing statistics mainly occur among teens and young adults between the ages of 15 and 24.

Legislative Proposal:

To combat the high rates of STD infections in teens and young adults in the VI, prevention programs should be put in place in schools and other youth focused programs. With prevention programs in place, the rates of being infected with STDs will drop because the group with the highest infection rates (15 to 24 year olds) will become informed on the risks and effects that are associated with STDs. A bill geared toward STD awareness and education could decrease the numbers of individuals acquiring STDs. The details of this bill would be to train professionals to educate at risk individuals about the effects of STDs and how to prevent the spread of STDs. Schools would have to educate the students about STDs and provide prevention tools and tips. The government would have to attempt to acquire funding and support for the programs at each school and evaluate the program methods and effectiveness.

We call upon the Legislature of The US Virgin Islands to pass a bill for the above mentioned.

Supporting Argument:

Regardless of the wealth of information in support of STD prevention programs, some individuals such as health care professionals and government leaders might be in opposition of this bill. Health care professionals might disagree with this bill because it increases their workloads and responsibilities whereas government leaders might disagree with the amount of funds and effort that would have to go into this project. This viewpoint is mistaken because there are greater positive effects that would result from a bill such as this one. Putting this bill in place will decrease our territorial STD rates and allow for a better future for the future generations.

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND THE ECONOMY

Issue: Minimum Wage

Issue Statement:

Many government workers have been complaining about the pay they receive for amount of work done.

Legislative Proposal:

On September 23, 2015, a bill was proposed by Senator Jean Forde and Kurt A. Violet that would amend Title 24 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 1, pertaining to an increase in minimum wage and appointing members to the Virgin Islands Wage Board. The federal minimum wage has not increased since 2010, although the Consumer Price Index has increased by 8% nationwide and the cost of electricity in the Virgin Islands has increased 11% between February 2010 and January 2015. Increasing the minimum wage will reduce the incidence of poverty in the territory and will serve to foster the declared policy of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands of promoting regular employment of workers by giving the unemployed an incentive to look for work. Studies have demonstrated an increase in the minimum wage

will not negatively affect employment levels if the minimum wage does not exceed 50% of the average wages in that jurisdiction. The cost of living on the Virgin Islands has increased tremendously; however, 4 wages have not been adjusted accordingly, thereby causing an increased incidence in the number 5 of “working poor”.

We call upon the Legislature to push Bill 31-0236 out of the Committee and to take the necessary actions towards voting on and passing this bill.

Supporting Argument:

However the minimum wage for workers in the United States Virgin Islands will increase by quick steps to \$10.50 per hour by January 1, 2017. Therefore, a bill [Bill 31-0236] Proposed by Senator Jean A. Forde and Kurt A. Vialet would increase the minimum wage to \$8.35 per hour by the end of enactment, then again to \$9.50 per hour by the end of 2016, and to \$10.50 per hour by the end of 2017. The legislation also urges Gov. Kenneth Mapp to appoint nominees to revive the V.I. Wage Board, which has been defunct since the 1990’s. Studies have demonstrated an increase in the minimum wage will not negatively affect employment levels if the minimum wage does not exceed 50% of the average. However, it has affected the employment levels in the Virgin Islands, also the cost of living and caused an increased incidence in the number of, “working poor.”

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH ISSUES

Issue: Leaders for Youth

Issue Statement:

Lack of guidance and counseling is a problem for the youth of the Virgin Islands. Lack of leaders is a problem for the youths and all young individuals all over the world, and not just in the Virgin Islands. Simply because many issues that are affecting the productivity of youths can be minimized and addressed through counseling and with someone of a higher authority to serve as a leader.

Legislative Proposal:

Little to no leaders of guidance are available on behalf of younger individuals. We humbly request that the Legislature adopt a new form of program made up of inspirational speakers, leaders, and people to set examples for others to help with all the issues the younger generation face such as: Underage Drinking, Teen Pregnancy, Drug Use, Bullying, Stress, etc.

We call upon the Legislature of United States Virgin Islands to adopt and pass a new law The Youth Issue Counseling Act in the current legislative session.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Issue: Healthcare Availability

Issue Statement:

Healthcare availability has been, and still is a major problem in the territory. The majority of participants expressed concerns about limited resources and high costs of items such as Medicare gap, high cost of universal residents, and the overall cost of services. Men voiced a stronger distrust of health care personnel than women. This problem created a major impact on the people without medical insurance or proper funding.

According to an article published by the Caribbean Exploratory NIMHD Research Center in 2012,

“Health care availability has been, and still is a major issue in the Virgin Islands. Six focus groups were organized with hope to find the one of the main causes of the issue. Majority of the participants expressed concerns about limited resources and high costs, such as the Medicare gap, high cost of insurance and copay, large number of uninsured residents and the overall cost of the services. Other barriers include, delay in receiving appropriate care, and inability to get preventative services. In some cases the hospital staff failed to give immediate treatment, which led to rapid progression of a severe illness, which often led to death or serious infection. Another issue is the growing number of uninsured children and women in the Virgin Islands. Group Health insurance is the main type of health insurance in the V.I. The second main coverage is public insurance e.g. (Medicare). As of 2009 a survey showed that 28.7% (33,000) people are uninsured in the V.I. The most affected groups are single mothers and children. The remaining group of people that have insurance, lack adequate coverage and are not able to receive full treatment in time of need.”

Legislative Proposal:

On September 30, 2013, a bill was proposed in the Thirtieth Legislature of the Virgin Islands ratifying the Agreement for group medical insurance with CIGNA Health and Life Insurance Company, the Agreement for Medical Health Insurance, AARP, Medicare Supplement Plan with United Health Care Insurance Company, Agreement for the Second Renewal of Group Dental Health Insurance with CIGNA Insurance Company, Agreement for the Second Renewal of Group Life and Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance Agreement with AETNA, Inc., and the Agreement Amendment of the Agreement for Vision Care Insurance Company. Bill No. 300251 was proposed by Senator Shawn-Michael Malone by Request of the Governor.

This bill would approve the Medical Health Insurance Agreement between the Government and CIGNA. It would also approve the Agreement for Medical Health Insurance with United Healthcare Insurance Company (including the AARP Medicare Supplement Plan). It also approves the Second Renewal of the Group Dental Health Insurance. It was ordered to the floor of the Legislature and adopted into action.

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND THE ECONOMY

Issue: Job Qualifications

Issue Statement:

Job qualifications and background checks have been a controversial issue in the Virgin Islands. Companies failing to achieve their mandatory qualifications in the application in the hiring process of getting a job becomes a problem for business and the community when it is actually time for the job to be carried out.

Legislative Proposal:

According to Kare 11, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the VA is sending out notices to a few hundred veterans who had their claims for traumatic brain injuries denied when they were examined by unqualified medical personnel. Today, this is an issue that needs to be addressed in the Virgin Islands. People should not be judged based on their background when they are qualified for the job. If we are keeping people with criminal records from getting a job it will have a drastic impact on the community with high unemployment rates. However, if we allow people with disabilities and or criminal records to get jobs, that would improve the high unemployment rate. This can help stimulate the economy.

However, this issue would affect the rate of unemployment in the Virgin Islands. We call upon the Legislative to take a stand and listen to the people that elect them and people who are seeing the problems here on the islands and want to do everything they can to fix them.

We call upon the legislature to stop over-looking the problems and try to see the damages and closed businesses that can help the Virgin Islands make their own profits.

Supporting Argument:

You might say that background checks and job qualities are there to ensure the safety of workers. However, put yourself in their shoes. Say for instance you have a criminal record but you served your time and decided to move on and make a difference. Now do you think that asking for job qualifications and background checks should be implemented for people looking for jobs?

PROPOSALS NOT PRESENTED TO THE CONVENTION DUE TO LACK OF TIME

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Issue: School Funding

Issue Statement:

Though money is being allocated towards the Department of Education, it is being utilized in the wrong areas. There are preexisting complaints on this issue. Senator Samuel Saanes said “I’m tired of hearing that the department just needs more time, or must be given a chance to fix its problems. The department has had decades to meet the needs of the students and still continues to fail them” (2013). So far, \$22,000 has been donated to STEM programs. More money should be allocated to the whole curriculum and infrastructure, not just that section. Funds should be spent on fixing classroom issues such as missing tiles, holes and leaks in the ceilings, air conditioning and better maintenance. These issues can become a serious hazards if they are not repaired. We found that each student receives \$15,000-\$16,000 a year. In other states and districts, such as Washington D.C. and New York, they are spending \$18,000 a year on a student. We are receiving the money, but we do not know where this large amount of money is going.

Legislative Proposal:

We think the solution to this issue would be for the legislation to create a committee or a program that will complete tasks like posting publicly where the money we are receiving is going, what it is being spent on and what is should be spent on. We still are not fully aware of where the large amounts of money is being sent and creating this group can help us get a move on it.

Issue: Lack of Resources

Issue Statement:

As education begins to include more technology, more money is needed to afford devices in classrooms. But as we wait on those devices, we are left with a small amount of text books. The books that are available are kept very poorly, and in some cases, outdated. In most classes, textbooks must be shared by multiple people. Teachers try to avoid this problem by giving work online and or providing online textbooks, but not every student has access to a computer and internet.

Legislative Proposal:

The solution to the problem would most likely be to create a committee which deals with publicly posting records of the amount of books or other resources bought and distributed throughout the schools in the U.S Virgin Islands. The schools should also be able to place an order on the amount of resources that they need and what they need it for. This will also contribute to the solution of the school funding problem by stating what the money is going toward to.

We call upon the legislature to create a bill that will establish a committee in charge of overseeing the allocation of resources to the schools.

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Issue: Air Pollution

Issue Statement:

Air pollution is a problem that affects everyone. The smoke or toxins released from vehicles is poisonous because of the burning of gasoline and natural gases. These airborne pollutants can severely harm the environment and ecosystems in it. Air pollution can even affect our tourism industry. The pollutants that ultimately fall out as nitrogen and sulfur deposition contribute to this haze and visibility impairment.

Legislative Proposal:

The 1955 Air Pollution Control Act was the first U.S federal legislation that pertained to air pollution. It also provided funds for federal government research of air pollution. The first federal legislation to actually pertain to "controlling" air pollution was the Clean Air Act of 1963.

Since 1970,

- The six commonly found air pollutants have decreased by more than 50 percent;
- Air toxics from large industrial sources, such as chemical plants, petroleum refineries, and paper mills have been reduced by nearly 70 percent;
- New cars are more than 90 percent cleaner and will be even cleaner in the future, and
- Production of most ozone-depleting chemicals has ceased.

Because of WAPA's major impact on air pollution, they have now made the change of generated power. 85 percent of their generated power will soon be generated from liquefied petroleum gas or liquefied natural gas rather than oil fueled turbines. This issue has mostly been dealt with the WAPA Company; however, the act should also be enforced with any type of truck hauling because they contribute to the air pollution in the Virgin Islands as well.

We call upon the Legislature of the Virgin Islands to strongly enforce the Clean Air Act.

Issue: Technology in School

Issue Statement

The world is evolving; so is technology and so should schools. Allowing technology use in schools could have a great impact on students. Students can access more resources and information if technology was allowed in the classroom. The curriculum and teaching strategies have changed little since Victorian times, according to the educationalist and author Marc Prensky. "The world needs a new curriculum," he said at the recent Bett show, a conference dedicated to technology in education. "We have to rethink the 19th Century curriculum." Most of the education products on the market are just aids to teach the existing curriculum, he says, based on the false assumption: "we need to teach better what we teach today".

Legislative Proposal:

A bill needs to be created on enabling more technology in schools. We propose in investing into more electronic devices like personal iPads, or computers. Investing into electronic devices can replace textbooks used in classrooms and will make a profit because the government wouldn't need much money to purchase textbooks every year. This money can go towards repairs or new additions to school buildings and staff. Much of the textbooks are old and students don't take much care of them.

We call upon the 31st Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands to create a bill enabling more technology access in schools.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Issue: Training for Healthcare Personnel

Issue Statement:

Within the territory, our healthcare is not meeting the proper criteria for the health system. Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix has lost their accreditation due to the fact that they lack the 9 member patient board as well as CMS services. Also, our specialists and trainees are in desperate need of a more advanced education to keep on the same track as Puerto Rico and The United States of America. Without providing proper payment and services for these trained personnel to perform in the VI they will not stay within the territory which will cause major shortage in our healthcare department.

Legislative Proposal:

The hospitals within the territories are in need of funds, trained personnel, and also schooling. In this bill, the Department of Health and the government of the Virgin Islands should come together to create a system with other territories such as Puerto Rico and the U.S. to aid and provide training and funding for our medical department. In this bill, our territory should branch out and create an awareness as well as a 5 to 10 contract plan to set goals for funding, the amount of money needed for schooling, and services in the Virgin Island.