

Government of the Virgin Islands
of the United States

Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs



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GOOD MORNING THE HONORABLE JANET MILLIN-YOUNG, CHAIRPERSON OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS LEGISLATURE'S COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE AND PLANNING AND TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE AS WELL AS ALL OTHER DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE PRESENT HERE TODAY.

THE DEPARTMENT HEREBY EXPRESSES ITS SUPPORT FOR BILL NO. 31-0017, AN ACT AMENDING VIRGIN ISLANDS CODE, TITLE 3 CHAPTER 19, BY ADDING SECTION 334 RELATING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARINE TOURISM IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS. THIS LEGISLATION, IF PASSED INTO LAW, WILL AUTHORIZE AND TASK THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT WITH DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE MARKETING TOOLS AND COORDINATE AND PARTICIPATE IN MARKETING EFFORTS TO ENHANCE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS AS A MARINE TOURISM DESTINATION THROUGH DIVERSIFYING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES. SECTION 34 OF THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION MANDATES SPECIAL FOCUS ON DEVELOPING, PROMOTING AND MARKETING MARINE TOURISM AND ENCOURAGING GROWTH OF MARINE-RELATED INDUSTRIES IN THE TERRITORY.

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THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION ALSO TASKS THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTITIES TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT NEW POLICIES, TECHNOLOGY, STRATEGIES, RELATIONSHIPS, AND SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR PROMOTING AND MARKETING SUSTAINABLE MARINE TOURISM. THE DEPARTMENT HAS NO DOUBT THAT THIS LEGISLATION WILL SERVE AS AN IMPETUS FOR THE INJECTION OF WELL NEEDED ECONOMIC LIFE, AS WELL AS DEVELOP AND FOSTER A VIBRANT RECREATIONAL MARINE INDUSTRY IN THE TERRITORY. THIS WILL NATURALLY LEAD TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE BUSINESSES AND PLAYERS IN THE INDUSTRY AND THE HIRING OF MORE EMPLOYEES, NOT TO MENTION ATTRACTING MORE VESSELS AND VISITORS TO THE SHORES OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS.

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT ALL ENTITIES ENGAGED IN COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE MARINE INDUSTRY WILL BE REQUIRED TO BE LICENSED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND ANY OTHER APPROPRIATE AGENCY. THE DEPARTMENT IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT IT BOASTS A ONE STOP ONLINE LICENSING PROGRAM CAPABLE OF PROCESSING A COMPLETE APPLICATION WITHIN FIFTEEN (15) BUSINESS DAYS PROVIDED OTHER AGENCIES PERTINENT TO THE PROCESS GIVE TIMELY APPROVALS. ALL

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AGENCIES INVOLVED IN THE LICENSING PROCESS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE SYSTEM. ALL THAT IS NEEDED FROM THE INTERNAL REVENUE BUREAU, THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES, THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AND THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT IS AN ONLINE APPROVAL FOR A BUSINESS LICENSE TO BE ISSUED. THIS HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS AND SO WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL BE ABLE TO PROCESS A LICENSE FOR ANY APPLICANT WITHIN A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME.

SIMILARLY, THE DEPARTMENT HAS A START-UP LICENSING SYSTEM IN PLACE. PRIOR TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ONLINE LICENSING SYSTEM, THE DEPARTMENT WAS INCAPABLE OF ISSUING A BUSINESS LICENSE WITHIN FIFTEEN DAYS. ALL AGENCIES WITHIN THE LICENSING SYSTEM HAD TO ISSUE MANUAL APPROVAL. THIS WAS QUITE CUMBERSOME AND TIME CONSUMING AND PREVENTED MANY BUSINESS APPLICANTS FROM ACQUIRING THE BUSINESS CAPITAL NEEDED FOR THE LAUNCHING OF THEIR BUSINESSES. TO ENABLE APPLICANTS TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY FUNDING FROM THE BANKS, THE DEPARTMENT INTRODUCED A START-UP PERMITTING SYSTEM. THIS START-UP PERMIT IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIXTY (60) DAYS AND PROVIDES AN

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APPLICANT WITH A DOCUMENT EVIDENCING A SERIOUS INTENT TOWARDS ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS.

THE DEPARTMENT IS FULLY EQUIPPED TO PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE MARINE INDUSTRY ONCE THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION BECOMES LAW. IN FACT, WE EAGERLY LOOK FORWARD TO PERFORMING OUR ROLE IN THE REVITALIZATION AND EXPANSION OF THE MARINE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THIS INDUSTRY WILL PROVIDE OUR CITIZENS WITH WELL NEEDED JOBS AND EXPOSURE, AND PROVIDES US WITH VITAL SOURCES OF REVENUE AND BUSINESS ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP TO PUT US ON THE ROAD TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY. AGAIN, WE ARE IN FULL SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

THANKS FOR GIVING US THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON BILL NO. 31-0017.