

FilmVI.net PO Box 7613 St Thomas , US Virgin Islands 00801

Dear Honorable Senator Millin-Young:

Thank you for this opportunity to lend support to the STARS Revision Act, Bill No. 31-0009 and share my thoughts and suggestions to improve the Virgin Islands film industry.

As a 30+ year resident of the VI I have worked with many major studios and commercial production companies, on major feature films, throughout the eastern Caribbean but mostly based from the USVI due to our unique connections to the mainland, culture & language.

Most of my expertise has come from the backbone of the industry TV Commercial Production, This type of production has more local hires and larger budgets and has expanded upon local talents and exposure of our tourism product.

In the 30 years of production I have witnessed, a lot of new competition around the islands and recent requests for incentives productions that want to shoot here.

As Virgin Islanders it's important to recognize that as a small community of only about 100,000 people ,Virgin Islands people have risen to amazing success throughout the world in the entertainment industry, Not only as world class athletes (Tim Duncan , Emile Griffith, Al Mcbean) but as performers, (Kelsy

Grammar) Top Super models (Hanna Davis) the VI have created from this small community some of the world's BEST!!!

What many may not know is that we also have amazing talent behind the scenes. In 3 decades of film production in the VI, I know many whose talent in the Art Dept., Grip & Electric, Camera, Marine dept., as well as general production have reached similar success abroad as those the world knows from in front of the camera.

Some of these people are, Erik Miles, Larry Bochulte , Asia Rabsatt, Max Rios, , Kelly Kendall, Nicholas Blanchard , Monique Lindesay , just to name a few.

I raise these points to share that we have done this successfully with the efforts of the pioneers like Eric Mathews, Win Delugo, Addie Ottley, Steve Bornn , Manny Centenno, who with minimal budgets have promoted the USVI and brought in valuable impacting projects.

Because of these efforts of these pioneers the Virgin Islands were instrumental in working on recent films like, CBS's Amazing Race , Shaw Shank Redemption, Curious Case of Benjamin Button, Twilight Saga Breaking Dawn, Thomas Crown Affair, Pirates of the Caribbean, and many well known reality shows such as ABC's "The Bachelor".

In 1998 a VI crew was requested to pull our resources locally to help a then-unknown country artist who's budget was \$17,000 to produce a music video, The product was amazing and was the #1 video on CMT for a record 17 weeks.

That star went to the top of the industry and has made St John his 2nd home and promotes Cruzan Rum, and shows beautiful B-roll

of the VI at all of his concerts around the world.

Kenny Chesney further went on to do a Thanksgiving special on CBS 48 Hours about his life in the VI. Not to mention he's since shot several productions here over the years & continues to be at the top of all the country spots.

Ironically my wife just completed a music video for "Little Big Band" who's visit was inspired by Kenny Chesney.

This music video is scheduled to be released this summer 2015 with Quote from Producer "Amazing VI Talent" Stay tuned !!!

This said our industry has become competitive and really in need of traditional film incentives to be able to compete.

For example it has seemed to me that I'm able to attract the smaller less lucrative 1 day jobs, easily where incentives might not matter.

Were it not for the DOT providing assistance, And to be candid the relentless devotion, pursuit and negotiation of Steve Bornn who's knowledge of the inner workings of the business and round the clock availability to not only service but help sell our locations & crew, all the big TV programs we have done recently, would also go away. But these kind of one-off subsidies are not enough. The industry prefers to seek formal incentives rather than submit case-by-case proposals.

Take this example:

In June of 2013 I successfully scouted and sold the VI as the location for a 21-day shoot in which the USVI was identified through-out the script and on air. The client and director were sold; by all indications it looked like we had the job. At the last minute prior to finalizing production plans, corporate overrode creative and Puerto Rico with a location that did not match the

concept and look, got the job -- strictly because of formalized incentives.

Based on this example, here's what we lost without the ability to offer definitive incentives -- the on-island budget was \$768,350 with mostly local hires: Hotel would have been about \$176,786. And local hires including camera, grip, props, art department, wardrobe, PA's, local payroll service at \$224,976. Taxi's and rental cars/trucks, \$51,568. Then we have multiple vendors, too detailed to breakdown.

These are the kind of jobs we use to get frequently; but now they go to Puerto Rico, and Florida Keys because of only one reason -- incentives. And we end up with the 1 or 2 day \$50,000.budgets.

The proposed Bill could give us the tools we need to attract these jobs that we are losing.

The simple fact that our government saw the need to promote our industry with the STARS Act was a great idea , this revised bill with a clear marketing plan is really what we need .

However after reading the law it became clear that it did not offer the kind of incentives and to the level needed to attract major productions to the territory.

The existing STARS act DOES NOT speak to the industry. We need fresh infusion of capital from productions that would otherwise seek other destinations offering incentives, like Puerto Rico and other islands.

After reading this Revised Bill 31-0009 I think we have something that will attract this fresh infusion and help re-ignite the film

industry to levels not seen before.

Clearly someone has realized the need to promote an industry that can offer hope to many VI residents who's dream to have a career in the film industry, this will become reality if this bill is made into law.

Finally it's important to realize that the vast majority of people working in film learn the skills on the job.

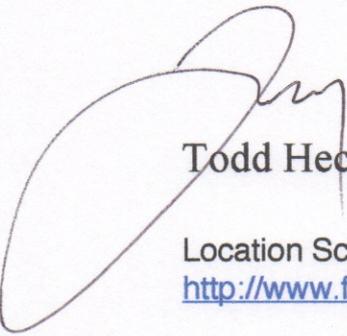
I have personally witnessed so many Virgin Islanders find a career in film by first learning in that Dept they picked and then moving on with connections in the Film industry with skills & connections developed while on the job.

Your attention to this very important bill could be the Key to attracting an Ancor tenant like a TV series, to create a robust film industry in the US Virgin Islands.

I certainly would like thank you for your invitation to give testimony as it relates to this Bill No. 31-0009.

I look forward to attending at 10am February 23rd 2015.

Warm Regards



Todd Hecht [FilmVI.net](http://www.filmvi.net)

Location Scout & Manager.
<http://www.filmvi.net>