

Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Honorable Osbert E. Potter
Lieutenant Governor



Property Tax Division

Testimony before Committee on
Government Services, Consumer & Veterans Affairs
on Bill No. 31-0071

January 22, 2016

Presenter: Ira Mills, Tax Assessor

Good Morning, Senator Justin Harrigan Sr., Chairman, Committee on Government Services, Consumer and Veterans Affairs, all other members of the 31st Legislature present, listening and viewing audience, I am Ira R. Mills, Tax Assessor, within the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

Mr. Chairman, I am here this morning to provide testimony on Bill No. 31-0071, *“An Act, amending Title 33 Virgin Island Code, Chapter 89, and Section 2459 relating to penalties for improperly conducting tax and public sewer system user fees auctions.*

Section 1 of the above amending bill amends Title 33 Virgin Islands code, Subtitle 2, Chapter 89, section 2459 is amended as follows:

(a) *By designating the current language as subsection (a), and*

(b) *By adding subsections (b), (c) and (d) to read:*

“(b) Any person who knowingly and willfully violates subsection (a) commits a felony

(c) Any person or who participates in the manipulation of an auction conducted under this chapter to fraudulently restrict other potential bidders from making legitimate bids on any property offered at any auction under this chapter commits a felony.

(d) Neither the Lieutenant Governor nor any other person may make any regulatory or procedural changes that have the result of limiting the rights and benefits that a property owner is entitled to under this chapter or having the result of violating the constitutional due process rights of the property owner, or defrauding the property owner or defeating or restricting legitimated bidders or bids.”

Section 1 renumbers the existing language of Title 33, section 2549 as (a) and adds (b), (c), and (d).

The Office of the Tax Assessor is in support of the intent of this legislation of sections 2549 (b) and (c) as these amendments hold accountable persons who may otherwise, knowingly and willfully, influence the outcome of a free and equal real property bidding process,. Section (b) elevates such wrongdoing and assigns penalties for such action to that of a felony. This Office has no objections to section (d).

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify on this measure. I am available to answer any questions that you or members of the committee may have related to this proposed legislation.