



Legislature of the Virgin Islands
**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT SERVICES,
CONSUMER AND VETERANS AFFAIRS**
Senator Justin Harrigan, Sr. - Chairman

MEMORANDUM

TO: Iver A. Stridiron, Esq.
Executive Director

FROM: The Honorable Justin Harrigan, Sr.
Chairman, Committee on Government Services, Consumer and Veterans Affairs

DATE: May 23, 2016

RE: 5/19/16 CGSCVA Committee Report

The Committee on Government Services, Consumer and Veterans Affairs met on **Thursday, May 19, 2016** at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on St. Thomas to consider Bill Nos. 31-0326 and 31-0333, receive a status update on the operations of the V.I. Taxicab Commission and an overview of the taxicab industry in the Virgin Islands.

Please find attached 5/19/16 CGSCVA Committee Report.

For questions or concerns, please contact Committee Coordinator, Amrika Williams at (340) 693-3586 or amwilliams@legvi.org.

Cc: All Senators
Chief Legal Counsel



COMMITTEE REPORT

Meeting
 Thursday, May 19, 2016
 9:45 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.
 Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall
 St. Thomas, VI

PURPOSE: **Part I:** To consider the following bills:

Bill No. 31-0326 - An Act amending title 33 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 83, section 2361 pertaining to the assessment of real property *Proposed by Senator Marvin A. Blyden*

Bill No. 31-0333 - An Act amending title 25 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 16, section 405 relating to the mooring and anchoring of vessels in the Virgin Islands *Proposed by Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr.*

Part II: To receive a status update on the operations of the V.I. Taxicab Commission and an overview of the taxicab industry in the Virgin Islands

ROLL CALL FOR ATTENDANCE:

Committee Member	Present
Senator Myron Jackson, Vice Chair	1
Senator Neville James, President	2
Senator Positive Nelson	3
Senator Tregenza Roach	4
Senator Sammuel Sanes	5
Senator Janette Millin Young	6
Senator Justin Harrigan, Sr., Chair	7
<u>TOTAL</u>	7
Non-Committee Member	
Senator Marvin Blyden	1
Senator Novelle Francis, Jr.	2

Chairman Justin Harrigan, Sr. called the meeting to order and stated its purpose. **Bill No. 31-0326** was introduced by sponsor Senator Marvin Blyden. Tax Assessor Ira Mills of the Lt. Governor's Office then testified that he is in support of sections a and b of the bill as it is already being implemented. He was not in support of section c with concerns of encroaching on the

responsibilities of the Chief Executive and the cost of outfitting and dispatching enforcement officers. Next, Committee members present vetted the bill in a 5-minute round and a follow up 2-minute round. After being questioned, Mills also stated that he did not support section c because he had safety concerns of the division’s employees. Thereafter, Senator Myron Jackson made a motion to hold the bill in Committee until further notice. The motion was properly moved, seconded by Senator Millin Young and voted upon. With six ‘yea’ majority votes, the bill was held.

ACTION TAKEN ON BILL NO. 31-0326: HELD

VOTE ON MOTION TO HOLD BILL NO. 31-0326:

Committee Member	Yea	Nay	Absent	Not Voting
Senator Myron Jackson, Vice Chair	1			
Senator Neville James, President			1	
Senator Positive Nelson	2			
Senator Tregenza Roach	3			
Senator Sammuel Sanes	4			
Senator Janette Millin Young	5			
Senator Justin Harrigan, Sr., Chair	6			
<u>TOTAL</u>	6	-	1	-

Next, bill sponsor Senator Novelle Francis, Jr. introduced **Bill No. 31-0333**. DPNR Commissioner Dawn L. Henry then testified on the bill. Henry was accompanied by General Counsel Irma Industrious, Esq., Acting Director of the Division of Environmental Enforcement Howard Forbes, Sr. and Director of Business and Administrative Services Althea Grant. Henry supported the bill with minor amendments. She stated that there has not been an increase in fees since 1992 and additional revenues are needed for increased operational costs. St. Thomas Yacht Club Manager Greer Scholes also testified on the bill. He read a letter from Commodore Dan Nicolosi and made other remarks both of which did not support the bill. Nicolosi’s letter stated that DPNR does not provide any services and the Enforcement Division is funded by the Federal Boating Safety Grant. Committee members present then vetted the bill in a 6-minute round and a follow up 2-minute round. Following, Senator Sammuel Sanes made a motion to amend the bill with Amendment No. 31-1035. With no objections, the amendment was so ordered. Thereafter, Senator Sanes made a motion to vote favorably upon the bill as amended and forward to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration. The motion was properly moved, seconded by Senator Nelson and voted upon. With six ‘yea’ votes, the bill as amended passed.

ACTION TAKEN ON BILL NO. 31-0333: PASSED (AS AMENDED)

VOTE ON MOTION TO AMEND BILL NO. 31-0333 WITH AMENDMENT NO. 31-1035: SO ORDERED

VOTE ON MOTION TO VOTE FAVORABLY ON AND FORWARD TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY BILL NO. 31-0333:

Committee Member	Yea	Nay	Absent	Not Voting
Senator Myron Jackson, Vice Chair			1	
Senator Neville James, President	1			
Senator Positive Nelson	2			
Senator Tregenza Roach	3			
Senator Sammuel Sanes	4			
Senator Janette Millin Young	5			
Senator Justin Harrigan, Sr., Chair	6			
<u>TOTAL</u>	6	-	1	-

Later, the Committee received a status update on the operations of the V.I. Taxicab Commission from Executive Director Levron Sarauw, Sr. In his testimony, Sarauw stated that the Commission is understaffed and underfunded. He also listed needs of the Commission including new vehicles, a copy machine, rental space for the St. Croix office, bullet proof vests and funds for regular education and training seminars for taxi operators. Sarauw ended his testimony by stating that the Commission is doing the best that they can with what they have and invited Senators to visit the offices. Additionally, the Committee received an overview of the taxicab industry by several other testifiers. Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Tourism, Joyce Dore Griffin testified that DOT issues departing surveys to visitors and uses the feedback for their quarterly Customer Service Trainings. She stated that though DOT receives mostly positive feedback on taxi operators, she would like to see an increase in attendance at the Customer Service Trainings. Griffin introduced the “TEXT A TAXI” initiative that will allow passengers to text the tag number of drivers that deliver exceptional service and will reward drivers with the most submissions. Lastly, Griffin recommended that taxi drivers offer the option to pay electronically as it would increase visitor spending. After, Bureau of Motor Vehicles Director Lawrence Olive stated in his testimony that the Bureau inspects all taxicabs in the Territory to make sure that they are road worthy and that each taxicab is in compliance with safety requirements for initial and renewed vehicles. He also provided a statistical review on the number of taxis registered and driver’s licenses issued in the last three fiscal years by district. Mr. Courtney Todman, an independent taxi operator testified on the aspect of unfairness in the industry. He stated that it is difficult for independent operators to do business as one taxi association is dominating the air and sea ports. Following, Committee members present questioned testifiers in a 6-minute round. After the discussion, testifiers were thanked for their participation and excused.

Lastly, Chairman Justin Harrigan, Sr. made closing remarks and adjourned meeting of the Committee on Government Services, Consumer and Veterans Affairs.

All testimonies and relevant meeting documents are available on the 31st Legislature Committees drive (U:)