

Good afternoon Honorable Justin Harrigan, Sr. Chairman of the Committee on Government Services, Consumer and Veterans Affairs, member of the Committee, other Senators, Staff, members of the listening and viewing public. I am Levron Sarauw, Sr., Executive Director of V.I. Taxicab Commission. I am here at your request to give a status update on the operation of the Commission.

The Taxicab Commission is facing it's up and down. We are still understaffed and underfunded, we are presently operating on a budget of \$539,544.00. Most of this goes to personnel services and fringe benefits, after that we are left with \$59,000.00 for everything else, including \$12,000.00 for rent on St. Thomas.

Governor Mapp understands the problem we are facing. He has said time and time again the agency should not be operating on "the back of taxi operators". Early this year he had forwarded a bill to the Legislature requesting \$550,000.00 to assist the agency. No action was taken, later on in the year he again sent a bill requesting \$438,000.00. It was reduced to \$130,370.00 for FY 2016 this means.

1. No new police type vehicles (no question the old ones needs replacing).
2. No new copying machine (the old one is on barely operating).
3. No rental space for the St. Croix office.
4. No bullet proof vests for officers.
5. No year round education and training seminars for taxi operators.

This agency oversees, police, and regulates the operation of the automobiles-for-hire in the territory. This operation deals directly with the number one industry in the territory (tourism). How can we do the job without the tools and needed equipment?

We are called upon to cover all three islands from Cyril E. King Airport to Red Hook from Cruz Bay to Coral Bay and from Frederiksted to Christiansted. Please be assured that we are doing the best we can with what we have. This committee along with other Senators are welcome to visit our offices and see what really goes on.

Thank for giving us this opportunity to bring you up to date about the plight of this agency. I am willing to answer any questions you may have. I close by strongly stating that this agency **cannot** function effectively without adequate funds.