



GOVERNMENT OF
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OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

A most pleasant Good Morning to you the Honorable Senator Justin Harrigan Sr., Chairman of the Committee on Government Services, Consumer and Veterans Affairs, Committee members, other distinguished Senators of the 31st Legislature. Additional greetings to all that are physically present, listening via radio or viewing via the Legislature's LEGIT TV and to my comrades in and out of uniform known to you as the Veterans of this beloved territory, I say Thank You for your unwavering support of the Office of Veterans Affairs – VI. Last but certainly not least, to the pillars of the Virgin Islands Office of Veterans – Mrs. Fredericks, Ms. Daniel and Ms. Chalwell on St. Thomas and Mrs. Gordon, Ms. Jeffers, and Mrs. White-Lynch on St. Croix thank you for your everyday operational support.

I am Patrick D. Farrell, the Director of the Virgin Islands Office of Veterans Affairs. It is with great pleasure that I come before this August body to place on record my position as it pertains to the possibility of having "Gold Star Mother's Day" as a day of not just national but local recognition. I commend the author, which I know to be the Honorable Senator Justin Harrigan on such a worthy and appropriate submission.

We all know that the day will come when we will be called upon to sit with our maker. No matter what you may call him or her, and that is your choice, your day will come; however when your loved one is taken unexpectedly by anything other than the normal wear and tear of life, it can take a toll in many different ways. Losing a son or daughter in the line of military duty can create a myriad of different feelings, some even escalating to hatred for country or even government officials that may have had a part to play in the decision making process that initiated specific military campaigns. What I feel to be most important is that we as a Nation and a Territory continue to support families that may have experienced such a situation and unfortunately those who will in the future. It seems that this particular piece of legislation seeks out to render the support that families and loved ones would need but, it is my hope that we can go much further than just asking for a day of recognition and a written proclamation. These families need assistance; assistance in the form of counseling at a minimum. Hopefully, this legislation will allow for the procurement of this type of service for immediate survivors.

I will like to publicly thank the various American Legion Posts throughout the territory and their Auxiliaries, the VI National Guard, Ms. Sandra Benjamin of Survivor Outreach Services and the Office of Veterans Affairs for partnering on the hosting of a wonderful Gold Star Mother's program just this past weekend on St Croix and St. Thomas.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to address you and the Committee on Government Services, Consumer and Veterans Affairs on bill # 31-0158 establishing the last Sunday in September as Gold Star Mother's Day in the

territory. At this time I am available to answer any questions that you or any member of this body may have for the Office of Veterans Affairs.