



VIRGIN ISLANDS PORT AUTHORITY

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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ST. THOMAS, USVI 00803-1707

September 24, 2015

Hon. Justin Harrigan, Sr.
Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building
P.O. Box 1690
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00804

RE: Bill No. 31-0117 – An Act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 1, section 26b to establish a discounted rate for senior citizens and veterans for airport parking.

Dear Senator Harrigan,

I am writing in response to your letter dated August 28, 2015. Thank you for inviting me to testify before the Committee on Government Services, Consumer and Veterans Affairs in regards to Bill No. 31-0117 – An Act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 1, section 26b to establish a discounted rate for senior citizens and veterans for airport parking.

I appreciate the service and sacrifice of America's veterans and I respect our senior citizens. However, I respectfully oppose Bill No. 31-0117 for the following reasons. The mandate of the Virgin Islands Port Authority (the "Authority") is to promote the wise use of our facilities for the betterment of the U.S. Virgin Islands and its people, and to assist our government and our community in fostering and sustaining sound economic development.

To meet this mandate, the Authority has undertaken improvements of its facilities including, but not limited to, the Cyril E. King Airport ("CEKA") and the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport ("HERA"). For instance, the Authority recently spent One Hundred Thousand and 00/100 Dollars (\$100,000) to purchase a lift for CEKA, which is primarily used by people with special needs.

The Authority plans to continue upgrading its airport facilities. One such improvement is to enlarge CEKA's parking lot. On any given day, CEKA's parking lot is bursting at the seams with parked vehicles. The Authority plans to create more parking spaces at CEKA by adding a second level to the parking lot.

Secondly, please note that the fee to park in the Authority's airport parking lot is considerably lower than the airport parking lot fees of other Caribbean islands. If someone parks in the

Authority's parking lot for the entire day, they only have to pay Ten and 00/100 Dollars (\$10). In contrast, Puerto Rico charges Twenty Six and 00/100 Dollars (\$26) to park in the Luis Muñoz Marin International Airport's parking lot for the entire day. Puerto Rico's airport parking lot fee is more than twice the amount of the fee that we charge to park in our airport parking lots. Furthermore, there are other Caribbean islands in addition to Puerto Rico, whose airport parking lot fees are higher than ours, for instance, St. Maarten at Twenty Four and 00/100 Dollars (\$24).

It is my understanding that veterans who are registered with Veterans Affairs and seniors with medical cards can be reimbursed for their travel expenses if they travel off-island for medical care. I respectfully suggest that the Committee explore whether or not seniors' and veterans' parking fees can also be reimbursed rather than reduce the revenue that the Authority needs to improve its facilities.

Although the above-mentioned reimbursements do not apply to seniors traveling off-island for reasons other than to receive medical care, the Authority's policies are clear: all users of our facilities, including veterans and seniors, must pay to use them. The community's response to the improvements to our airports' bathrooms and CEKA's baggage claim area has been overwhelming positive. At the same time, community members communicate to the Authority additional improvements that they would like to see at our airports. Jet bridges is one such example. We must consider the Authority would pay for jet bridges. In order to be able to continue improving our facilities, the Authority needs to marshal all of its revenues; airport parking lot fees included.

Amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 1, section 26b to establish a discounted rate for senior citizens and veterans for airport parking will lessen the revenues that the Authority needs to continue to improve its facilities and undermines the Authority's mandate to promote the wise use of our facilities for the betterment of the U.S. Virgin Islands and its people, and to assist our government and our community in fostering and sustaining sound economic development.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carlton Dowe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carlton Dowe
Executive Director