



October 22, 2015

The Honorable Justin Harrigan, Sr.
Senator
31st Legislature of the Virgin Islands
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00840

Subject: Testimony for Bill No. 31-0026

Honorable Senator Harrigan, Sr.:

We are pleased to submit our written testimony for Bill No. 31-0026 - An Act amending title 27 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 7, relating to various provisions of the Trades and Crafts Code, schedule for Thursday, October 29, 2015.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any clarifications or further information you may require. We look forward to working together to build a stronger Virgin Islands community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ana G. Foster".

Ana G. Foster, PHR
CEO
(340) 514-0956
afoster@netwaveunlimited.com

Enclosure: Legislature Testimony Bill No. 31-0026

Legislature testimony

Bill No. 31-0026

ADDITION OF FIBER OPTIC LICENSING BOARD

Good day, honorable members of the 31st Legislature, my name is Ana Foster, and I am the sole principal of Netwave Unlimited Services, LLC. Netwave is a local, minority woman owned and operated business, specializing in fiber optic installation. We are also a certified provider for the Virgin Islands Department of Labor. In this capacity, we offer training in fiber optic installation, maintenance, repair and optical fiber network design and system testing to private sector technology companies and unemployed and displaced Virgin Islanders.

Netwave was founded out of the need to prepare Virgin Islanders to be technology-ready. Netwave offers our Territorial workforce an opportunity to profit from the \$117 million dollar investment in the Virgin Islands broadband expansion network.

Today, I am testifying in support of Bill No. 31-0026 - An Act amending title 27 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 7, relating to various provisions of the Trades and Crafts Code, for two reasons: first, to ensure that the standard for fiber optic installation is regulated by a Fiber Optic Licensing Board, and second, to ensure that the Virgin Islanders have a fair shot at competing for jobs in the growing fiber optic sector.

It is this second point, promoting local jobs that must be emphasized. Our training program has trained and certified 72 technicians up to date. Of those 72, only 40% are

working in the Fiber Optic field. The other 60% of those technician-graduates are either working in other fields or are unemployed.

Because fiber optic installation remains unregulated, paying fiber optic jobs are being outsourced to personnel that train-on-the-go and may not have the necessary knowledge in fiber optic installation, repair and maintenance. Without a regulatory board, our local residents will continue to be overlooked for job opportunities in the field. Additionally, the stewardship of the fiber optic backbone that is heralded as an innovative opportunity for our islands may be jeopardize by unexperienced personnel.

A regulatory board will ensure that companies will have technicians with sufficient knowledge to work with the fiber optic lines, and will ensure that the work done on the fiber optic lines is done correctly. At the same time, it will benefit the companies doing installation by providing them with a less expensive local workforce as local residents do not require any additional expense for traveling, housing, transportation or per diem.

To talk to you more about the benefits of having a fiber optic licensing board is Andrew Bandola. Mr. Bandola served as the Vice President of Projects for viNGN until recently. He is also a Master Electrician and one of the pioneers of fiber optic in the territory.

Why is it important for fiber optic technicians to be licensed to work in the Virgin Islands?

The territory's fiber optic infrastructure is a significant investment. Its preservation and upgrade potential is dependent on competent maintenance and repair. A fiber-optic licensing board will ensure that the system is safeguarded from:

1. Incompetent and dishonest technicians who could cause damage to the cables, affecting a large number of consumers, and triggering loss of revenue to providers;
2. Homeland security threats that could have terrorists tap into the network; and
3. Protection of personal, financial, and government secrets from possible theft through the network.

Board-regulated licensure will ensure:

1. That individuals have gone through an extensive training program and are certified under a National/Global certifying body that requires them to continue their education and stay abreast of developments in the field to maintain their certification.
2. That the individuals have the knowledge necessary to follow the fiber optic standards set by the Telecommunication Industry Association as an offshoot of the Electronic Industries Alliance, also known as the EIA/TIA 568.
3. That fiber optic companies working in the Virgin Islands be more likely to select local employees whose credentials and certifications are monitored and regulated by a Virgin Islands Board.

-
4. That a board will ensure that as the code changes training can be provided as continuous education for the licensed technicians.
 5. That the Virgin Islands will become more attractive to big name companies because a board will ensure that the job is done correctly and the technical personnel can be found locally.
 6. That a board will ensure that the work is done correctly by the contractors and it will provide technical knowledge in cases of disputes and/or unsatisfied customers.
 7. That the creation of a board will promote local jobs.
 8. That a fiber optic license needs to be created because it is a different field from being an electrician or computer technician.

What is fiber optics?

Fiber Optic technology uses glass or plastic threads, slightly thicker than a human hair to transmit data using light. The light is guided down the center of the fiber. Fiber optics have several advantages over traditional copper communications lines:

- Fiber Optic cables have a much greater bandwidth than copper cables, this means that they can carry more data.
- Fiber optic cables are less susceptible than copper cables to interference.
- Fiber Optic cables are much thinner and lighter than copper wires.
- Data can be transmitted digitally (the natural form for computer data).
- Fiber optic is immune to electromagnetic interference.
- The biggest advantage of fiber optic is that it can transport more information longer distances in less time than any other communication medium.
- The main disadvantage of fiber optic cables is that they are expensive to install, needing trained personnel, in addition they are more fragile than wire and are difficult to splice.

Why is Fiber Optic so important?

Optical fiber is the standard by which telecommunications companies transmit telephone signals, internet communication and cable television signals. Due to much lower attenuation and interference, fiber optic has significant advantages over existing copper wire in long distance and high demand applications. Historically, however, fiber optic infrastructure development was complex, costly and time consuming. Due to these difficulties, fiber optic communication systems were primarily installed in long distance

applications, where they could be used to their full transmission capacity, which offset the high cost of development.

In the 1990s, optical-amplification systems became commercially available. Since that time, the telecommunication industry has laid a vast network of intercity and transoceanic fiber communication lines. Submarine fiber-optic cables are the primary means of international communication today.

In addition, because fiber is unaffected by electromagnetic interference it is now possible to transmit information and data with less noise and less error. Today, fiber has become the transport medium of choice for practically all data, voice and video communication. In the field this telephone, video and internet is known as Triple Play.

Most recently the Virgin Islands Next Generation Network (viNGN) through several grants, was able to create a fiber optic infrastructure in the territory to connect “the V.I. to the world” and place the territory in a competitive position to rise as a premier global telecommunications access point.