

HONORABLE CARLA J. JOSEPH SECRETARY OF 35TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Good morning, Chairperson Carla J. Joseph, members of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, as well as other Senators other testifiers, and fellow Virgin Islanders. My name is Gregory Goodwin, and I am the eldest son of The Honorable George E. Goodwin, and I am here in support of Bill No. 35-0006, an act honoring and commending Former Senator George E. Goodwin, for his many years of significant contributions to the Virgin Islands community, as well as his advocacy, for social justice for all...

Senator George E. Goodwin will be one day be remembered as one of the great unsung heroes of the development and advancement of the Virgin Islands in the 20th and early 21st Centuries. He left an uncertain athletic future as one of Antigua's youngest cricket test bowler in the late '50's and migrated to St. Thomas at the age of 17, and was initially employed in the hospitality industry. He studied accounting at what was then the College of the Virgin Islands (CVI) eventually opening an accounting business whose final location was on Education Street.

He was a founding member of the Alien Interest Movement, which was a primary advocate for thousands of persons seeking to legally migrate to the US Virgin Islands. He personally prepared the documentation necessary to formally complete the process for many becoming either a permanent resident or US citizen. Goodwin was concerned by the harsh treatment of thousands of migrants and became an expert in federal immigration laws rules and procedures. One major related issue that he fought severely for in the late 60's/70's was the education of children, both those born in the VI to immigrants and those that were born in other Caribbean islands but immigrated to the VI since. George even sued the Virgin Islands government on behalf of AIM and won the judgment for all children living in the Virgin Islands to be able to matriculate to public school, regardless of origin.

I remember him taking us as young kids to his office in Savan, which was located above an auto mechanic's shop yard near Victor's Hideout and doubled as both his bookkeeping practice and headquarters for Alien Interest Movement. He often held 2 and sometimes 3 jobs simultaneously in our youth during the 70's, with the primary one being his appointment at CETA. (Yes, as children, we considered his work with AIM as a job). My siblings and I also tagged along on Saturday or Sunday mornings, playing under the bleachers as we watched him compete in cricket matches in his all white uniform and maroon cap at the former Wayne Aspinall Field. Looking back, the various jobs along with his other experiences and ability to charm all fuelled each other somehow, somehow, as it seemed as if he knew everyone, even on St. John and St. Croix.

He later left CETA to join the campaign of former delegate Ron De Lugo. His time served their was valuable, he once told me, as it gave him exposure to other people that served the VI in a political setting. He saw local politics and policy making as *the* vehicle we have available to us to effect the changes we need to advance as people and our standard of living. His own father having been a notable councilman in his own right in his village of All Saints, Antigua, it seemed a natural transition when he became a mentee to former Senator Earle B. Ottley. Together with Yvonne Bowsky, Goodwin was tapped to manage Governor Alexander Farrelly's first gubernatorial campaign in 1986, and his re-election in 1990. Farrelly named Goodwin the Administrator of the

Government Employees Retirement System. Soon after, the Danes contacted Goodwin to express their interest in selling the West Indian Company to the Virgin Islands Government, and the rest is history. Goodwin was elected to the VI Senate for the 20th and 23rd Legislatures. One of his more notable bills passed while in the Senate was to make mandatory the use of the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) as the de facto researcher for the VI Government, as opposed to the then common practice to contract out such work to a mainland firm. The cost effectiveness and pride instilling genius of this move was nothing short of exemplary of the level of thinking for and commitment to the building up of the Virgin Islands that Goodwin displayed. He later also served as an aide to Congressional Delegate Donna Christian Green in her first term in 1997.

As Democratic Party Treasurer, he took on the chairperson's role that ultimately led to the removal of three-party officers with conflicting contacts, which in turn led to the election of Governor Charles W. Turnbull in 1998. He later became Chief of Staff to Lt. Governor Gerard Luz James II, and later Policy Assistant to Governor Turnbull.

George Goodwin was also an active member of several civic organizations over the years, to include the VI Port Authority Board, the VI Cricket Association, the Caribbean Development Correlation and the Association of Caribbean Organizations among others.

Goodwin's one unfulfilled goal was to sponsor a "Shopper's Visa", a project with the goal to further enable and direct travel and trade to the USVI from other Caribbean islands. He saw the ability to affordably travel within the Caribbean region, with the VI as *the* destination, as vital to the growth of the VI as a leading economic facilitator for ourselves and the region as a whole. He also saw it as a way to continue our connections to our neighbours and relatives abroad, since, and I'm sure some of us remember this quote, "We share more in common than we do in differences". This goal proved to be a bridge too far to cross in his time in the Legislature; hopefully we have others here now and in the future, that can take that work and carry it forward to fruition.

Ladies and Gentlemen of this Legislative Committee, Madame Chairperson, other testifies, on behalf of the Goodwin family, we thank you all for your time today.