

March 6, 2023

Statement for VI Legislative Rules & Judiciary Committee
Offered by Gregory Goodwin

Good morning, members of the 35th Legislature, members of its Rules and Judiciary Committee, other testifiers, and fellow Virgin Islanders. My name is Gregory Goodwin, the eldest son of the Honorable George E. Goodwin and the former Bernice M. Pickering. I offer this statement in support of Bill No. 35-0006, an act honoring and commending former senator George E. Goodwin, for his decades of wide-ranging contributions to the advancement of life in the Virgin Islands community; to rename the Cricket Field located on Parcel H of Tract 1, Estate Nazareth, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands in his honor; and to award him the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor, and for other related purposes.

Starting with his successful lawsuit against the VI government under Governor Evans to allow for the education of *all* children residing in the VI (not just the ones born here), George Goodwin has been nothing short of a fiscal and social advocate savant for the US Virgin Islands. He founded the Alien Interest Movement, an organization dedicated to advocating for those seeking to legally immigrate to the USVI. Through that organization, he personally prepared the necessary documentation in the legal process for thousands of people to become either citizens or permanent residents. During the 70's he was the lead Director for CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), an extension of the Department of Labor tasked with training workers and providing them with jobs in public service. In essence, in a situation that took years to develop, one where Caribbean immigrants, people that share our reflection, ancestry, and blood were viewed and acted upon unfavorably by contemporary VI society, societal and labor practices, Goodwin guided thousands through the process to become legitimate citizens, won a legal judgement to get their kids educated, and got them trained for jobs territory wide. In the process they became positive, tax-paying contributors to our community that is the Virgin Islands. This first singular multi-layered accomplishment is perhaps the largest legacy he leaves to the Virgin Islands. It paves the way to allow many others to contribute to our culture, heritage, function and legacy. The Virgin Islands do not grow to foster a Nicolas Friday, a Timothy Duncan, a large number of our Legislature, past and present, Senators and Legislative aides alike, without this selfless act of service.

Goodwin also led successful campaigns for and served in policy making for former Governors Alexander Farelly and Charles Turnbull - re-electing both Governors. Appointed to run the Government Employees Retirement System (GERS) by Governor Farelly, he led the then indebted program back into the black and left it with a surplus at the end of his tenure. He also seeded the idea with Governor Farelly that the VI Government should purchase WICO, after being approached by the Danish government shortly after his term at GERS began. Goodwin served two terms in the VI Legislature as a Senator, where a quite powerful yet underrated bill he sponsored made the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) the de facto researcher for the VI Government, ending decades of contracting out such work with US mainland firms. Like the idea to purchase WICO, this bill created an economic multiplier within the territory by redirecting funds that were leaving the territory back into it, feeding the territory economically while further developing pride and

competence in our own professional abilities. Goodwin also practiced smaller fiscal measures meant to eliminate wasteful government spending, some of which are practiced by VI Senators today - such as not having a government car or cell phone paid for with taxpayer money outside the salary provided. Goodwin served as a congressional aide to both Ron deLugo and Donna Christiansen while they were the USVI's Delegate to Congress, bookending his government and political career.

In addition to founding the Alien Interest Movement, George Goodwin was also an active member of several other civic organizations over the years, including the VI Port Authority Board, the VI Cricket Association, the Caribbean Development Correlation and the Association of Caribbean Organizations among others. Goodwin also was the first director for Blue Cross Blue Shield first few years as a health insurance provider in the territory. He also maintained Goodwin's Bookkeeping Service, providing tax preparation and accounting services to the community from the early 70's until the mid-2010's.

George Goodwin always considered himself a man of the people. A man that led others through the action of selfless service. My personal observation, setting aside our relationship as father and son, but he is the type of leader that one rarely sees - with plenty of conflicting traits. George Goodwin has always been a proud and confident man, yet humble enough to use and appreciate preparation and strategy. He has always been popular yet approachable, relatable and engaging with all, yet discreet and somehow not an attention seeker. To this day, I still meet people he forged relationships with that I did not know he knew. Yet for all that time he spent out - he always let us know that family is his first priority: he would drop everything to respond to the needs of his family. He never sought attention for his accomplishments, nor did he feel the need to brag of them, yet was quietly prideful and acutely aware of their impact. His contributions to the sport of cricket in the VI through the VI Cricket Association, and his social justice and political service to the Virgin Islands were nothing short of exemplary, yet always spoke the desire of wanting to see his home, the Virgin Islands, operate at a higher level than it what was at the time. He always felt driven to help that along.

On a personal level, in addition to his obvious love of cricket and time with family and friends, he enjoyed reading about other political figures abroad, the occasional game of chess, checkers or dominoes, soca music and tv series such as the Jeffersons, Magnum PI, Burn Notice, Blue Bloods and Madame Secretary. He enjoyed teasing, local and regional cuisine, fellowship in the Anglican Church, and has a understated talent for drawing and painting. After the death of his wife, the former Bernice Pickering, he now resides comfortably at a senior retirement home, where he is its most active member.