

Support In Favor of Mr. James Sasso
Being Recognized for His Service to the People of
St. Thomas/St. John V. I. as a Funeral Director

Good morning to Honorable Senator Avery Lewis, Chairperson of the Committee of Government Operations, Honorable Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr., sponsor of the Resolution to honor Mr. James Sasso and all the other Honorable Senators of the Committee on Government Operations 35th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands. My name is Bernice A. Turnbull and I am appearing before you to offer my support in favor of the recommendation to honor Mr. James Sasso for his distinguished service in the Death Care, Compassionate Care, and Life Memorial industry, to the people of St. Thomas and St. John as a Funeral Director.

I have known Mr. Sasso for as long as he has been a Funeral Director associated with Turnbull's Funeral Home and I find him to be humble, caring, considerate and empathetic. I speak as one who has experienced his service.

It has been said that the way a society treats their dead tells the story of that society. The story of how Mr. Sasso treats the dead needs to be recorded in the annals of the Virgin Islands. For those who have not had the experience of the service he gives. I will try to give you an abbreviated version his program.

Mr. Sasso handles the dead as if though he was interacting with someone alive. He ensures that your loved one looks the best he or she can. This means from the time the casket leaves the funeral home it becomes his personal responsibility. O yes, he handles it with great care. Once it gets to church where the service is being held, it is carefully removed with care and precision. The Pallbearers are given instruction as to how to handle the dead. No half stepping. As this point, Mr. Sasso takes charge. He respectfully requests that all in the church please stand in respect of the dead being brought in. Once inside the church, before the viewing begins. He makes sure that the dead is ready for viewing and asks a relative to give their approval.

During the viewing, he gives instructions about the use of cell phones during the service. Once the viewing is over, he thanks the attendees for coming and informs them as to what will happen after the church service. he introduces the clergy who will be performing the service.

At the end of the service, he gathers the pallbearers and ensures that the instructions given relative to the handling of the casket are in place.

The highlight of the procession out of the church is Mr. Sasso leading and marching that casket to Zion. Just to view this brings comfort and some humor to those grieving. This is something that was not seen at funerals before. Hence as persons grieve, they find comfort because someone took special care of their loved one.

At the cemetery, there were accommodations of a tent and water. Mr. Sasso makes sure that the pallbearers handled the dead with care and place the casket properly in its burial site. The extraordinary care he exhibits during the burial rite of the dead is noteworthy. Under his care, he treats the dead with respect.

I salute the 35th Legislature for honoring the dead by honoring Mr. Sasso for the loving, caring, and empathic way he treats the dead and his or her survivors. Thank you.