

## SEN. SARAUW HOSTS ENVIRONMENTAL TOWN HALL MEETING

**Date :** December 9, 2017

St. Thomas – The Office of Sen. Janelle Sarauw hosted a Town Hall Meeting at the Capitol Building to meet with representatives from the Virgin Islands Waste Management and other entities to discuss post-hurricane environmental legislation.

“It is imperative to have a candid discussion that surrounds the facts about preserving our environment. We can’t continue to do business as usual. There are alternative solutions to using Styrofoam and plastic straws such as replacing it with the paper version,” said Sen. Sarauw.

The pending legislation sponsored by Sen. Sarauw is an amendment to Act 7938 which seeks to include a ban on the importation, use or sale of all Styrofoam carryout containers within the Territory, sunscreen containing Oxybenzone commonly referred to as BP-2 and a gradual ban on the import, use and sale of straws.

The facts presented during a video presentation, are there were over 6 million straws and stirrers that removed from beaches. There are also 500 million plastic straws that are disposed of Styrofoam is equally harmful to the environment. The breakdown of styrofoam can take approximately 500 years.

Sen. Jackson stated that this presentation and overview was helpful to the community.

Additional topics included passed legislation for the introduction of the Tree Burning Ban, composting and mulching as a means if tropical wood conservation.

“There needs to be something to protect valuable wood from burning and re-purposing compost and mulch. I have two solutions to this problem. The first one is to establish a wood bank or a storage facility that is available for public use. The community has experienced woodworkers who can make use of valuable wood,” said Clay Jones of Heritage Tree Care. “Secondly, the Bovoni Landfill overcrowded with waste does not need to be populated with compost and mulch. This can be re-used for the soil post-hurricane.”

Harith Wickerman, Chairman of Board of Directors at the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority, shared the importance of compost and mulching. “Re-purposing compost and mulching will alleviate soil erosion that occurs after a tropical storm or hurricane. Currently, there is 500,000 debris after the hurricanes hit the Virgin Islands. There will 250,000 after mulching. Re-using our natural resources keep our islands healthy for generations to come.”

During “Trash Talk” an open forum Makeda Mills, Student at University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) offered an educational solution to compost. “Compost can be used in the classrooms at the UVI. Students can learn about its properties in a Composting Program. When a major storm occurs, students will know how to reuse it to preserve the environment properly.”

Presenters at the Town Hall Meeting are Sen. Myron Jackson, Poly Hoppin, Research Professor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, Harith Wickerman, Clay Jones, Tropical Woods Conservation, Composting and Mulching and Michael Vansgaard a Community Activist.

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