

BILL AS IT RELATES TO APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS MOVES FORWARD DURING DAY TWO OF LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Date : June 15, 2018

ST. THOMAS- Members of the 32nd Legislature, chaired by Senate President Myron Jackson, convened in day two of Legislative Session at the Capitol Building on Friday, to vote and approve the remaining measures on the agenda including Bill 32-0179-An Act amending Title 24, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 10, Sections 221, 228 and 230 as it relates to the apprenticeship standards.

During debate time, senators discussed Amendment No. 32-729 to Bill No. 32. 0179. The amendment states that for the sum of \$125,000 is appropriated in the fiscal year ending on September 30, 2018, from the General Fund to the Election System to fund the 2018 primary elections. "Why are we using taxpayer's monies for what is a Democratic Party primary election?" asked Sen. Positive Nelson. "The Democratic Party is established enough to fund their convention. The Board of Elections should do their job with integrity."

However, Sen. Neville James said, "I would prefer that the monies are used to grow the Independent Party. That will create a competition that is healthy. What we want is an independent entity that the Board of elections can conduct the primaries. This is how the Democratic Party funds their primaries nationwide." Ultimately, senators voted in favor of this amendment.

Lawmakers also debated Amendment No. 32-718 to Bill No. 32- 0179 for the Legislature of the Virgin Islands shall return any money taken from the salaries of employees of the Legislature pursuant to section 4 of Act 7261. "I am asking for mercy on behalf of the employees. The monies did not assist with the economic use of the Virgin Islands instead it went somewhere else. They are hurting and they need their money too. I circulated an opinion from the Legal Counsel and it states, "Failure to remit the 8% of its employee's salaries to the General Fund," debated Sen. Alicia "Chucky" Hansen.

In opposition, Sen. Jean Forde stated that we are all in favor of paying employees adequate salary. "I believe there is a proper way to do things. We haven't done research to promise you monies for

the increase 30 days after the law is enacted. Let us make sure we have the monies to do it.” Ultimately, lawmakers voted it down and the amendment failed.

Separately, senators shared their remarks on the bill. Sen. Tregenza Roach expressed his support for Bill No. 32-0179 as it relates to the apprenticeship standards. “In the absence of career and technical training, it is good for young people to receive on hands training in technical professions.”

Similarly, Sen. Marvin Blyden stated that Bill No. 32-0179 Mandates the V.I. Department of Labor (VIDOL) to assist individuals to get jobs, it also requires VIDOL to conduct an annual analysis of the job market and to share it with the Board of Education and other entities. The bill requires VIDOL to follow job market trends which are used to tailor and groom young people for these professional areas.

Policymakers also expressed their sentiments on additional bills on the agenda.

Referring to Bill No. 32-0226- A Resolution encouraging the people of the Virgin Islands to observe July 22nd as a remembrance of the devastation caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria and as a supplication for protection during the 2018 Hurricane Season; Sen. Positive Nelson said, “I am wondering why July 22nd was selected as a day of observance. I don’t know the importance of that date. People should be grateful and appreciative of life after experiencing two hurricanes. Do you need a law to tell you that?”

Sponsor of the Bill, Sen. Jackson expounded on the measure. “In reviewing the law as it relates to observing a hurricane, eventually it was removed as a paid holiday in the government. The selected date of June 22nd was the original day now recognized in the third week in June. With the removal of the paid holiday, the revised the law states that the following Sunday from the original date is the new date of observance.”

Separately, Sen. Alicia “Chucky” Hansen stated that she does not support Bill No. 32-0212 to allow for the pronouncement of death by registered nurses, physician assistants and nurse

practitioners. “There is another aspect about this bill that not covered; and its liability. If a nurse or physician wrongfully or untimely pronounced someone’s death that creates a liability for the special homes or hospice. A doctor should only pronounce time of death. That liability should not be on nurses.”

However, Sen. Francis stated that the bill was vetted and expressed his support. “Initially, I had my reservations with this bill. It is critical, and we should be mindful that when we have a death situation, people wait hours for morgue to arrive to the facility and make a proper announcement. Nurses and physicians should be authorized to do this for people who are in hospice care facilities and are facing terminal illness.”

Similarly, Sen. Jackson said, “Bill No. 32-0212 provides a means that when relative decided to send a family member to a facility for terminal illness, it allows for a peaceful transition for the patient. Physicians of that facility should have the ability to pronounce their death. Some states implemented this measure already.”

Lawmakers voted and approved the following:

- Bill No. 30-0179- An Act amending Title 24, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 10, Sections 221, 228 and 230 relating to the apprenticeship standards as amended
- Bill No. 32-0177-An Act amending Title 27, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter I, Subchapter IV, Section 97(a) relating to renewal of nursing licenses
- Bill No. 32-0197- An Act amending Title 19 Virgin Islands Code by adding a new chapter 68 entitled “Animal Shelters providing a minimum standard of care for sheltered animals
- Bill No. 32-0212- An Act amending Title 19 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 37, Subchapter III,

adding Section 870 to allow for the pronouncement of death by registered nurses, physician assistants and nurse practitioners

- Bill No. 0226- A Resolution encouraging the people of Virgin Islands to observe July 22, 2018 as a remembrance of the devastation and human suffering caused by hurricanes Irma and Maria and as supplication for protection during the 2018 hurricane season
- Bill No. 32-0185- An Act amending title 23 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 10 section 1005 relating to the Governor of the Virgin Islands and emergencies and major disasters
- Bill No. 32-0227-A Act amending Title 27 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 4A, subsection 202, subsection (b) changing the amount of years, from two to four years, that five of the seven board members of the Virgin Islands Board of Licensed Counselors and Examiners are to be appointed
- Bill No. 32-0228- An Act amending Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 16, section 245a relating to the Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation's competitive bidding process to require advertisement for bids to be published through electronic media or in the newspapers of general circulation, and to make technical amendments
- Bill No. 32-0229- An Act amending Title 23, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 10 Subchapter 1, section 1004 requiring the Government of the Virgin Islands to enter into contracts before June 1st of each year in preparedness for hurricane season or any emergency or major disaster

All bills approved will be forwarded to the Governor for further consideration.

Senators present are Myron Jackson, Positive Nelson, Tregenza Roach, Alicia "Chucky" Hansen,

Janette Millin Young, Janelle Sarauw, Nereida Rivera O'Reilly, Brian Smith, Marvin Blyden, Novelle Francis, Jean Forde, Neville James, Kurt Violet and Sammuel Sanes.

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