

## Homeland Security Committee Approves Noise Pollution Control Bill

**Date :** July 18, 2016

St. Croix--the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice & Public Safety met Friday in the Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room to consider Bill 31-0364 which would implement hazardous duty pay for Firefighters in the Suppression Unit for the performance of hazardous duty and Bill 31-0381, which seeks to amend the existing noise control statues.

Senate President Neville James in speaking on Bill 31-0364 said the bill seeks to “correct a long standing omission” which was also echoed by several testifiers throughout the committee meeting on Friday.

Firefighters and their union representatives from the St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John districts were on hand to advocate for the passage of the legislation, which some senators felt should be part of a greater discussion on hazardous duty pay for first responders.

Possible amendments to the bill were discussed, which include the designation of a funding source to cover the hazardous pay costs as well as the extension of hazardous duty pay to all eligible law enforcement personnel. The bill was held in committee to allow for a more comprehensive financial analysis by the Senate’s Post Audit Division.

The second item on the agenda was the Noise Pollution Control Bill (31-0381), sponsored by Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr. The Senator refuted claims that the proposed legislation serves a special interest. “This is not an anti-business, anti-music, anti-entertainment or anti-culture bill. It is a quality of life bill.” Francis said he has heard from diverse groups, all of whom have their own concerns about the impact of noise in residential and business areas.

Representatives from the Frederiksted Economic Development Association, the Christiansted Community Alliance, the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce and the Departments of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, Health and Police were in favor of the legislation. All testifiers suggested amendments that would address inconsistencies and improve the enforceability of the legislation.

Chairman Francis said he will continue to work with key stakeholders to fine tune the Noise Pollution legislation. "Today's discussion reflects that this bill is a work in progress," he stated. "Common courtesy cannot be legislated, but legislation that allows the greater community to enjoy a better quality of life certainly can."

The bill was favorably voted on by all six committee members present and will proceed to the Rules and Judiciary Committee for further vetting.

Members in attendance on Friday were: Novelle E. Francis, Jr. (Chairman), Kenneth L. Gittens (Vice Chair), Justin Harrigan, Sr.; Jean Forde; Sammuell Sanes, Almando "Rocky" Liburd; Nereida "Nellie" O'Reilly and non-committee member Neville A. James.

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