

LABOR LAW POSTER AND POSTHUMOUS VETERAN BILLS APPROVED

Date : October 3, 2019

ST. CROIX--The Committee on Government Operations, Consumer Affairs, Energy, Environment, and Planning chaired by Senator Alicia V. Barnes met on Thursday in the Virgin Islands Cardiac Center on St. Croix.

Members of the Committee received testimony on Bill No. 33-0091, an Act amending the Virgin Islands Code by requiring businesses to post the required labor law posters in a conspicuous place inside the business and if there is more than one site, then at all locations.

The Bill further stated that in Section 307 of the amendment, specific penalties are assessed for multiple violations each year and an appeal process is set in place for any business that is penalized. The Bill was sponsored by Senator Stedmann Hodge, Jr.

Gary Molloy, Commissioner of the Department of Labor (DOL) said his department is in favor of the intent of the proposed legislation. According to Mr. Molloy, the Bill ensures that businesses provide notice to employees of their rights under local and federal law.

He added that if the Legislature agrees with the amendments by DOL, the legislation will strengthen the Department's ability to provide greater compliance in our community. He suggested to the Committee that the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA) be given an opportunity to provide testimony on the Bill as it directly affects a statute that DLCA administers.

Some of the suggestions Commissioner Molloy recommended were: (1) that the enforcement of Labor Laws should be placed under the authority of DOL; (2) that upon previous notice and an opportunity for a fair hearing, will impose administration fines for violations of the rules, regulations, and orders approved or prescribed by DOL.

He added that such fines shall not be less than \$25 nor more than \$5,000 and;(3) that any business found in violation of this subsection will be allowed to have their appeal processed through an Administrative Hearing Review.

Commissioner Molloy concluded his testimony by adding that the Bill also seeks to ensure that employers, including those who are beneficiaries of the Economic Development Commission, display all required Labor Posters. Furthermore, as amended, the Bill would ensure that any Job Vacancies are posted by their respective employers.

Chairwoman Barnes noted the employees who are very skilled in their given profession, however, reading and comprehension proved difficult for them. She suggested that DOL take the initiative and develop some form of oral orientation rather than take literacy for granted.

Other testifiers on the Bill were Nesha R. Christian-Hendrickson, Legal Counsel and Gwen Steel, Director of Labor Relations. The Bill was favorably approved and sent to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further amendments and consideration.

The Committee also took testimony on Bill No. 33-0127, an Act posthumously honoring and commending the men and women who lost their lives while serving in the United States Armed Forces; naming the roundabout road circle located in downtown Cruz Bay, St. John. Testifiers in support of the measure were Patrick D. Farrell, Director of the Office of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Harry Daniel and Henry Powell.

The roundabout road will be named, "The Veterans Circle", and appropriating approximately \$20,000 to the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts to commission a monument in the memory of the Veterans. Bill No. 33-0127 was favorably approved and sent to the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation and Aging for further consideration. The measure was sponsored by Senator Athneil "Bobby" Thomas, who thanked his colleagues for their support in honoring the brave Virgin Islanders who served on behalf of our territory.

Committee members at Thursday's hearing were Chairwoman Senator Alicia V. Barnes, Myron D. Jackson, Marvin A. Blyden, Allison L. DeGazon, Javan E. James, Sr., and Athneil "Bobby" Thomas. Non-Committee members were Senators Novelle E. Francis, Jr., and Stedmann Hodge.

###