

RESOLUTIONS RECOGNIZING ALVIN “ALLI” PAUL & ROBERT O’CONNOR, JR. FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TERRITORY MOVE FORWARD

Date : July 25, 2019

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THOMAS - Members of the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation and Aging, chaired by Sen. Myron Jackson, voted in favor of Bill No. 33-0060 and Bill No. 33-0082 – two resolutions honoring former senators Alvin “Alli” Paul and Robert O’Connor, Jr., respectively, at the Capitol Building on Tuesday, for their lifetime contributions to the territory.

Bill

No. 33-0060, proposed by Senator Janelle K. Sarauw, posthumously recognizes the late Alvin “Alli” Paul for his legacy to the culture of the Virgin Islands through the Mocko Jumbie art form.

Franke

Hoheb, brother of the former Senator and cultural icon, stated that as a child, former senator Paul became fascinated with stilt dancing after watching the late John Magnus Farrell practice. Eventually, he not only perfected the craft but transformed the attire of stilt dancing. “Alli changed the costume from the drab skirt to colorful pants which made it easier to dance. He went from traditional shorter stilts to taller stilts, reaching as high as 12 feet,” Hoheb said. “Alli was the first dancer to perform on one stilt and created a troupe of Mocko Jumbies.”

Former

Governor, Dr. Charles W. Turnbull, also shared his support for the bill. “When Alvin “Alli” Paul passed away on January 11, 2019, the Virgin Islands, the wider Caribbean, indeed the world lost one of the most gifted stilt performers and dancers ever,” he said. “Alli Paul took the art form that originated many centuries ago in West Africa, the ancestral home of most Virgin Islanders, to

the highest of levels.”

Bill

No. 33-0082, sponsored by Senator Donna Frett-Gregory, commends former senator Robert O’Connor, Jr. for his lifelong commitment to the people of the Virgin Islands through his service as a Senator, his membership on the Port Authority Board, and his work as a community leader by naming the new Port Authority maintenance building in his honor.

“O’Connor

served as a chairperson to the VIPA Board for over 20 years and spearheaded a myriad of projects that have come into fruition today,” said Virgin Islands Port Authority Executive Director Carlton Dowe, in a letter submitted to the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. “He is also the owner of several successful businesses on St. John and a stellar example of commitment to hard work and excellence.”

Senator

Jackson noted O’Connor’s unassuming presence, stating that “he’s a powerhouse in his own right, quietly moving boulders – not stones – boulders to make way for a better life, especially for the residents of St John and for the Virgin Islands as a whole.”

Additional

testifiers included Allan Yisrael Petersen, Willard John, Darlan Brin, Julien Harley Sr., Abigail Hendricks, and Robert O’Connor, Jr. Both bills were amended and forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration. If they successfully move through that committee and Session, the Legislature of the Virgin Islands will ultimately host ceremonies to present permanent copies of the resolutions to both honorees.