



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL

Volume 5, Issue 1
Spring 2001

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Special points of interest:

Committee on Resources

- Ranking Member, Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands.

Committee on Small Business

- Member, Subcommittee on Workforce, Empowerment and Government Relations.
- Member, Subcommittee on Rural Enterprises, Agriculture and Technology.

Member, Congressional Black Caucus

- Chair, Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust.

Contacting the Delegate

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GREETINGS FROM THE DELEGATE

Fellow Virgin Islanders,

I am pleased to offer our first newsletter of the new millennium. We hope that everyone – residents, as well as visitors, will find it informative.

This year began with much pomp and circumstance as the 43rd President of the United States was sworn in. I was pleased to welcome some of our Senators and other local residents out of the cold rain into our new Washington, D.C. offices.

Since that day, we have had several opportunities to meet with President George Bush, as well as several of his cabinet members. They are becoming increasingly familiar with the challenges facing the Virgin Islands today, and we look forward to collaborating with the new administration to address them.

As I begin my third term, a new administration, power sharing in the Senate, a closer margin for the majority in the House, and the individual priorities of a new Cabinet certainly present us with new challenges. As always, we will do our very best to turn them into opportunities. This will take increased vigilance and



Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen meets with Puerto Rico' Resident Commissioner Anibal Acevedo-Villa, on developing the best strategy for insuring that the Virgin Islands will be successful in maintaining the same level of rum tax rebate, and ultimately lifting the cap entirely.

a greater workload on the part of an already busy office. Not being afraid of hard work, I embrace this new challenge.

At least in this first year, however, it will mean more time spent in Washington, and perhaps, joining my colleagues on both sides of the aisle at meetings and on travel, which would give me an invaluable opportunity to more personally inform and sensitize them to our needs and concerns.

I plan to be in the territory as often as I reasonably can and I will continue to communicate with you regularly through the media. As always, it is a privilege and an honor for me to represent the wonderful people of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Best regards,

Donna

LESSENING THE IMPACT OF TAX AND BUDGET CUTS, A PRIORITY FOR TERRITORIAL DELEGATES

Since the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam both have a mirror tax system, where income taxes using federal tax rates remain in the respective local treasuries, Delegate Christensen joined Delegate Robert Underwood of Guam in writing to and meeting with Interior Secretary Gale Norton on the impact of the proposed tax cut to the territories.

They have used every opportunity to raise the issue with the President, and his immediate staff, seeking measures that would make up for the potential losses.

The Virgin Islands government has estimated losses at approximately \$28 million. This would be spread out over several years if enacted in its present form.

The delegate is also looking at working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to stem proposed cuts in the Small Business Administration, FEMA, Housing, Education, Health and Human Services and other agencies and programs on which we depend.

MONUMENT ISSUE: WHO OWNS THE SUBMERGED LANDS?

Delegate Christensen, who has long been a supporter of the environment, believes that the central issue of the monuments is that of land ownership. "Regardless of whether one is for or against the monuments, I think reasonable people would agree that it is important that we ensure that land properly belonging to the people of the Virgin Islands is not taken.

She has asked Interior Secretary Gale Norton to review the legal analysis that was used to conclude that the lands that make-up the newly designated national monuments is owned by the federal government. Traditional users, particularly fishermen have opposed the designation, citing threats to their livelihood. Conservationists have supported it, citing the need to

replenish the fish stock and preserve the threatened coral reefs. Christensen has also sought the opinion of the General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of the Congress in determining the issue. If it is determined that the lands are local and not federal, it would nullify the monument designations.



In January, Delegate Christensen hosted town meetings to hear the concerns of fishermen, conservationists and residents on the then pending monument designations.



Delegate Christensen listens as Interior Secretary Gale Norton addresses a meeting with territorial delegates and governors.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES FOR THE 107TH CONGRESS

EXTENDING THE RUM TAX REBATE

Delegate Donna Christensen's agenda for the 107th Congress is anchored by the initiative to lift the cap on rum revenues. The first priority, however, is to at least, extend the current rum tax rebate of \$13.25 per proof gallon which expires this year. With the Virgin Islands economic tough times, this action would maintain the current annual funding of

approximately \$75 million to the territory's treasury, which represents a near doubling of these proceeds since 1997. Lifting the cap would yield even more. The Delegate has also unveiled her proposal to pursue rebates of retroactive funds that the territory has lost since 1984, the year when the cap was imposed. This longer term issue, if successful, would be of great assistance in helping to address

our fiscal crisis and the need to invest in a better economy.

LIFTING THE MEDICAID CAP

Lifting the Medicaid cap and changing the match were the subject of the Delegate's first bill and represents one of her highest priorities. Successfully doing this would mean more payments to our hospitals so they could be

be better staffed and supplied, that more people would be able to take advantage of Medicaid to pay for healthcare, improved and expanded medical services for our community, and an almost \$10 million relief to the local government which pays in excess of its required match, thus freeing up money for other important priorities. Chris Finch and his management team at Lutheran Social Services recently made the rounds on Capitol Hill to make the case for lifting the cap. We encourage others to use their organizations and meetings to do the same.

Other bills introduced of importance to the territory:

- The six-pack rule exemption
- Enhancements to the watch & jewelry benefits program
- Naming the St. Thomas Federal Building – "The Ron de Lugo Federal Building."

EXPANDS ROLE ON RESOURCES AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Delegate Christensen was elected to serve as the Ranking Minority Member of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands of the Committee on Resources. As a result, she will lead the efforts of House Democrats in passing legislation dealing with National Park System, the National Wilderness Preservation System, the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, National Trails System, National Heritage Areas, Military Parks and Battlefields and certain Federal Outdoor Recreation plans and Programs.

For the 107th Congress, Delegate Christensen remains a Member of the House Small Business Committee. She was named to its Subcommittee on Workforce Empowerment and Government Programs and the Subcommittee on Rural Enterprises, Agriculture and Technology. Her priorities include maintaining the Small Business Administration's funding level in the proposed budget, addressing constituent complaints on the sale of disaster loans in the territory and developing more small business opportunities for the Virgin Islands.

PROCUREMENT CONFERENCE COMES TO VIRGIN ISLANDS; AIMED AT DISADVANTAGED BUSINESSES

Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen will address a small business procurement conference entitled; the Minority Business Enterprise; Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century and Beyond that is scheduled for May 22 through May 25 at Frenchman's Reef Marriott Hotel in St. Thomas. Lt. Colonel James Lloyd of St. Thomas of the Army's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization is one of the coordinators of the conference.

SALUDOS DE LA DELEGADA

Ciudadanos de las Islas Virgenes,

Me complace ofrecerles nuestro primer Boletín de Noticias del nuevo milenio. Espero que tanto residentes como visitantes lo encuentren informativo.

Este año comenzó con mucha pompa y circunstancia con el juramento del 43º Presidente de los E.E.U.U. Tuve el placer de dar la bienvenida a algunos de nuestros Senadores y otros residentes locales y protegerlos de la fría lluvia de Washington dentro de nuestra nueva oficina el día de la inauguración.

Desde entonces tuvimos varias oportunidades de reunirnos con el Presidente George Bush y también con miembros de su gabinete de ministros. Ellos están rápidamente familiarizándose con los desafíos que encontramos en las Islas Virgenes hoy en día, y esperamos colaborar con la nueva administración en cuanto a esos temas. Comenzando mi tercer término me enfrento a una nueva administración,

la división de poder en el Senado, el margen muy estrecho que existe para la mayoría de la Cámara de Representantes y las prioridades individuales que el nuevo gabinete nos presenta definitivamente con nuevos desafíos. Como siempre, haremos todo lo posible para aprovechar las oportunidades. Esto van a acrecentar la vigilancia y la labor de nuestra ya muy ocupada oficina, pero como no tenemos miedo al trabajo, una vez más acogeremos el desafío.

Por los menos este primer año pasaré más tiempo en Washington y para reunirme con mis colegas de ambos partidos políticos (Republicanos y Demócratas), lo que me dará una inestimable oportunidad de informarles personalmente de nuestras necesidades y preocupaciones.

Pienso estar en el Territorio tan amenudo como sea posible y continuaré comunicándome con ustedes a través de la prensa. Como siempre, es un privilegio y un honor para mí representar a la maravillosa gente de las Islas Virgenes.

MITIGANDO EL IMPACTO DE LA REDUCCION DE LOS IMPUESTOS Y EL PRESUPUESTO, UNA GRAN PRIORIDAD DE LOS DELEGADOS DE LOS TERRITORIOS:

Como las Islas Virgenes de los Estados Unidos y Guam tienen un sistema de impuestos de ingresos en donde usan tasas federales se quedan en sus respectivos tesoros locales. Nuestra Delegada Christensen unió sus fuerzas con el Delegado Robert Underwood de Guam al escribir y conversar con la Secretaria de Interior Gale Norton sobre el impacto de la propuesta de recortar los impuestos en los territorios. Los Delegados aprovecharon todas las oportunidades para hablar del tema con el Presidente y sus principales asistentes buscando una medida en que podrán compensar las posibles pérdidas.

El Gobierno de las Islas Virgenes ha estimado pérdidas de más o menos \$28 millones. Esto sería distribuido a través de varios años si fuera ejercitado como se hace en el presente. La delegada también está intentando trabajar con colegas Republicanos y Demócratas para apurar los recortes pequeños propuestos en Small Business Administration, FEMA, Housing, Education, Health and Human Services y otras agencias y programas en los cuales dependemos.

EL ASUNTO MONUMENTAL: QUIEN ES DUENO DE LAS TIERRAS SUMERGIDAS ?

La Delegada Christensen lleva muchos años apoyando el medio ambiente y cree que el asunto principal sobre los monumentos es quién es el dueño de las tierras sumergidas?

Irrespectivamente de hecho de que uno este a favor o contra de los monumentos, entiendo que las personas razonable estará de acuerdo en que lo importante es que aseguremos la propiedad de la gente de las Islas Virgenes y no que se nos quite.

Ella ha solicitado a la Secretaria del Interior que revise el análisis legal que fue utilizando para concluir que la tierra que componen los recientemente designados Monumentos Nacionales son patrimonio del Gobierno Federal.

Los usuarios tradicionales, particularmente los pescadores se han opuesto a la designación, viéndose amenazada su vida diaria. Los Ambientatistas los han apoyado citando la necesidad de reponer la pesca y preservar los arrecifes de coral amenazados. Christensen también solicitó la opinión de la oficina de Contabilidad General, el arma investigadora del Congreso, para obtener su determinación sobre este tema. Si se determina que las tierras son locales y no Federales, invalidará la designación de tales monumentos.

AUMENTAR EL PAPEL EN EL COMITE DE RECURSOS

LLEGAR A SER EL MIEMBRO CON MAS RANGO DE PARQUES Y TERRENOS PUBLICOS

La Delegada Christensen fue elegida a servir como el jefe con mas rango del partido de la oposición del sub-comite de la Cámara sobre Parques Nacionales, Recreación y Terrenos Públicos del Comité de Recursos. Como resultado, ella va a dirigir los esfuerzos de los Demócratas en la Cámara atrovando legislaciones de National Park System, el National Wilderness Preservation System, el Wild and Scenic Rivers System, National Trails System, National Heritage Areas, Military Parks and Battlefields y ciertos Programas y Planes de Recreación al Aire Libre.

COMITE DE EMPRESAS PEQUEÑAS MIEMBRO DE DOS SUB-COMITES

Por el 107 Congreso, la Delegada Christensen queda como Miembro del Comité de la Cámara de Empresa Pequeñas. Ella fue nombrada al sub-comite de Work Force Empowerment y Government Programs y el sub-comite de Rural Enterprises, Agriculture, and Technology. Sus prioridades incluyen mantener el nivel de fondos propuestos en el presupuesto de la Administración de Empresa Pequeñas, preocuparse de la quejas de los electores sobre la venta de los préstamos de desastres en el territorio y desarrollando mas oportunidades para las de empresas pequeñas para las Islas Virgenes.



Delegate Christensen discusses economic matters in the Caribbean with the Barbados Ambassador to the United States, Michael King.

INICIATIVAS LEGISLATIVAS DEL CONGRESO 107

La agenda de la Delegada Donna Christensen para el 107 Congreso está fundada en la iniciativa de subir el límite impuesto al ingreso de ron.

La primera prioridad por los menos es extender el impuesto del reembolso de ron corriente de \$13.25 por la graduación de por ciento del galón que expirará este año. Con los tiempos difíciles en las Islas Virgenes, esta acción mantendrá fondos de casi \$75 millones en el tesoro del Territorio que representa casi el doble de los fondos procedentes desde 1997. Subiendo el límite del impuesto rendirá más. También la Delegada presentará una propuesta para conseguir el reembolso de fondos retroactivos en el territorio desde 1984, año en que el límite fue impuesto. Si este asunto a largo plazo tiene éxito, será una gran ayuda para mejorar nuestra crisis fiscal y las necesidades de invertir en mejorar la economía.

Office of Congresswoman Donna M. Christian-Christensen

WE'VE MOVED...

We have begun the 107th Congress by moving all three of our offices.

The Washington, DC office is located at

1510 Longworth
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-1790 – telephone
202-225-5517 – fax

The St. Thomas office is now located at

Suite #207, 2nd Floor
Nisky Business Center
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands
00802
340-774-4408 – telephone
340-774-8033 – fax

The St. Croix office is now located at

Space 25, Sunny Isle Shopping Center
P.O. Box 5980
Sunny Isle, St. Croix 00823
340-778-5900 – telephone
340-778-5111 – fax

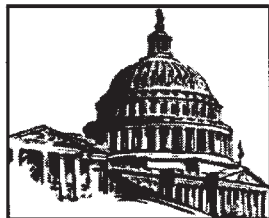


NOS HEMOS MUDADO
Con el comienzo del Congreso 107 nos hemos mudados del sitio en las tres oficinas:

En Washington, D.C. la oficina está localizada
1510 Longworth
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Washington, D.C. 20515
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St. Thomas está localizada
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CONFERENCIA PARA AYUDAR LAS PEQUEÑAS EMPRESAS Y EN DESVENTAJA SE LLEVARA ACABO A LAS ISLAS VIR- GINES

La Delegada al Congreso, Donna Christensen se dirigirá a una conferencia de pequeños empresas "Minority business Enterprise; Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century and Beyond" que sera presentada de el 22 de mayo hasta el 25 de mayo en el Frenchan's Reef Marriott Hotel en St. Thomas. Lt. Colonel James Lloyd de St. Thomas de la Oficina Ejército de la Utilización de Pequeñoas Y Desventajados Negocios es uno de los coordinadores de esta conferencia.

CONGRESSWOMAN DONNA CHRISTENSEN WITH LOCAL TEACHERS



Delegate Donna Christensen congratulates three Virgin Islands teachers from St. Croix who received the Presidential Award for Mathematics and Science in March. Pictured with the Delegate are teachers Joan Kenon, Elizabeth Burnett and Martin Campbell.