

Highlights From The Hill

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nile Accountability Block Grant program.

July 2005

- Virgin Islands LEPC awarded \$631,000 from the STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant.
- Department of Human Services awarded \$75,000 for the Senior Medicare Patrol Project.
- Virgin Islands is awarded \$108 million in transportation funding over next five years with the passage of the Transportation Equity Act. It also includes \$8 million for Phase II of the Christiansted Bypass and \$8 million for the East West Corridor Road on St. Thomas. The measure changes the territory's designation to "urbanized area" making it eligible for \$1 million a year for 6 years for VITRAN service.

August 2005

- Cyril E. King Airport awarded \$2 million for rehabilitation of terminal taxilane, increasing to \$7 million the total Department of Transportation award for this project.
- Virgin Islands LEPC awarded \$175,000 from the National Criminal History Improvement Program of the Office of Justice Programs, Department of Justice.

September 2005

- Virgin Islands Department of Health awarded \$333,902 from the Department of Health and Human Services for construction efforts.
- The Village Partners In Recovery awarded \$254,320 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to support minority substance abuse, HIV and hepatitis prevention efforts.
- The Virgin Islands Advocacy Inc. awarded \$20,000 from Health Resources and Services Administration to support traumatic brain injury protection and advocacy efforts.
- Women's Coalition of St. Croix awarded \$42,728 to address domestic violence and sexual assault needs throughout the Virgin Islands.
- Virgin Islands LEPC awarded \$100,000, \$97,000 and \$12,000 from the Department of Justice for delinquency prevention and intervention efforts and juvenile justice system improvements.

October 2005

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awards \$50,000 each from the Compassion Capital Mini Grant Program to Beyond Visions, Inc., - St. Thomas, Access to Racial and Cultural Health Institute, St. Croix, and Virgin Islands Resource Center for the Disabled, St. Thomas.

March 2006

- Virgin Islands Department of Health awarded \$3,679,567 for the operation of Head Start.
- Virgin Islands Energy Office awarded \$48,000 a feasibility study on landfill and wastewater treatment plant biogas recovery.
- Virgin Islands Department of Health awarded \$115,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to support demonstration projects for the expansion and improvement of emergency medical services for children.
- Frederiksted Health Care, Inc. awarded \$928,644 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to increase access to comprehensive primary and preventative health care and improve the health status of underserved and vulnerable populations.

April 2006

- Virgin Islands Department of Human Services awarded \$88,000 for the Victims of Crime Act program.
- Virgin Islands Housing Authority awarded \$175,000 to fund the Weed and Seed program on St. Thomas aimed at reducing violent crime through prevention programs.

May 2006

- Caribbean Dance Company awarded \$15,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts for the Access to Artistic Excellence Programs.
- Virgin Islands Council on the Arts awarded \$256,000 from the National Endowment of the Arts for the State and Regional Support Partnership grant.
- Virgin Islands Energy Office awarded \$184,000 for the State Energy Program.
- St. Thomas/St. John Chamber of Commerce awarded \$50,000 for the Anti-Gang Initiative program.
- Virgin Islands Department of Health awarded \$244,150 in Ryan White Funding for health care and support services for individuals and families living with HIV.
- The Virgin Islands government awarded \$2.7 million in Homeland Security funding under three major programs. \$1,560,000 from the State Homeland Security Program which provides assistance to states and territories to prevent, respond to and recover from acts of terrorism. \$1,130,000 from the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program which supports prevention activities and \$52,177 from the Citizens Corps Program which promotes citizen preparedness.

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Aprovechándose De La Nueva Designación HUBzone

La Administración de Pequeños Negocios (SBA) ha puesto al día su website para reflejar el hecho de que todas las tres Islas Vírgenes han sido designadas zonas HUB o sea que históricamente están consideradas zonas comerciales pero que no son suficientemente utilizadas y esto las hace elegibles y tienen preferencia en oportunidades de contratos federales con la condición de que ofrezcan empleos a una cantidad (%) de trabajadores locales, los negocios que quieren aprovecharse de esta oportunidad, deber solicitar a través de Internet, SBA. Para más información llamas por teléfono a la oficinas: U.S. Small Business Administration Office in the Virgin Islands. Tel. (340) 774-8530 en St. Thomas, o Tel. (340) 778-5380 en St. Croix.



Delegate Christensen and Representative Luis Guttierrez listen to complaints about the Federal Bureau of Investigations operations in Puerto Rico.

US VIRGIN ISLANDS
AT LARGE
POSTAL PATRON-LOCAL

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Official Business
Washington, DC 20515
U.S. House of Representatives
Donna M. Christensen
Congresswoman



Delegate Christensen listens to constituent concerns at a town hall meeting she held on St. Croix to discuss mail delay and confiscation. Federal officials invited to hear and answer the public's concerns include (left to right) Mirella Couto - Asst. Area Port Director for Trade, PR for the Customs and Border Protection, Lou Demeo, Post Office Operations Manager, San Juan, Louis Jackson, Postmaster, Frederiksted and Sylvia Vanterpool, Asst. Area Port Director Trade, Customs and Bureau Protection, VI.



Christensen Challenges Delay and Confiscation Of Virgin Islands Mail by Federal Agencies

Virgin Islands residents attempting to mail packages to the U.S. mainland have had their efforts frustrated by recent federal regulations emanating from homeland security concerns.

Prompted by a large volume of constituent complaints, Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen hosted a series of town hall meetings in May to discuss why mail from the Virgin Islands to the mainland was being held, confiscated or delayed by various federal agencies. Officials of the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Postal Service and the Food and Drug Administration were present to respond to the concerns raised at the meeting.

Christensen and constituents from St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John were told that due to homeland security concerns and because the territory was outside the U.S. Customs zone and therefore classified as foreign, old regulations were being reinforced and new regulations have been put in place which have resulted in the delay and confiscation of mail, sometimes without notification to the sender. Some of the newly enforced regulations causing the most concern include:

- Collection of fines on gifts being sent to the mainland that are worth more than \$100.
- The opening and confiscation of packages containing items such as jewelry and beauty products sent by Virgin Islands merchants to the mainland without notification to the sender.
- The confiscation and seizure of prescription drugs being sent to the mainland for the personal use of Virgin Islands patients who may be away for a short period of time by the Food and Drug Administration.

"Ordinary Virgin Islands residents are the victims of the un-

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Christensen Reta Agencias Federales Por Tardanza Y Confiscación de Correos de las Islas Vírgenes

Los residentes de las Islas Vírgenes están bastante frustrados con los esfuerzos que ellos han hecho para enviar paquetes al Continente Americano, debido a las nuevas reglamentaciones que están procediendo de los asuntos de seguridad de nuestra tierra natal.

Impulsados por una gran cantidad de quejas que vienen de los constituyentes, a Delegada al Congreso, Donna M. Christensen, auspicio una Reunión de Consejo en el mes de mayo con Oficiales para la Protección de Aduanas y Costas del Departamento de Seguridad par alas Tierras Natales; los de Servicios Postales Americanos; y los de Administración de Alimentos y Narcóticos para discutir el tema de porqué el correo, que se envía de las Islas Vírgenes al Continente Americano es detenido, confiscado y atrasado por esas agencias.

A Christensen y a sus constituyentes de St. Croix, St. Thomas y St. John les dijeron, que de acuerdo con los Asuntos de Seguridad de las Tierras Natales, el territorio está localizado fuera de la Zona Aduanera y, por lo tanto, y está clasificado como extranjero, están poniendo en vigor viejas leyes e instalando algunas nuevas. Como consecuencia, esto a resultado en el atraso y la confiscación del correo de las Islas Vírgenes, a veces sin ellos haber notificado al remitente. Que han sido puestas en vigor y que causan una gran preocupación son las siguientes:

- El cobrar una cuota por los regalos que son enviados al Continente Americano, si estos cuestan más de \$100.
- El abrir y confiscar paquetes que contienen prendas y productos de belleza sin notificar al remite a fe. Estos has sido enviados por comerciantes, desde las Islas Vírgenes el Continente Norteamericano.
- La confiscación y embargo, por la Administración de Alimentos

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tended consequences of those regulations which affect us because we are outside the U.S. Customs zone," said the Delegate. "I will be writing to these agencies and asking them to review the application of these regulations in the territory. They are being wrongly and unfairly applied to residents of the Virgin Islands who are American citizens and who should not be hindered from moving legal goods into and out of the mainland. Christensen said that it was particularly troubling since there was no attempt to inform the public about the changes in the applications of the regulations. "Being outside the U.S. Customs zone allows the territory to maintain its duty free status, a major plank in our tourism product and for our economy. The territory and its residents should not be penalized or considered "foreign" because of this," she said.

Property Tax Bill To Pass Senate Soon Quick Passage Also Expected in the House

Delegate Christensen continues to push legislation that maintains the Virgin Islands right to set its own tax policy and would prevent a significant increase in property taxes. S. 1829 is poised for passage in the Senate, and the Delegate has been working with Resources Chairman Richard Pombo for quick passage of her companion bill, H.R. 59 in the House. It would repeal a 1936 federal law which governs how property taxes are applied in the territory and has the potential because of a recent court ruling of eliminating the property tax exemptions that many low and middle income owners enjoy. "The Virgin Islands is the only U.S. jurisdiction where property taxes are based on federal law. The measure is needed so that our local government can fashion property taxes according to the circumstances and realities of our communities," she said.

Delegate Continues Efforts Although Governor's Disapproval Stalls CFO Bill

Because of the objections of Governor Charles Turnbull, legislation to create a chief financial officer is still in the Senate Energy Committee. The measure has passed the House twice. The Delegate told the Senate panel in March that although the territory is no longer in a financial crisis, a chief financial officer is still

needed. "We are still having a major problem managing and maintaining our hard fought for federal dollars and we still do not have the level of financial accountability and transparency that the people demand and expect," she said. "I am continuing to pursue the creation of a CFO and a financial management system because it is the only way to ensure the territory's financial future."

Meetings Continue to Ease EDC Regulations

Delegate Christensen continues to meet with key lawmakers in the House and the Senate to get the U.S. Department of Treasury to issue less restrictive regulations on residency and income qualifications so that the territory can maintain a viable tax incentive program. "We are still pursuing both administrative and legislative remedies to the USA Jobs Act. Our recent meetings have been positive and we expect that there will be a good outcome."

V.I. Border Patrol Amendments Included in SAFE Ports Act Passes House, Awaits Passage In Senate

Delegate Christensen successfully included language to provide a Border Patrol Unit for the Virgin Islands in HR 4954, the Security and Accountability For Every Ports (SAFE)

Act. The bill improves the security at U.S. Ports by closing the gaps in the security framework by expanding capabilities and maximizing resources. She also amended the measure to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to study and report back to Congress on the impact of the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) on charter boats and yachts in the territory. Earlier in the year, the Delegate hosted a meeting for Virgin Islands charter boaters and yachters with Homeland Security officials. The boaters complained that newly instituted manifest reporting requirements hurt their businesses.

Medicaid Cap Lifted For Two Years, Baseline Funding Increased

The cap on Medicaid payments to the Virgin Islands and other U.S. territories was lifted when President Bush recently signed

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At a meeting on Capitol Hill, the delegate met with Kevin Rodriguez and Margarita Benjamin of St. Thomas, V.I. to discuss education issues.

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y Narcóticos, de prescripciones medicas enviadas al Continente Americano para el uso de pacientes de las Islas Vírgenes que estarían fuera del territorio por muy corto tiempo

"Los residentes corrientes y comunes de Las Islas Vírgenes, son víctimas de las consecuencias no intencionadas de esas reglamentaciones que nos afectan a nosotros porque estamos fuera de la Zona Aduanera." Yo les voy a estar escribiendo a estas agencias y les voy a solicitar que revisen la aplicación de estas reglamentaciones a nuestro territorio. Estas leyes están aplicadas erróneamente, a injustamente a los residentes de las Islas Vírgenes, quienes somos ciudadanos Americanos y a quienes no se les debe impedir el enviar productos legales para el Continente Americano y fuera del Continente.

Christensen dijo que esto era particularmente problemático ya que no hacían un intento por informar al público en cuanto a los cambios en las aplicaciones de las reglamentaciones.

"Estando afuera de la Zona Aduanera Americana, esta nos permite mantener la posición que tenemos, libra de derechos a zona franca, el tablón más importante en nuestro producto turístico y para nuestra economía. El territorio y sus residentes no deben ser castigados o ser considerados extranjeros" por esto, dijo ella.

Ley Sobre Impuesto de Propiedad Para Aprobación en el Senado Pronto Se Espera Sea Rápidamente Aprobada Por La Cámara de Representantes

La Delegada Christensen continúa promoviendo legislación que mantiene a las Islas Vírgenes poniendo en orden sus propias reglas de impuestos y así evitando el aumento significativo de los impuestos sobre las propiedad. El proyecto de ley S. 1829, está equilibrado para ser aprobado por el serrado.

La Delegada ha estado trabajando con el Líder de Recursos, Richard Pombo, para que rápidamente aprueben el proyecto de ley que le acompaña, H.R. 59 en la Cámara. Este revocará la ley federal de 1936 que actualmente rige la aplicación de los impuestos sobre la propiedad en nuestro territorio y tiene mucho poten-

cial, porque en una reciente decisión de la corte, para eliminar las exenciones sobre el impuesto de la propiedad de que gozan muchos propietarios en el territorio que tienen salario bajo o de la clase media. "Las Islas Vírgenes son las únicas jurisdicciones Americanas donde los impuestos sobre la propiedad están basados en la ley federal. Esta medida es necesaria para que nuestro gobierno local pueda adaptar los impuestos sobre la propiedad de acuerdo a las circunstancias y realidades de nuestras comunidades," dijo ella.

Delegada Continuará Esfuerzos Aunque La Desaprobación del Gobernador Demora el Proyecto de Ley CFO

A causa de las objeciones del Gobernador Charles W. Turnbull la legislación para crear un Jefe Oficial de Finanzas, esta todavía en el Comité de Energía del Senado. Esta medida ha pasado ya dos veces por la Cámara de Representantes. La Delegada le dijo a un panel del Senado en marzo, que aunque el territorio ya no esta en una crisis financiera, todavía se necesita un Jefe Oficial de Finanzas. "Todavía y estamos manteniendo un gran problema administrativo manteniendo una pelea fuerte por los dólares federales. Todavía no tenemos el nivel de contabilidad financiera y transparente que la gente exige y espera dijo ella. "Yo continuare luchando para conseguir la creación de la posición de Jefe Oficial de Finanzas y de un sistema de gerencia financiero. Esta es la única forma en la cual esta asegurado nuestro futuro financiero en el territorio."



Delegate Christensen participated in a meeting held on Capitol Hill to discuss legislative strategies on closing the gap in health disparities and other related issues.. Also pictured are Kao Ping Chua, Dr. Gail Christopher, Dr. Will Pittz, and Dr. Tom Laveist.

Reuniones Continúan Aliviando Las Reglamentaciones EDC

La Delegada Christensen continúa reuniéndose con legisladores clave en la Cámara y en el Senado para hacer que el Departamento del Tesoro de los Estados Unidos emita reglamentaciones menos restrictivas en residencia y requisitos para salarios de modo que el territorio pueda mantener un programa que sea viable de incentivos para impuestos. "Nosotros todavía estamos siguiendo los remedios administrativos y legislativos para el proyecto de ley USA JOB Act. Nuestras reuniones recientes han sido muy positivas y yo espero que tengamos buenos resultados."

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the Deficit Reduction Act into law. A provision of the law will lift the cap for the next two years and provide \$2.5 million more for the Virgin Islands health system in FY 2006 and \$5 million in FY 2007. These increases added to the Medicaid funding received in FY 2005 will become the new baseline for our annual funding which will then be adjusted for inflation annually. The Act provides a 33% increase in Medicaid funding in Fiscal Year 2006 and an additional increase of 66% in Fiscal Year 2007 to the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas.

Taking Advantage of the New HUBzone Designation

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has updated its website to reflect the fact that all three Virgin Islands are now designated HUBzones, or historically underutilized business zones which make them eligible or preferences on federal contracting opportunities as long as they hire a certain percentage of local workers. Businesses who want to take advantage of this opportunity and apply online can access the SBA website at HYPERLINK "https://eweb1.sba.gov/hubzone/internet/application/dsp_apps_home.cfm" https://eweb1.sba.gov/hubzone/internet/application/dsp_apps_home.cfm. For more information contact the U.S. Small Business Administration office in the Virgin Islands at (340) 774-8530 on St. Thomas or (340) 778-5380 on St. Croix.

Federal Funding Announced From June 2005 to May 2006

June 2005

- Virgin Islands LEPC awarded \$911,660 from the Department of Justice: \$627,000 from the Office of Victims of Crime for the Victims of Crime Act, \$137,688 from the Bureau of Justice Assistance for the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners Program, \$33,000 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for the Title V Incentive Grants Program and \$113,972 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention fro the Juve-

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Enmiendas Para Las Patrullas Costaneras de Las Islas Vírgenes Incluidas en el Proyecto de Ley Puertos Seguros (Safe Ports Act) Aprobado en La Cámara, Espera Aprobación en el Senado.

La Delegada Christensen exitosamente incluyó el lenguaje apropiado para proporcionar una Unidad de Patrulla Costanera para Las Islas Vírgenes en al Proyecto de ley, H.R. 4954, ley de seguridad y Contabilidad para Cada Puerto (SAFE) Este proyecto de ley mejora la seguridad en los Puertos Americanos, cerrando aberturas en el armazón y dando capacidad para ensanchar y llevar los recursos disponibles hasta lo máximo. Ella también enmendó esta medida para exigir al Secretario de Seguridad de Tierras Natales que estudie y luego reporte al Congreso el Impacto del Sistema de Información del Pasajero de Edad Madura (APIS) en botes y yates fletados en el territorio. Temprano en el ano, la Delegada auspició una reunión para boteros y yateros de flate con oficiales de Seguridad de las Tierras Natales. Los boteros se quejaron de que los nuevos manifiestos que han sido instituídos y que se requieren en los repostes les están haciendo mucho daño a sus negocios.



Delegate Christensen participated in a virtual town hall meeting held at the U.S. Capitol. At the meeting she spoke about Medicare Part D, the new federal prescription drug program and answered questions by seniors attending the meeting in person and around the country via teleconference. Pictured: Members of AARP (dressed in red) in the audience and panelists Asst. Surgeon General John O. Agwunobi, Advocate Fran Cooper, Dr. Wilhelmina Leigh, A. Cassandra Brown, CMS Consultant Ben Johnson, Marie Smith, President AARP, Sharon Latson and Dr. Reed Tuckson..

Limite De Medicaid Elevado En Próximos Dos Años, Alimento En Base De Fondos

El límite de los pagos de Medicaid a las Islas Vírgenes y otros territorios de los Estados Unidos fué elevado cuando el Presidente Bush recientemente firmó el proyecto de ley Reducción del Déficit (Déficit Reduction Act). Una medida de la ley elevará el límite en los próximos dos años y proveerá \$2.5 millones en el año fiscal 2007. Esta aumentos, añadidos a los fondos de Medicaid recibidos en el año fiscal 2005, pasarán a ser la nueva base para nuestros fondos anuales y después serán ajustados de acuerdo con la inflación anual. La ley ofrece un 33% de aumento en los fondos de Medicaid en el ano fiscal 2006 y un aumento anual de 66% en el ano fiscal 2007 para Las Islas Vírgenes, Guam, American Samoa y el Commonwealth de Northern Marianas.

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