

Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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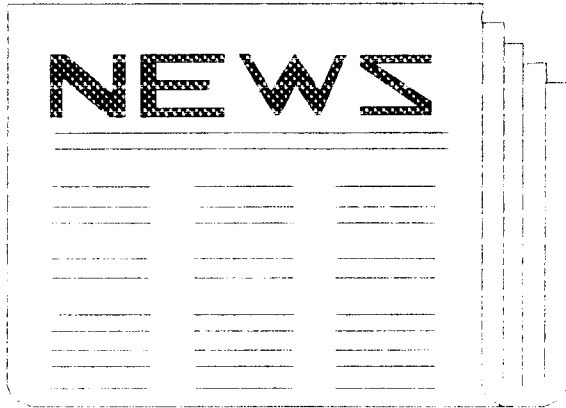
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HOLLAND L. REDFIELD II
Senator



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PRESS RELEASE

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JUDICIARY COMMITTEE VICTIMIZES CRIME VICTIMS

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REPUBLICAN SENATOR HOLLAND L. REDFIELD TODAY CHARGED THE SENATE PUBLIC SAFETY & JUDICIARY COMMITTEE WITH SENTENCING VICTIMS OF RAPE, ASSAULT, BURGLARY AND ROBBERY TO PAY TWICE FOR CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST THEM -- A DOUBLE VICTIM OF THE SAME TERRIBLE CRIME.

LEGISLATION PROPOSED BY REDFIELD, CALLED THE CRIME VICTIM RELIEF BILL, WAS REJECTED TODAY BY THE COMMITTEE ON A 2-2 TIE VOTE. THE BILL WOULD HAVE DIRECTED THE POLICE COMMISSIONER TO EXEMPT ALL CRIME VICTIMS IN THE FOUR CATEGORIES FROM PAYMENT OF FEES FOR POLICE REPORTS OF THE INCIDENTS.

SUPPORTING THE BILL BY REDFIELD, WHO IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, WERE SENS. CELESTINO WHITE AND ARTURO WATLINGTON JR.

"THROUGH THE ACTION OF THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE, THEY HAVE SHOWN AN OBVIOUS INSENSITIVITY AND CALLOUSNESS TO VICTIMS OF CRIME IN THE TERRITORY," REDFIELD SAID.

REDFIELD POSED THE QUESTION TO THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS WHO VOTED NO: "IS IT FAIR FOR A CRIME VICTIM TO HAVE TO ENDURE A CRIME OF ASSAULT, BURGLARY, RAPE OR BURGLARY, THEN HAVE TO GO TO THE POLICE STATION, WAIT IN LINE FOR POLICE REPORT, THEN BECOME A VICTIM AGAIN BY HAVING TO PAY FOR A REPORT ON SOMETHING THAT SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO HAPPEN IN THE FIRST PLACE? THIS ADDS INSULT TO INJURY."

REDFIELD POINTED OUT THAT POLICE COMMISSIONER MILTON FRETT IS IN CLEAR SUPPORT OF THE LEGISLATION, AND HAS SHOWN UNDERSTANDING AND SENSITIVITY TO THE ISSUE. ASSISTANT POLICE COMMISSIONER ANTHON "CHUCKY" CHRISTIAN MADE HIS POSITION CLEAR IN TESTIMONY TO THE COMMITTEE ON BEHALF OF FRETT.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING TESTIMONY CAME FROM THE WOMEN'S COALITION OF ST. CROIX, WHOSE MEMBERS VIVIDLY RECOUNTED EXAMPLES OF RAPE VICTIMS WHO, IN SOME CASES, SUFFERING A SECOND INDIGNITY OF HAVING TO BORROW MONEY TO OBTAIN AN OFFICIAL REPORT OF THEIR TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE.

ONE OBJECTION RAISED WAS THAT THE COMMISSIONER NOW CAN SELECTIVELY WAIVE THE FEES FOR POLICE REPORTS. "MY ARGUMENT IS WHY SHOULD SOMEONE HAVE TO GO AND BEG THE COMMISSIONER TO WAIVE THE FEE," REDFIELD SAID.

A SECOND OBJECTION WAS THAT THE V.I. TREASURY NEEDS THE MONEY. "I ANSWER THAT BY ASKING: HOW WE CAN PUT A PRICE ON THE PAIN, SUFFERING AND HUMILIATION OF A CRIME VICTIM?" COUNTERED REDFIELD.

"I WANT TO MAKE IT CLEAR TO MY COLLEAGUES THAT I INTEND TO SPECIAL ORDER THIS BILL TO THE FLOOR ON A ROLL CALL, SO THAT EACH OF THE SENATORS' CONSTITUENTS CAN SEE AND HEAR THE REASONS THEY ARE FOR OR AGAINST THIS VITALLY-NEEDED BILL," REDFIELD SAID.

REDFIELD THANKED SENS. WATLINGTON AND WHITE FOR THEIR UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT OF THE CRIME VICTIM RELIEF BILL FROM THE OUTSET.

"WE HAVE MANY LAWS PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF PERPETRATORS OF CRIME. WE NEED A FEW MORE LAWS PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF VICTIMS, AND A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRAUMA THAT CRIME VICTIMS GO THROUGH," REDFIELD SAID.