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DELEGATE ASSURES ST. CROIX VETS CAN FILL PRESCRIPTIONS

Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress Ron de Lugo announced today that the Veterans Administration has contracted two pharmacies on St. Croix to take over dispensing prescription drugs to veterans after two other stores refused to continue the service.

The Delegate said People's Drugstore and Golden Rock Pharmacy agreed yesterday to assume the Veterans Administration contract to fill veterans' prescriptions on St. Croix after D&D Apothecary Hall and Gores' Pharmacy backed out.

D&D and Gores will continue to refill prescriptions they initially handled but will not fill any new prescriptions. D&D and Gores have reportedly claimed they are losing money on sales to veterans even though the VA pays pharmacies a \$3.00 dispensing fee on top of their regular charge for filling veterans' prescriptions.

"I question the reasons for pulling out," the Delegate said.  
"Virgin Islands consumers pay some of the highest prescription

drug prices in the country. It's very disappointing that some drug stores are refusing to provide prescriptions for our veterans."

In discussing the issue with the Delegate's staff, Veterans Administration officials said that the average prescription cost to the VA in 1991 was \$5.40 in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, \$6.53 in Ponce, \$8.05 in San Juan, and \$23.04 in the Virgin Islands.

De Lugo said his Washington office is compiling information about prescription drug prices from the Veterans Administration and the Health Care Financing Administration which he will forward to Senator Holland Redfield, Chairman of the Committee on Consumer Protection, in preparation for local hearings on drug pricing in the Virgin Islands next month.

The problem of cost and availability of prescription drugs for Virgin Islands veterans should be largely solved, de Lugo said, when the Veterans Administration opens Community Based Clinics on St. Croix and St. Thomas later this year. The Virgin Islands Delegate has been the chief mover behind the CBC's which each will be staffed by a full-time physician and nurse and will dispense the most commonly used prescription drugs directly to veterans.

De Lugo suggested that St. Croix veterans who have questions about filling prescription drugs should contact the Vet Center at the United Shopping Center in Sion Farm. The telephone number is 778-5553.