

Senator Saraauw

JANUARY 2018



Majority
Press Conference

The Status of
Education

Committee on
Workforce Development



OVERVIEW

We are getting there. One step at a time. However, did someone say Tsunami? With a failure to receive an alert, Virgin Islands residents would quickly be reminded of the Territory's communications issues.

During the month of January, Viya's restoration efforts, Department of Education's preparedness, the National Guards and VITEMA, were all brought to the senate floor. This month would also mark the Senator's first hearing as Chairperson for the Committee on Workforce Development, Consumer Affairs, and Culture, which she is proud to serve.

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MAJORITY CAUCUS PRESS CONFERENCE

In a special press conference held by the Majority Caucus on January 18th at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall, Senator Neville James, Majority Leader, introduced Senator Sarauw officially as the newest member. As a member of the Majority, Senator Sarauw, who still remains Independent, would have the opportunity to chair her own committee. Senator Sarauw was invited to the podium to give her remarks formally as a member of the Majority.

“I am happy to be a member of the Majority. I look forward to working with my fellow colleagues, helping the people of the Territory to recover from the two devastating hurricanes and ways to improve our economy, our health, infrastructure, education infrastructure and so forth”, stated Senator Sarauw.

With the reorganization of the body, Senator Sarauw is the chairperson of Workforce Development, Consumer Affairs, and Culture and sits on the Committees of Rules and the Judiciary; Education, Youth, and Recreation; Housing, Public Works, Waste Management, and Planning; and Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety. The first committee hearing for Workforce Development, Consumer Affairs, and Culture was held Monday, January 29th at 9am.



NEW LEGISLATIVE COORDINATOR

Senator Sarauw welcomes the newest member to her staff Mrs. Shenise Daughtry, as her new Legislative Coordinator.

Born and raised in these beautiful US Virgin Islands, Shenise's call to service has come full circle. Heart-tugged on the campus of the University of Delaware, as an International Relations major, she realized that she wanted to serve as a life-long vocation and not just on an occasional weekend. Thus, Shenise continued her studies in Georgia to obtain her Masters of Public Administration. Thereafter, she served as an AmeriCorps member and then a nonprofit professional working alongside dedicated community members and city officials as they sought to collaboratively address social ills and facilitate sustainable change within neighborhoods across Delaware and Maryland. Now, for her island community, she desires to use her passion for service and gained experience to bring about the bold and progressive change that Senator Janelle K. Sarauw works towards.

Shenise's experiences have allowed her to see that all communities share a confounding complexity, yet an underlying hope that change is possible -- a truth that many no longer believe, but are desperate for. Standing on the belief that "with God all things are possible" and seeing that desperation for change on so many faces, compels her to serve with a sense of urgency and purpose. Shenise is excited to serve in this new capacity, to engage in the political process, and to finally have the opportunity to embrace her own community. She states that "it is time to rise up in a way like never before to sow our God-given talents and answer the call to genuine service." Shenise is undoubtedly grateful to be able to do so -- in the place she calls home.



TSUNAMI WARNING

On January 9th about 9:52 pm, the National Weather Service issued a tsunami advisory for the Caribbean region, to include the United States Virgin Islands, after a 7.6 earthquake occurred off the coast of Honduras. The potential for disaster came when no alert was issued from the VI-alert system and with abysmal cellular service, many Virgin Islanders were left unaware that there was a tsunami advisory in effect for the Territory. “Our communication infrastructure system continues to be a major issue and needs to be addressed expeditiously”, stated Senator Sarauw. After Hurricanes Irma and Maria struck the islands, the Senator has been in constant contact with the communication companies trying to reestablish reliable service for Viya, Sprint, and AT&T customers.

On December 11, 2017 Senator Sarauw issued a letter to Viya requesting that they better communicate their restoration plans and efforts to the community. Viya has since provided more frequent updates via the Daily News and has launched a new restoration page on their website – www.viya.vi/restoration - to keep customers informed about their restoration efforts and progress. Senator Sarauw’s office has also been working along with Mr. Patrick Fucik, National Director, State Legislative Affairs of Sprint, who has personally agreed to address the concerns of the accounts of affected Sprint customers, following the storms. The office has provided a log to Mr. Fucik with customers numbers and concerns. AT&T however, has been unresponsive to inquiries from Senator Sarauw’s office.

Senator Sarauw has also reached out to the Public Service Commission to inquire about their advocacy for reliable utility service, particularly from our telephone company. According to VI code, the Public Service Commission is responsible for regulating public utilities, including telecommunication, to ensure that service is reasonably safe and adequate.

“The event of last night is a major reminder as to the importance and need of reestablishing communication within our islands post haste. Not only do we need to restore service, but provide an infrastructure that can function through a crisis. This is a public safety issue! I would also like to applaud those residents, both local and abroad, that utilized whatever means of communication to inform each other of the potential threat. The Territory needs to remain informed, vigilant, prepared”, stated the Senator.



CHAIRING HER FIRST COMMITTEE HEARING

With a pound of the gavel, Senator Sarauw's first Committee Hearing for Workforce Development, Consumer Affairs, and Culture came to order on January 29, 2018. On the agenda were expected updates on the status of unemployment and disaster unemployment claims as well as the status of Federal funds within the Department of Labor; updates on consumer affairs and the costs of goods within the Territory; VI Carnival Committee's preparedness for the St. Thomas Carnival Season; and updates from the Department of Tourism. Invited testifiers were Catherine Hendry, Esq., Commissioner, Department of Labor; Devin Carrington, Esq., Commissioner, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs; Beverly Nicholson-Doty, Commissioner, Department of Tourism; and Halvor Hart III, Executive Director, Virgin Islands Carnival Committee.

During Block I, the Department of Labor reported on the surge in unemployment claims which had been reported as the highest in the past ten years. Questions on employee morale, long delays in unemployment insurance and disaster unemployment payments to claimants, lack of employee overtime compensation, the high-risk status of all federal grants, the status of workforce development programs and apprenticeship programs were all concerns addressed. The Department of Labor, however, was unable to provide substantial responses related to much of the inquiries particularly in regard to the status of Federal grants.

During the same Block, the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs reported on its current status and the costs of goods within the Territory. Post-storms, it was established that several businesses engaged in price gouging and may be continuing in the practice, according to Commissioner Carrington. However, lack of enforcement officers appears to be plaguing the Department and hindering progress in holding businesses accountable. Moreover, Commissioner Carrington expressed his desire for an increase in the penalty amount (i.e. fine) in order to better discourage business misconduct. The Department provided responses to the concerns of the legislative body to include a delay in processes, lack of enforcement, inadequate regulation, and the Department's overall resolve to make the necessary adjustments to fulfill its duties.

In Block II, the Carnival Committee reported on their plans for the St. Thomas Carnival season and the increased costs the Committee experienced in doing business according to Executive Director Halvor Hart III. One of the big concerns was the effect of limited accommodations post-hurricane on-island for the Carnival Season. However, Carnival sponsors remained on board. Another concern raised was the revenue generated from the Carnival Season, which Mr. Hart was unable to provide statistics on.

The Department of Tourism reported on marketing strategies and initiatives for the approaching season. There is a notable decrease in cruise ship calls, which began prior to the storms and continues since. The marketing campaign is "VI Still Nice" and while 2018 may be a challenge, there is hope for an uptick in demand of cruise ships and visitation throughout the Territory. The Department addressed concerns over a key vacancy to which Commissioner Doty-Nicholson noted the significant budget cuts; the apparent lack of branding and identity as a Territory which we could authentically market. The VI Department of Tourism is in continuous conversation with the VI Carnival Committee and they are currently collaborating to ensure a successful Carnival season.

By the end of the day and after chairing her first hearing, Senator Sarauw admitted to being nervous. However, a sigh of relief came when the Senator saw a familiar face coming into the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall. Being the freshman Senator and the youngest, the Senator had big shoes to fill as she chaired her Committee on Workforce Development. Seeing her father, "Pops" Sarauw, just smiling at her gave the Senator the reassurance and boost she needed.





JULIAN BISHOP

During Senator Sarauw's first Committee Hearing on Workforce Development, Consumer Affairs, and Culture, Senator Sarauw paused to recognize intern, Julian Bishop, who came over from the island of St. Croix to attend the hearing. Julian is a senior at the Good Hope Country Day School and is college bound. During his internship at the Legislature, Julian can be found in one of the chambers engaged and willing to learn.

"I look forward to his success in the future. Very smart, very articulate", stated the Senator. "We must acknowledge him because our most precious natural resource, he is standing in front of us. We appreciate you."



STATE OF THE TERRITORY

On January 22nd Senator Sarauw and her staff attended the 2018 State of the Territory Address. When asked her thoughts about the Governor's Address, the Senator expressed her concerns about Education and the lack of payment to the Virgin Islands National Guards. "He's an Economic Governor, big on numbers, big on the Economy but I think he missed the mark on Education", stated Senator Sarauw.

The Senator's concern remains the ramifications of split sessions on the Territory's youth. "We can not afford to rob our youths out of quality education", stated the Senator. "Another concern is the learning environment. It is unacceptable for students and teachers to be exposed to mold. We also have to do better for our National Guards. We expect them to be the first on the ground after an emergency and so we need to pay them for their service to this Territory", stated Senator Sarauw.



BCB: TEAM H

At the request of Mr. Hamilton-Kraft, Senator Sarauw visited Team H at BCB Middle School to engage the students with a lesson in social studies. The Senator discussed when the Virgin Islands was purchased, the value in gold, and the purpose the islands would serve the United States in guarding the Panama Canal, to name a few. Senator Sarauw and her staff also engaged the students with an activity that would help as a future study guide utilizing supplies that were sent by Natalie Day and schools in the DC/Maryland area.

“Teaching is one of the most noble professions and I appreciate those who educate our children”, stated the Senator.



On a conference call held January 18, 2018, with Mr. Patrick Fucik the National Director of State Legislative Affairs of Sprint and other stakeholders, Senator Sarauw was informed that to reestablish cellular services to the Territory, Sprint has joined with PR Wireless, Inc., a company based out of Puerto Rico, to form PR Wireless PR, LLC. The combined venture will be reevaluating and restructuring cellular services in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. The result of combining wireless licenses, network assets and local management expertise of PR Wireless, Inc., also known as Open Mobile, will be a better infrastructure and stronger competitor for the Caribbean region.

Many local Sprint customers have reached out to the Senator's office to indicate that Sprint representatives have begun reaching out to them and they are receiving their credits. “I remain committed to advocating on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands, as I do recognize the importance of reliable communication services”, stated the Senator.



M.I.A.

With the failure to appear, Senator Sarauw agreed to subpoena Brigadier General Deborah Y. Howell, Adjutant General Virgin Islands National Guard and Honorable Mona Barnes, Director Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency.

“It’s about the third or fourth attempt that we have had in bringing VITEMA and the National Guard here and there are some pressing matters that we must address and we have not spoken to them since the storm”, stated Senator Sarauw.

By the end of Roll Call the vote was carried to subpoena Brigadier General Deborah Y. Howell and Honorable Mona Barnes to show at a date within two weeks.

Senator Sarauw presented a five-page petition signed by the National Guard members requesting their pay. “Too much time has passed without answers from the heads that answer to this body and ultimately to the people of the Territory, and to whom their safety is entrusted”, stated the Senator. “There’s a correlation between the National Guard and the Government and these are the same soldiers who are not paid that would have been expected to come out of bed and man their post had a tsunami hit this Territory and it really begs a question as how we treat our local disaster responders across agencies. We’ve seen it with the bus drivers transporting the linemen. We saw it with the waste haulers, we see it with the Police Department struggling to receive overtime, we see it with the Bureau of Correction struggling to receive overtime and as a Government our people our greatest natural resource and it’s imperative we treat them as such.”



Status of EDUCATION

On January 17th the Committee of Education, Youth and Recreation met with the Department of Education to get an update on the status and conditions of educational programs and facilities in the Territory. Invited testifiers were the Honorable Sharon McCollum, Commissioner, Department of Education; the Honorable Terrence Joseph, Chairman, V.I. Board of Education; Ms. Carol Callwood, President, AFT Local 1825; Ms. Rosa Soto-Thomas, President, AFT Local 1826; Mr. Carver Farrow, President, STT/STJ EAA and Ms. Rosa White, President, STX EAA.

The primary discussion was the Department of Education's progress and utilization of assistance from FEMA. After being hit with two Cat5 hurricanes, schools being damaged, a drop in student enrollment, teachers resigning, and little progress being made, Senators were concerned with the Department of Education's preparedness for the next school year and the ramifications of double session on public school students and teachers.

Commissioner McCollum expressed the repetitive process the Department has to go through with FEMA since personnel changes are made frequently within the agency and the wait they experience to gain funding to proceed with the modular units. The Department of Education is utilizing all of its resources to ensure current students make it through the school year despite double session but the biggest problem the Department of Education faces is the lack of available funding to get rebuilding moving. The department is working on establishing modular units for temporary use until the facilities can be built. Locations identified for the modular units were Ulla F. Muller for Gladys Abraham and Cancryn would be the property adjacent from the hospital and Lockhart school.

Senator Sarauw made a point of clarification during the hearing. "This body is on regular calls with FEMA and I don't believe that Department of Education is best utilizing the first branch of government in giving us full disclosure of the issues that you do have with FEMA. We speak with FEMA often and I believe it is imperative that you guys make us aware of the issues that you are having."

With the lack of development on the status of the schools it looks inevitable that the next school year will be split sessions.



Viya & PSC

Can You Hear Me Now?

When Hurricanes Irma and Maria hit the islands in 2017 it became very evident there was an issue with the communications infrastructure. On January 24th the PSC came before the Senators to provide updates to communication restoration. However, Senator Sarauw's focus was Viya and the PSC accountability to the fact that Viya's telephone system failed. The Senator's concern was and still remains Viya's insufficient battery units. A letter was sent in December to Viya for failure to provide communication updates pertaining to restoration efforts. In addressing Mr. Donald Cole, Executive Director of PSC, Senator Sarauw was concerned about Viya's services and the PSC's involvement.



"The first line of defense is communications", stated Senator Sarauw. "How was Viya allowed to bundle everything? Was the PSC involved in this?" asked the Senator.



According to Mr. Cole, the PSC was involved and mentioned the units were also a service that was implemented in the states. The original copper system that was in place was inefficient, and they had to switch over to the fiber system to provide the services being offered. Based on FCC rules, the company met the requirements of communication. Mr. Cole also recommended for another meeting when Viya representatives can also meet to discuss the Senators concerns regarding the choices made for implementing the system. Mr. Cole admitted after two Cat 5 hurricanes the entire communication infrastructure was destroyed. However, this still did not sit well with the Senator.

"Even without the storm, when WAPA goes Viya goes. That's a problem. That's a tremendous problem that we need to go back to the board and revisit our communications infrastructure. I can't stand and say this is okay in a 21st century", stated the Senator.

Committee on Rules and Judiciary

Jan. 25th & 26th Nominations



Nominee Nelson Petty, Jr.

VOTE: SENATOR SARA UW - YES

to serve as Commissioner for the Department of Public Works.



Nominee Julio A. Rhymer, Sr.

VOTE: SENATOR SARA UW - YES

(SEN. SARA UW VOTED NOMINATION TO BE HELD IN COMMITTEE)

to serve as Director for the Office of Management and Budget.



Nominee Stacy A. Bourne

VOTE: SENATOR SARA UW - YES

to serve as a member on the Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission for the District of St. Thomas.



Re-appointment of Hubert Turnbull

VOTE: SENATOR SARA UW - YES

to serve as a member on the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority for the District of St. Thomas.




Re-appointment of Elizabeth Armstrong

VOTE: SENATOR SARA UW - YES

to serve as a member on Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority Board for the District of St. Croix.

CRAFTING POLICY

| DATE SUBMITTED | SUMMARY | ASSIGNED NUMBER | STATUS |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 7/31/2017 | Amendment of Act 7938 to include ban on importation, use or sale of all styrofoam and plastic straws. | 32-476 | Re-assigned to Attorney Mollah |
| 7/31/2017 | Bill requesting transfer on death beneficiaries for vehicles | 17-0772 | Pre-empted/ Co-Sponsoring with Senator Forde/BR-17-0031 |
| 8/1/2017 | Recognition of Ms. Lorna Freeman | 17-0780; NEW BR 17-0709 | Pre-empted/Primary Sponsor with Senator DeGraff/BR-17-0709 |
| 8/4/2017 | Bill requesting merger of WICO and Virgin Islands Port Authority | 17-0781 | Primary Sponsor with Senator Sanes/ BR 17-0551 |
| 8/15/2017 | Amendment to change school year to align with districts within the 50 states. | 32-486 | Pre-empted [Senator Roach] |
| 8/16/2017 | Amendment to add moratorium on gas stations STT/STX | 32-488 | Pre-empted/Primary Sponsor with Senator Sanes/ Bill No 32-0133 |
| 8/16/2017 | Bill to impose a fee on money transmissions | 17-0798 | Pre-empted [Senator Hansen] |
| 8/18/2017 | Amendment to create Dept Tourism & Culture | 17-0806 | Partially pre-empted [Blyden] BR 17-0182/Am 32-123 |
| 8/23/2017 | Amendment to re-appropriate funds from Hotel Development Fund to SPR for 5 vans | 32-496 | Replaced with Amend. No. 32-553 |
| 8/28/2017 | Bill to establish probate Division | 17-0820 | Re-assigned to Attorney Tharpes |
| 8/29/2017 | Amendment to curb violence by strengthening loitering laws | 32-506 | Assigned to Attorney Augustin Ayala First Draft Received/ Edited |



| DATE SUBMITTED | SUMMARY | ASSIGNED NUMBER | STATUS |
|----------------|--|-----------------|--|
| 9/1/2017 | Amendmnet to add "sick" to the Pharmaceutical Assitance program | 32-512 | Draft Request In Legal Counsel |
| 10/19/2017 | Resolution to recognize climate change as a policy issue | 17-0836 | Draft Request In Legal Counsel |
| 10/24/2017 | Repeal of Act 7987 Title I, Sec 2-6 - Sin Tax | 32-521 | Draft Request In Legal Counsel |
| 12/1/2017 | Amendment to CDL loan changing interest to 5% | 32-550 | Passed 12/1/17 |
| 12/1/2017 | Amend Act 7866, sec. 1 adding 200,000 for acquisition of Passenger vans for DSPR | 32-553 | Passed 12/21/17 |
| 1/10/2018 | Resolution to recognize The Family Resource Center, Inc. | 18-0887 | Drafted by Attorney Tharpes & Received |
| 1/25/2018 | Amendment to provide definition for bona fide resident | | Rescinded |

TH
Janel

**OFFICE OF
SENATOR SARA UW
FINANCIAL REPORT***



32nd Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Office of the Honorable Janelle K Sarauw
2018, January Financial Report

* Annual budgets for all senator offices is allotted at the start of the year.
Senator Sarauw has been allotted half of this.

EXPENDITURES

| LINE ITEM | DESCRIPTION | MONTHLY \$ | YTD |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------|--------------------|
| TRAVEL (AIR/HOTEL*) | [Senator] [Staff] | \$370 | \$8,566.11 |
| PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | | \$0 | \$1,420 |
| OFFICE EQUIPMENT | Internet/Cable, Maintenance | \$0 | \$5,304.96 |
| OFFICE SUPPLIES | Paper, envelopes, pens, pencils, binders, folders, etc | \$0 | \$2,619.10 |
| PROFESSIONAL SERVICES | Storage/Freight | \$246.50 | \$ 3,566.22 |
| MISC | Committee of Workforce - Catering | \$1,620.00 | \$3,295.09 |
| | | | |
| Total | | \$2,236.50 | \$24,771.48 |

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Next Month

- **Loitering Town Hall**
- **Committee of the Whole**
- **Committee on Workforce Development**
- **School Tours**



Senator Sarauw swearing in Testifiers during Committee on Workforce Development Hearing