



Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection

Legislature USVI

March 10, 2026 · 3.6 hours · gov

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0:00:00 . Thank you.

0:01:00 Let's go. We'll be right back. I'm going to show you how to do it. Let's go. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. All right.

0:16:00 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much.

0:18:30 Thank you. Let's go. We'll be right back. [3 such phrases repeated 11 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:24:00 Thank you. We'll be right back. Good morning. [3 such phrases repeated 21 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:33:58 The meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2026 for the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection has been called to order. I say good morning once again to everyone listening and viewing. Welcome to the first Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection meeting here in St. John in the Cleone H. Creaky Legislative Conference Room. which I have the honor to chair a law to chair so we'll be here my alongside my seasoned colleague vice chair senator Nova Lee Francis jr. I want to extend a warm welcome to our committee and non-committee members and not in attendance your presence participation and support of the legislative process greatly appreciated. As always, I begin by expressing deep gratitude to my dynamic duo, Ms. Watley and Ms. Michael. Thank you for all you do. Thank you for everything you do daily, especially making this meeting happen here today. To those watching or listening across our Virgin Islands, thank you for tuning in and thank you for

engaging in the legislative process. Good morning, colleagues and members of the community. March is Virgin Islands History Month, a time for us to celebrate the rich culture, resilience, and contributions of the people who have shaped these islands into the vibrant community we proudly call home. It is also National Women's History Month. When we honor the countless women whose leadership, courage, and dedication continue to strengthen our families, our institutions, and our society. Women in charge. So I don't debate it today.

0:36:04 Additionally, March, them boys instead of crack a smile, my son. All right. I ain't getting enough problems later. Additionally, March is recognized as Social Workers Month, giving us the opportunity to acknowledge the compassionate professionals who dedicated their lives to supporting individuals and families through some of life's most challenging moments. Their service is vital to the well-being of our community. As we reflect on these observances, let us also remember the values that define us as Virgin Islanders. Our spirit of caring, sharing and looking out for one another. That spirit continues to guide guide us and strengthen our community. Before I move forward I'd like to say congratulations to the Virgin Islands Fire Emergency Medical Services Center who graduated another class of proud Virgin Island firefighters, emergency medical technicians and I thank the directors here and the Assistant Commission, the whole leadership of the Virgin Island, famous family, congratulations. You know it's surprisingly that under some bad circumstances I had a little tragic in the family, tragedy in the family, you know by violence and the very next day, no, not true, the Monday, the Monday or Tuesday after. I saw all of them at the hospital working. They were riding the trucks going in and out. So I'd just like to commend you and the team. They're walking. You have them out there already. Thank you. Director Josh Hinn, I knew you'd be proud as well too. My hope is that this year continues to be one filled with gratitude, unity, good health and progress for every Virgin Islander. Let us move forward together with faith,

0:38:05 purpose and a shared commitment to building a brighter future for our people and i just like just you know before i move on with today's business just like to say to all of us in the virgin islands if we just share a little more love each day this place would be a better place i don't know why so many people are so angry but if we just share a little bit of love things will be a better place just a little bit more love man it can't kill us a simple greeting a good morning good afternoon sometimes you just have people rumbling in their truths i mean just a little bit more love in this community and i think that would help us over you know money nothing could beat that that's a little bit more love and that's me to you today the committee will receive testimony from the rep from represented representatives of the virgin island fire and emergency medical services the virgin islands waste management authority the Caribbean Green Technology Centre and VITEMA regarding Bill No. 36.0232 related to the disposal of green waste used in controlled incineration technologies. The committee will also hear from the Virgin Islands Lottery, the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Finance regarding Bill No. 36.0233 which addresses amendments to the Virgin Islands Lottery.

0:39:28 We have two bills in front of the committee today. Thank you once again to my colleagues, testifiers, and the public for your continued engagement. Let us proceed with today's agenda in the spirit of service, collaboration, and gratitude. Let's begin today's work on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands. Madam Clerk, could I please have a roll call? Yes, Mr. Chair. Senator Ray Fonseca.

0:39:58 Senator Fruncega, here. Senator Novel E. Francis Jr. Senator Francis Jr., absent. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger, present. Senator Francis Heiliger, present. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins, here. Senator Gittins, present. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Senator Johnson, absent. Senator Carla J. Joseph, present. Senator Joseph, present. Senator Avery L. Lewis, present. Senator Lewis, present. Mr. Chair, you have five members present, two members absent. Thank you. Madam Clerk, are there any correspondence from any committee members to be read into the record yes mr chair you may proceed dated march 9th 2026 the honorable senator avery l lewis chairman committee on government operations veterans affairs and consumer protection 36 legislature of the virgin islands capital building charlotte O'Malley, PO Box 1690, St. Thomas VI 00804. The Honorable Senator Franklin D. Johnson's excuse letter. Dear Senator Avery L. Lewis, please be advised that I will be unable to attend today's Tuesday, March 10, 2026 Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and consumer protection hearing scheduled for 11 a.m. at the Cleone H. Creaky Legislative Conference Room, St. John. I apologize for my absence and any resulting inconvenience it may cause. In the interim, I kindly request that my office be provided with the copies of all circulating documents distributed. Thank you for your consideration and understanding.

0:42:02 Sincerely, Franklin D. Johnson, Senator 36, Legislature of the Virgin Islands. This concludes the reading of the correspondences. Thank you. Madam Clerk, are there any correspondences from any invited testifiers to be read on the record? No, Mr. Chair. Thank you. The Committee of Government, Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection stands in recess for two minutes. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.

0:46:02 Good morning again. The Committee of Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection is back on the record. I'd like to recognize my esteemed colleagues, Senator Nova Lee Francis, Jr. Madam Clerk, please mark

essential so that our landfills do not continue to source for potential fires, placing firefighters and our community at risk. Control incineration technology allow communities to address these hazards in a timely manner while maintaining appropriate operational and environmental safeguard in addition to safe benefits these technology can reduce the burn

1:08:54 the burden on the already limited land space landfill capacity decreased transportation costs associated with getting debris off island and support faster recovery and natural After natural disasters, I have always said on this floor that enforcement and proper regulation must be followed and it is not different with this technology. When operated properly, control incineration can be an effective and responsible component of not only of waste management authority, but our emergency preparedness. For this reason, I ask for your support of Bill number 36-0232 to allow control incineration technology under proper oversight and regulation in the territory.

1:09:52 So, Mr. Chair, at this time, I'd like to, in advance, thank my colleagues in this committee for the support that I expect them to support this bill. And thank you for this time, Mr. Chair. thank you senator joseph uh colleagues we're going to go straight to the testifiers and we're going to begin with the virgin islands fire ems uh director antonio stephens you may proceed good morning honorable senator abriel lewis chair committee government operations veteran affairs and consumer protection other distinguished committee members and the the listening and viewing audience i am antonio stevens the director of the virgin islands fire and emergency medical service also appearing on behalf of the agency our assistant director of fire clarence stevenson and st john deputy chief of operations magabi colleagues senator thank you for the opportunity to testify and build 36-0232 an act authorizing the disposal of green waste using controlled incineration technologies including air curtains incinerators the virginia's family mercy medical service welcomes the adoption of improved waste management strategies in the territory and we do support bill 36-0232 the bill amends act 8018 to grant authority to waste management authority and landfill operators to burn green waste using controlled incinerators air curtain incinerators or other substantially similar technology if not effectively managed green waste can accumulate at the landfills and create conditions that are conducive to fires and as we have seen in recent years the fires at the territories landfills can be major events that last for days or even weeks and require significant resources to extinguish bill 36-02032 specifically the language proposed to replace subsection a in act 8018 gives the waste management authority the legal authorization needed to implement an effective green waste management strategy. And the Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Service is in support of the language as written. The new subsection B proposed in the bill outlines specific permitting requirements for open burning of green waste and private property. While these requirements closely align with the agency's current criteria for desuing burn permits, the Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Service recommends the following revisions. Adding language that states the burning will occur during daylight hours only. Removing during daylight hours from subsection B2. Replacing Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Service with Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Service. second, replacing Virgin Islands Fire Services with Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services. We hope that this body will consider these recommendations and will take favorable action on a final draft of the bill that incorporates them. Thank you again for affording us the opportunity to testify on this important legislation. We await your questions. Thank you. Director Stephens, to best of your knowledge on you giving testimony from FEMS

1:13:40 today. Only you giving testimony. That is correct. Thank you. Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority. Sorry. I was a director. CFO Griffin, you may proceed. Good day, Honorable Senator Avery Lewis, Chairman of the Committee on Government Operations, Veteran Affairs and Consumer Protection, other committee members, and members of the viewing and listening audience. I'm Daryl Griffith, the Chief Financial Officer of the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority. I appear today with the Authority's Chief Engineer, Mr. Alex Bruni, and Chief of Solid Waste, Ms. Sheena Isanason, to provide testimony on the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority's planned use of air curtain burners to manage green waste. We appreciate the opportunity to clarified authorities permitted and appropriate methods for the disposal of green waste with a specific focus on the authorities planned use of air curtain burners as a modern controlled environmentally sound system for managing vegetative debris across the territory the US Virgin Islands faces structural and environmental challenges common to small island communities including limited land availability, high per capita waste generation, and costly logistical constraints and restrict long-term reliance on landfills. These challenges are well documented in global and regional research on island waste systems.

1:15:22 Waste management is simultaneously navigating major priorities such as landfill expansion, closure mandates, and compliance with federal consent agreements. As testified previously, the authority's long-term strategy places significant emphasis on waste diversion, especially organic and combustible materials which make up a substantial portion of the territory's waste stream. Waste characterization data confirms that the USVI has meaningful opportunities to divert vegetative waste from disposal practices that overburden the landfills.

- 1:15:59 Today, most vegetative debris such as tree limbs, brush, yard waste, and storm debris is still directed to our already constrained landfills, creating fire hazards, space limitations, and operational inefficiencies. Air curtain burners present a safer, cleaner, and federally recognized alternative. What is an air curtain burner and what it's not? An air curtain burner is an environmentally sound engineered combustion system using a high-velocity curtain of air across the top of a burn chamber to trap smoke and particles, re-burn them at higher temperatures, and drastically reduce visible emissions. This result is a cleaner, more complete burn with far less smoke.
- 1:16:48 Air curtain burners are formally recognized and approved for vegetative debris reduction by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These systems are safe and widely used after hurricanes because they rapidly reduce storm debris while adhering to environmental standards. An air curtain burner is not an open burn pile. Managing emissions is a critical component of operating any waste reduction technology, and air curtain burners are specifically engineered to maintain environmentally safe smoke levels during operation.
- 1:17:31 Unlike open burning, where smoke is uncontrolled and can carry ash, particles, and visible emissions into surrounding communities, the air curtain burners use a powerful air curtain to create a high-efficient, high-temperature burn. This process dramatically reduces smoke, minimizes particular pollution, and ensures compliance with strict federal opacity standards. By controlling opacity, which means the amount of light blocked by emitted smoke, we ensure that operation remains cleaner, safer, and significantly less impactful on public health and the environment. The air curtain burner's ability to consistently remain within allowable opacity limits is one of the primary reasons this equipment is recommended. It provides the authority with a reliable, environmentally sound method of managing vegetative waste while reducing nuanced smoke, improving air quality, and preventing violations that could arise from uncontrolled burning. and understanding smoke levels, which we refer to as opacity. Opacity refers to the percentage of light blocked by smoke. Zero opacity means clear air. 100% opacity means thick black smoke. Federal requirements mandate that air-controlled burners operate at 10% opacity or less, demonstrating a highly controlled low-emission burn.
- 1:19:02 Short duration opacity allowances up to 35% apply only during the first 30 minutes of startup. Waste Management is evaluating the air burners, a high-capacity above-ground unit designed specifically for clean wood and green waste. The key features are it processes 6 to 10 tons per hour, uses a clean Tier 4 diesel engine, refractory-lined firebox for high-temperature controlled burns. It has dual rare doors for ash biochar removal, and it's deployable at the Anguilla-Bavoni or other vegetative waste sites. What can't be burned and what cannot, what's allowed are tree trunks, branches and brush, stumps and yard trimmings, clean untreated lumber, storm debris consistent only of vegetation, and what's prohibited, paint or pressure treated wood, construction and demolition debris, household waste, plastics, engineered wood, hazardous or medical waste. This ensures the system is only used for natural, clean materials. How the system operates? A startup, ignition using clean kindling, no fuel accelerants, air curtain activation. The blower creates a high-speed air barrier across the firebox. Control loading. Material is added steadily to maintain temperatures of 1,600 to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. smoke monitoring less than 10 percent opacity during normal operations up to 35 percent opacity allowed during the first 30 minutes of startup owning the safety controls ember screens dust control and clean surroundings reduce risk ash handling after cooling the remaining ash or biochar is safely
- 1:21:02 removed record keeping operators log burns emissions readings and maintenance for regulatory compliance the territorial green waste volumes to fully illustrate the necessity of air control burners waste management provides the following volumes of green waste the daily green waste waste intake. Territorial 80 to 85 tons per day. St. Thomas 20 tons per day. St. Croix 60 tons per day. Annual green waste intake. Territorial 29,200 to 31,000 tons per year. St. Thomas 7,300 tons per year. St. Croix, 21,900 tons per year. And the reason why St. Thomas numbers are significantly lower is reduced because waste management currently cannot accept green waste at the Bovoni landfill, which has no available space. This forces residents and haulers to store material or dispose of it unofficially, increasing fire risk and the likelihood of illegal dumping. To address the current inability to accept green waste on St. Thomas, Waste Management is actively implementing temporary alternatives to reduce stockpiling, fire risk, and illegal dumping until the air curtain burners are procured and operational.
- 1:22:28 In the interim, we're pursuing short-term solutions through private partnerships, allowing approved haulers and vegetation management companies to assist with processing green waste off-site. Additionally, Waste Management is working with the Department of Property and Procurement to identify and secure suitable temporary locations where green waste can be safely staged and managed. These measures will help stabilize conditions on St. Thomas in the short term, while the acquisition of the air curtain burners will ultimately provide a long-term, environmentally responsible solution for handling green waste efficiently and safely. the environmental and community benefits it protects landfill capacity reduces vegetative material up by up to 90 percent keeps bulky tree debris out of anguilla and bovoni extending

landfill lifespan cleaner air compared to open burning significantly reduces smoke and particulates meet strict epa opacity limits avoids methane emissions created when vegetation decomposes in landfills disaster readiness provides rapid processing after hurricanes or storms reduces hauling transportation costs and congestion at debris sites helps maintain smooth and smooth landfill operations during emergencies and cost efficiency cuts hauling and disposal expenses produces biochar which can be used for soil improvement erosion control and landscaping Fire risk reduction. During the period of 2024 and 2025 a total of 15 fire incidents were recorded. The total number of incidents increased between the two years. In 2024 we had six total incidents, five on St. Croix and one in St. Thomas. In 2025 we had nine total incidents, six on St. Croix and three on

- 1:24:33 St. Thomas. The 2024 incidents occurred during the following specific weeks and I won't read through all of those specific weeks, but what it does is support sustainability goals. It moves the territory towards more modern and environmentally responsible waste practices. It helps waste management meet recycling and divergent targets and it also illegal dumping remains a significant issue particularly at bin sites across the territory. Given residents officially permitted green waste disposal sites reduces environmental and public health risk. Senators with 80 to 85 tons of green waste generated daily and up to 31,000 tons annually the need for air curtain burners on both St. Thomas and St. Croix is both clear and urgent. These These systems will protect and extend landfill capacity, provide a cleaner federally approved method for vegetative waste disposal, strengthen our hurricane response capabilities, reduce illegal dumping, support waste management's long-term diversion and sustainability goals.
- 1:25:45 On behalf of the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority and our Executive Director, Mr. Hannibal Mike Ware, I respectfully urge your support for approval, funding and deployment of air curtain burners within the territory this concludes my testimony our team and i remain available to answer any questions the committee may have thank you for your time and consideration thank you cfo griffith at this time we'll get testimony from dr gunnell uh caribbean green technology center um good morning senator every chairman of the committee of government operations Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, other community members of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, and those in the audience. So my name is Greg Gwinell. I'm the Director of the Caribbean Green Technology Center at the University of the Virgin Islands. We develop and share knowledge of how infrastructure, ecosystem, and institutions interact in the U.S. Virgin Islands with the goal of supporting more resilience and sustainable development. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Bill 36-0232. My goal today in this testimony is to provide technical context on the proposed use of controlled incineration technologies for vegetative debris disposal. I will not provide any vote for or against this bill.
- 1:27:11 I will just provide technical information. In preparing these comments, I reviewed information on how curtain incinerators operate, how they are used in other jurisdictions, and the operational consideration associated with their use. My comments focus on several topics, the technology itself and how it's typically used, potential air quality consideration, the influence of weather and site location, operational and cost consideration, and how other jurisdictions, including Puerto Rico and other Virgin Islands, other Caribbean islands manage vegetative waste. I will also highlight several technical considerations in the bill related to monitoring, setback, and operational safeguards. So the purpose of the bill 36-0232 proposed to admin Act 8018 to allow the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority and landfill operators to dispose of vegetative debris using controlled incineration technologies, including air curtain incinerators.
- 1:28:19 The bill also states that other methods such as composting, mulching, and shredding remain permissible options. Air curtain incinerators are widely used in the United States to rapidly reduce large volume of vegetative debris, particularly after storm and land clearing operations. The bill also allows private individuals to burn vegetative debris using generated on their property with a permit from the Virgin Islands Fire and Medical Emergency Services. Private burning must occur 50 feet from any structure or 15 feet from any structure if using an approved closed-top burner. Burning must be attended and conducted during favorable atmospheric conditions.
- 1:29:09 So those are the key takeaways from the bill. So, Mr. Griffith summarized the technology. I will not go over all the detail, but I will just focus on a few key items, because I will use them later. So, the burning achieved 90 to 95 percent reduction in debris volume, 90 to 95 percent reduction in particulate emission compared to open burning. burning the burning of vegetative debris does generate emissions especially fine particulate matter and nitric oxide NOx carbon monoxide and other gases are generally present at very low level and are not usually the dominant air quality concern for vegetative debris burning burning also produces ash approximately five to ten percent of the original debris mass Depending on the composition of what was burned, some can be considered hazardous material, but if it's mostly vegetative debris or mostly untreated wood, most of them can be disposed in a landfill for disposal. So air curtain burners are used in several U.S. states, including Florida and Texas, particularly for hurricane debris management, forestry debris, forestry debris, land clearing waste however these states do not rely exclusively on burning for vegetative waste management municipal

programs also use grinding mulch production or composting burning is often used when debris volumes exceed grinding capacity large woody material is difficult to process or debris must be reduced quickly to maintain landfill capacity This happens after hurricanes or tornadoes or typical disasters.

- 1:30:56 Most of the issues that come up are related to air quality impacts. Air quality is the primary environmental issue associated with vegetative debris burning and often determines whether communities throughout the state accept or oppose burn operation. Smoke plumes from debris burning can affect areas approximately 0.2 to one mile downwind, depending on wind speed and atmospheric condition. The most important pollutant associated with burning is the fine particulate matter. EPA has set regulatory threshold of 35 micrograms per meter cube over 24 hours and 9 micrograms per meter cube annually, so those would have to be monitored.
- 1:31:41 So just to conclude on the air quality, just mentioning some health impact. So the short-term exposure to this particulate matter include asthma attack, respiratory irritation, eye irritation, increased emergency room visits. Long-term exposure includes cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, and an overall increased mortality risk. There are some methods that the EPA has created. I will not go over that for time. So it's worth noting that vegetative debris also creates NOx, nitrogen oxide, and volatil organic compound VOCs. In sunlight, these gases can react to form ground-level ozone, which can be dangerous if they exceed certain EPA threshold. However, ozone formation typically occurs on regional scales, whereas the exposure to particulate matter occurs locally near burn sites. So in general, this particular matter is really the dominant air quality concern. Air quality impacts depend strongly on wind speed and atmospheric stability.
- 1:32:56 Lower wind speed reduces pollutant dispersion and can increase smoke accumulation if burning occurs frequently. Typical debris burn permits require a minimum wind speed of approximately 5 miles per hour, and burning needs to be suspended if winds exceed 15 to 20 miles per hour. Large states such as Texas and Florida often operate burn sites in rural areas with large buffer distance from home. So what I did is I took three, four years of wind speed observation from the meteorological station around the island to kind of get a sense of what's going on for us in the territory. So wind observation in the territory frequently show very low wind speed, less than one mile per hour overnight and early morning. So that goes back to the comment earlier about burning needed to happen during the day. so the stronger winds are during the afternoon sea breeze periods the other thing that I found was that the Caribbean trade winds tend to weaken during the month of August to October which are also the hottest months of the year conducive to this ground level ozone formation again it requires a fair amount of VOC and NOx but those months are also the hottest which are conducive to this formation of those gases. So there may be a risk that burning during this month can create hazardous smoke condition for people living near the burn pit, not only the ozone, but also the accumulation of smoke in the air that is not dispersed by wind. Cost and operational consideration. So using this method to manage debris requires an initial capital cost and maintenance cost. Typical costs associated with air curtain burning include equipment purchases, operation costs such as lower fuel, train operators, and general maintenance, and insurance. So what I found was that insurance tend to sometime be a deal breaker. Some program, and one in particular in Colorado, they have reported insurance premium exceeding \$100,000 per year due to the wildfire and liability classification.
- 1:35:13 Furthermore, burn pits must be attended continuously during operation and ash must be transported to the landfill which in this case would still would be close by for the if the operation happens in the landfill but discussion need to be had with with private properties owners so now I'm just going to talk about some general consideration about the bill itself so the bill established setback distances for private burning of 50 feet from structures 15 feet if using an approved closed up burner however from research, typical distances in other jurisdictions are usually around 50 to 100 feet. Furthermore, the bill does not currently define maximum pile size burn for private burning or burn volume. So again, other jurisdictions have guidelines, so they have maximum pile diameter of 3 to 8 feet, maximum pile height of 3 to 6 feet, the burn volume must be less than a one cubic yard, and the burn duration limited to the same day burning, so no overnight burning.
- 1:36:17 Also, I noted that the bill specifies vegetative debris, but does not describe procedure to ensure burn material is free of non-vegetative contaminants. If vegetative debris becomes mixed with treated wood, plastic, painted material, household waste, combustion can release additional toxic pollutants, including dioxins and heavy metal. So it may be important to clarify, also I was thinking about the sargassum issue. So it may be important to clarify whether marine biomass such as sargassum is included in the definition of vegetative debris. Unlike terrestrial vegetation, sargassum can accumulate trace material from seawater, particularly arsenic, with measured concentration in a Caribbean sample ranging from 30 to 100 microgram per kilogram dry weight. When biomass-contained metal is burned, these elements do not disappear, but they concentrate in the remaining ash or may be emitted in fine particulate matter. Sargassum also contains high level of salt, which can affect combustion processes and increase corrosion in equipment. For this reason, several Caribbean jurisdictions treat marine biomass separately from land-based vegetative debris when evaluating disposal or processing options. Many jurisdictions, therefore, require debris inspection and separation procedure before burning. So going back

to the bill, the bill authorizes control burning, but it does not specify the following.

- 1:37:54 Setback distance for the VI Waste Management Authority, or landfill operation, meteorological operation limits, I think we can be stronger, air quality monitoring requirements, and contamination control procedures. Many jurisdictions address these issues to operational permits or regulations. So I'm going to talk about the alternative before concluding. So many jurisdictions manage rooting vegetative debris through grinding, mulching, and composting. These methods, as mentioned by Mr. Griffith, produce material used for landscaping, soil improvement, erosion control, or agriculture. The thinking is that composting preserves the biomass and produces a suitable product for soil amendment, whereas burning convert biomass into ash. Puerto Rico has a composting program.
- 1:38:46 After Hurricane Maria, mulching operation processed approximately 5,000 to 6,000 cubic yards of vegetative debris per day. In the rest of the Caribbean, St. Lucia promotes household composting and organic waste diversion. Barbados operates green waste composting facility. the Cayman Islands have grinding and mulch distribution program. Other islands have or promote similar program. However, they do burn when volume exceed the capacity of their operations. So in conclusion, air curtain incinerators are effective at rapidly reducing large volume of vegetative debris, particularly after storm or land clearing operation. At the same time, combustion produces particulate emissions that can affect nearby communities under certain meteorological condition. For this reason, many jurisdictions combine debris burning with other methods, such as grinding, mulching, and composting, and establish operational safeguard, including setback distance, monitoring, and debris separation procedure when burning occurs near populated area. So this is the end of my testimony. Thank you very much, and I'm happy to receive any questions.
- 1:39:59 Thank you, Dr. Ganel. I'd like you to please provide your testimony to my team so we could circulate it to the members immediately. Director Dashen, you may proceed. Good afternoon, Senator Avery L. Lewis, Chairman, Committee on Government Operations. You are closer to the mic, Director. Good afternoon, Senator Avery L. Lewis, Chairman, Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection. Other committee members, the 36th Legislature staff, and those in the viewing and listening audience. I'm Darrell D. Joshin, the director of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency by TEMA. I'm here today to provide the testimony on bill number 36-0232 and act amending act number 8018 to authorize the disposal of green waste using controlled incineration technologies including air curtain accelerators and for other purposes dated February 2nd, 2026 proposed by Senator Clifford A. Joseph Sr. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency in a report published on December 9th, 2017, the United States Virgin Islands Hurricanes Irma and Hurricane Maria generated 850,000 cubic yards of debris. Of that amount an estimated 60% or 510,000 cubic yards comprise vegetation debris such as downed tree limbs, trees, palm fronds, brush and grass. By March 23rd 2018 the government house reported even a larger amount an estimated 750,000 cubic yards of vegetation debris had been picked up across all islands. FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Immersion Protection Agency are normally the lead federal agencies working in conjunction with local government agencies to reduce debris following a Stafford Act approved disaster by the President of the United States.
- 1:42:01 Overall debris is categorized as power utility and telecommunications debris, construction demolition or C&D debris, white goods debris, metal debris, hazardous materials debris, marine debris, and vegetation debris. Through contracts by the federal agencies or the government U.S. Virgin Islands, most debris is reduced and then transported outside the territory. The one exception is vegetation debris. Currently vegetation debris must stay in the U.S. Virgin Islands as determined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Normally, vegetation debris is reduced in volume through various techniques. After debris reduction, the vegetation is sent to the VI Waste Management Authority landfills at Bovone on St. Thomas and Anguilla on St. Croix. Currently, there are no authorized permanent vegetation debris locations on St. John or Water Island. A joint U.S. Virgin Islands Task Force formed following Hurricanes Irma and Maria concluded that there are three options for reduction of the vegetation debris. Composting, mulching, and air curtain incineration. However, the 32nd legislature passed Act 8018 on December 21st 2017 after being vetoed by the governor on December 13th 2017. Act 8018 bans the burning of all fallen trees and other vegetation debris generated because of a natural disaster thus subsequently eliminating the air curtain incineration option the purpose of today's hearing is to present discussion on amending act 8018 to include the air curtain incineration as an additional option along with composting and mulching and the reduction of vegetation debris generated during a disaster the bottom line is that all natural
- 1:44:00 disasters in u.s virgin islands generate a tremendous amount of vegetation debris in a very short period there is very little room to store vegetation waste and reduction techniques such as composting and mulching while very feasible options take up precious land area are slow and produce limited results when vegetation debris is properly separated from other types of debris the air curtain incineration option provides both a quick and environmentally friendly solution. By definition an air curtain incinerator is a pollution controlled device that burns vegetation debris using a high velocity fan to generate an air curtain over a steel box. This technology increases combustion temperatures and efficiency

significantly reducing smoke in particular matter compared to open burning. A self-contained above-ground air current incinerator can reduce vegetation debris at a rate of 10 tons per hour or 40 cubic yards per hour. This translates to 3,360 cubic yards a week, running 12 hours a day, seven days a week. As testimony to the environmentally friendly nature of the air curtain incinerator on April 17th 2024, the United States Environmental Protection Agency removed, under the code of federal rhetoric regulations title 40 part 60 paragraph 60.2069 the title 5 permit requirements for air curtain incinerators as long as it burns only wood waste clean lumber yard waste or a mixture of these types of waste to qualify for exclusion and I quote the air curtain incinerators must be used to combust debris in an area declared a state of emergency by the local or state government or the president under the authority of the stadford act the duration of use without needing to notify the epa is eight weeks and if that period lasts more than eight weeks you must notify the epa and request permission to continue to operate for additional eight weeks at the end of 16 weeks from the date of the air curtain started operations you must cease

1:46:17 operations unless the epa has approved in writing your request to continue operation end quote currently the only requirement from the epa is that an air curtain incinerator complies with the opacity requirements under the other solid waste incinerators rule opacity is the measure of visible smoke emissions this rule requires a check as defined in paragraph 62.14755a with the opacity of less than or equal to 10% during operation and less than or equal to 35% during start-up period within the first 30 minutes of operation. The use of an air curtain incinerator in US Virgin Islands following a natural disaster provides for a quick and environmentally safe method to reduce vegetation debris. Additionally this method deploys pests and pathogens making it a valuable alternative to chipping and hauling which can spread infestations. The process achieves a significant reduction of volume converting 95 to 98 percent of the waste into sterile ash.

1:47:24 VITEMA is in full support of the proposed amendment to act number 8018 especially during times of natural disasters with generation of large volumes of vegetation debris in a short period of time and cannot be transported outside the territory. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on bill number three six dash zero two three two I'm prepared to answer any questions any members of this committee may have at this time thank you thank you director Josh that concludes all the testimony from everyone colleagues we're going to go to a four-minute round the order today will be senator gittins senator carla joseph senator ray fonseca senator novelly francis jr senator alma francis heiliger then myself and then the bill sponsor um director joshin let me ask you this do you remember the dollar value that it was to remove all the debris after the storms? I don't have that information, Senator. Okay. Do you remember the dollar value that it took when we had the last major fire in the vegetation area, either you, Director Stevens, and the Bovone landfill? I would say that was well over a million dollars for that 30 days. Well over a million dollars. Good. Thank you. And how, Director Stevens, to the best of your knowledge or to assistant director i know he was present how long did that fire last 17 days uh senator 17 days yes sir was that pure vegetation second no one twenty three was 17. second the question again senator i was asking you to the best of your knowledge first if to the best of your knowledge and hold you to it it was 17 days or more between 17 and 23 days

1:49:32 okay good right and then um to the best of your knowledge that pile was just pure vegetation it was it was mostly uh vegetation but there was some mixed material in there as well okay where did the pale come from most of the pile came from hurricanes irma maria okay and then we still were accumulating upon it right we still are accumulating more vegetative waste and other debris um one of the things that was brought out in both a couple of testifiers was there was mixed stuff that should not have been in there um in those piles but again some things that we could avoid and some things are hidden i think the landfill operator does a good job you know with it for the most part at the boat land sales and waste management too as well uh director senator giddens you will be recognized for your four minutes i apologize thank you can you please recognize the mic of senator giddens thank Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

1:50:49 Thank you. The mic of Senator Giddens. Send a power switch. It's me. It's not them. Thank you. Good afternoon to all. I was wondering if I'm in here alone. So with regards to Bill 36 as 0-232, I wholeheartedly support this measure, especially because it modernizes how we manage our green waste here in the Virgin Islands. And right now, the buildup of vegetation debris at the landfill sites creates a fire hazard and operational challenges for our government across the board. St. Croix, St. Thomas, well, ain't no landfill in St. John, but in both districts. And by allowing the VI Waste Management to now utilize this control technology like the air curtain incinerators, I believe we are moving in the right direction from unsafe open pit burning toward safer and more controlled disposal methods.

1:52:23 You know, at the same time that I support this bill, it also still preserves, I see, the environmental safeguards and the appropriate permitting process through the Virgin Islands Fire Service. But at the same time, I still have a true concern about another growing challenge in the territory, and that's the increasing number of abandoned and derelict vehicles that we're seeing across the islands. So as we discuss this matter today, I have some questions with regards to the

environmental and air quality oversight. But I wanted to ask the Waste Management Authority first whether or not they have an idea of the number of abandoned and derelict vehicles that are on each island. Are you all looking at this where you can have an idea as to the number of abandoned and derelict vehicles on the island? And if you haven't, just be honest and say you haven't, but this is something that we really need to look into.

1:53:47 Good morning. Sheena Isanacin, Chief of Solid Waste. I do not have that number this time. Usually the administrative office, they're the ones that does the derelict vehicles. so you're talking about the administrator yes sorry okay so uh would they share this type of information with you they should be so so they are the ones responsible for picking up the vehicles but what is your existing capacity or or plan for processing and removing these vehicles right now we're working on coming up with an RFP for scrap metals including derelict vehicles to have them shipped off-island so we're in a process of working to clear the other metals that we have on the both islands at this time as you know in Bovoni and Anguilla there's a huge amount of metals that we have so So, and what are your current methods used to dispose and or recycle these types of vehicles?

1:55:01 And how does the authority ensure hazardous components are safely removed from these vehicles before disposal? Before they come to the landfills, they should be emptied of all the liquids or the fluids that are in them. And if they bring them to the landfill, they charge an extra \$350 because the contractor on the landfill would have to then remove all those fluids and safely dispose of those fluids because they can cause fires on the landfill. And then we have the company that removes those metals off-island.

1:55:44 Okay. Time has been called, but if I may ask one question, I'm not sure if you have a follow-up. Go ahead, Senator. So, following hurricanes or major storms, green waste volumes seem to increase across the territory significantly. significantly. So how would this bill in itself improve the authority's ability to quickly process storm debris compared to the current restrictions under Act 88, I mean, 8018?

1:56:23 When we, a storm comes, we set up the designated area where the residents and the companies are able to bring the debris to certain areas on the island. Yeah, but tell me how this bill will improve your ability to quickly do this. Because then we'll be able to burn the green waste right away instead of having to store it and wait for it to be disposed of off-island. Excellent. Because I support the measure, but we need to get that out there so that the community listening and following this proceeding could understand what these incinerators are.

1:57:05 And you are already procuring some incinerators for all three islands? We haven't procured it as yet because that's why we're here today, but we're all looking into it as soon as we get the okay. So you have access to any at this time, or what's your plans to procure these, what do you call them, air curtain incinerators or similar control technologies?

1:57:34 What would the anticipated cost be and the operational timeline to get them started? Darrell Griffith, CFO, Waste Management Authority. We have a grant through EPA that's managed by DPNR that we've actually submitted the RFPs to for the purchase of the air curtain incinerators. In the amount of and how many? In the amount of about \$750,000 per machine, I mean total, and they've been submitted. Slow down for me. I'm sorry. Per machine and then you said total. So which is it? Per machine. What's the total EPA grant? The total EPA grant is \$6 million.

1:58:16 \$6 million. Okay, that's what I want to hear. And \$750,000 per machine. And we've submitted the RFPs to them for their review. And then as soon as it's passed that we can actually purchase the machine, because we will not purchase it unless we know we can actually use it in the territory. Well, with my vote, you won't be able to use it. But how many? One for St. Croix and one for St. Thomas. So we're looking at three. Two. I mean, yes, you said one for St. Croix and one for St. Thomas.

1:58:49 Yes, sir. So there's no way to have one for St. John on its own? St. John is just a transfer station right now, so we're going to do it just at the landfills for right now. So with a total, and I'll wrap up right here, Mr. Chair, although I have more. So you're talking about a \$6 million grant and only two machines you're looking at at 750 each. Are we looking at getting an extra one just in case something goes down or are you looking at procuring other similar control technologies?

1:59:32 We're looking at procuring other equipment too as well. We're also purchasing mulchers and we're purchasing shredders and we're purchasing two vehicles for our enforcement officers. And we're also wrapping up with the University of the... More vehicle again, boy. Yes, definitely. And with the University of the Virgin Islands, we're also doing... What's the full title? It's the Sustainable Material Management Integrated Plan. So this goes hand-in-hand with a bill that's going to be coming up shortly, I think April 8th or 9th. And I think the Waste Management Authority will be one of the testifiers, and that's to deal with the overgrown vegetation across the territory.

2:00:15 So I'm glad to hear you talking about purchasing mulchers, etc. But let me just caution you, before I put this mic down too, about the number of vehicles that we continue to bring in here in this government, okay? We're already having a problem with fuel. Are we going to just be buying government vehicle on top of government vehicle and we're always

going for the top of the line? so let me just caution you with that and I know you have a good man at the helm who was Inspector General thank you Mr. Chair thank you Senator Giddens one of the things I say does put on the record here that we had a good program going with the abandoned vehicle but currently the operators at the landfill are owed a substantive amount of dollars for substantive amount of dollars for the taxing the vehicles and you know and different things so when we cleared up that clear up that bill i guess the administrators that could proceed with um removing the derelict vehicle but still i'm glad that the senator bring it up because we got put the word out there for these people that you know stop leaving your vehicles all over the place you know everybody blames the government for abandoned vehicle but we don't blame the owner like the government it's not a government car and i'm gonna say it's not a government car let's blame these people who continuously we have continuously cleaned up areas and cars continue coming i ain't pointing no fingers but cars continue coming you come back in the morning then four blocks not engine not doors gone you know everybody lands in westman even know i'm speaking about but we continue every day to blame the government for all these abandoned and derelict vehicles out there yes the government have a little responsibility

2:02:10 a stake in the game but let's start with the root cars that's why i tell people stop selling kind of night stop make sure the car is completely out your name go to dmv because the lien goes to the last registered owner when i was administrator had numerous people come Crying, oh, you can't. I'm sorry, the law is \$1,000. The fine is \$1,000. But, hey, some you catch, some you don't catch. But it is there.

2:02:46 Senator Carla Joseph, you're recognized for your four minutes. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. A pleasant good day to everyone. I really want to commend the bill's sponsor for bringing forward this measure. I know the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority has been making some overtures to this body to rethink and relook at burning of our vegetation.

2:03:20 I do understand I wasn't here in the 32nd legislature when this bill was passed, Act 8018. But I do understand some of the area that we, and the why, that we need to put it back in place. My concern is, of course, it's going to look at two distinctive areas of looking at putting this back in place. And I believe Dr. Gregory, kindly indicate your, help me pronounce your last name, please.

2:03:56 Gwenell. Gwenell? Very good. I think I remember meeting you at a meeting, Dr. Gwenell, in Bovone at Trinity Methodist Church. And you were there with the residents of Bovone. I was there as well, talking about the impacts of our infrastructure and the work that you do at the University of the Virgin Islands to really get a sense of how our environment, and you mentioned the landfill, affect us. I also believe Mr. Bromont from the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority was there. So I want to commend you for the good work you're doing getting a lot of that raw data that we need and of course everyone knows bovoni is where i grew up so i'm very familiar with that area and some of the effects now you mentioned something dr gwinell in your testimony about the air particles and how burning does in fact have an adverse effect on human beings i always have to look at the human beings because I am one so tell us if if you based on the information your research if these particles if managed correctly will be reduced so the burning will reduce the amount of particle or the burning technology the ACI the incinerators will reduce the amount of particles in the air compared to open burning the worst you can do is open burning. That being said there are still particles in the air and there are hence the need for permits that Director Gershon talked about that the EPA now is waving for emergency during emergency time but there are still particles in the air and so the main concern is when you have very low winds or very fast wind that can make things burn faster than normal but very low winds when you have those low winds day then the the smoke doesn't move and so you have more and more concentration of those particles in the air and so that's why a lot of communities from my reading of how those technologies are used in the states and elsewhere that's why a lot of communities are concerned is they are afraid of this concentration during low-wind days that can then in fact your your your help low wind days you mentioned um in your testimony and i'm glad you brought up the wind one minute after the carib the caribbean trade winds weekend during august

2:06:41 to october which are also the hottest months of the year and i know the virgin islands FEMS has recommended a certain window, a daylight to burn for residents. What would be your recommendation given what you state? Because we want to assure that we minimize as much as possible the possibility of adverse effects on the human beings because we're going to do burning as well.

2:07:16 they the Virgin Islands fire emergency are going to service are going to do burning as well so should we look at a time of the year when we're factoring in the wind so I think that we need to and I think that's something that the bill doesn't clarify whether or not the burning needs to happen on a regular basis or can happen on a regular basis versus as an emergency basis most of the time when this technology is used is when you just you have to do something because you are overwhelmed it is not from my understanding a regular sort of operation that you use let's say every Tuesday of every week and so I think that it's important to clarify whether or not you are thinking about allowing burning as a regular type

of operation versus emergency operation if it's regular type operations then we need to be very careful about controlling those negative impact on air quality especially during those months where it's just dead nothing moves and I think you know what I'm talking about where then then you can have a lot of adverse impact because not only the air is not moving, the concentration of particle can increase, but you have all the vehicle that add more, which creates really adverse condition for the community that lives near the burning. So the other thing I would say is that during emergency period, if you have to burn after a hurricane or something like that or after a storm, maybe identify a site away from people where you can do some of this instead of at the landfill.

2:09:08 Even at the landfill, you know, every time I go to the landfill, I mean, it's a crowded space. So we can even create a lot of issues. But if we can identify a site where that can be done away from people with enough, you know, the safety and the space, maybe that can happen. But again, we need to be very careful about using it as an emergency sort of protocol not on a regular basis because you will still have concentration of particle if there's no wind and if you leave, if there are community downwind, they will still be impacted some way or another. So we need to be very careful.

2:09:44 Okay, and Mr. Chairman, may I know my time was called. May I wrap up with one final question? Thank you so kindly. You're very gracious. I really want to stress that because um i know of an incident when they had burning and this is not burning that was uh planned this is when the the dump caught on fire and a lot of adverse effects happened to our residents in bovoni and it traveled all the way to nada and to frenchman's bay and bolongo all of those who feels it knows it and a lot of the people there so i i would like to see if we could work on what what time frame um that we could do the burning i love that the virgin islands fire emergency service fire emergency medical service have indicated a time that they would prefer to see burning done i think that's something that we could also look at as legislators to make sure that we are protecting our people because we don't want them to have to suffer, you know, because where they live.

2:10:57 And the people in Bovoni area, I know, and NADA, and those areas are in a very close proximity to the landfill. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for the time. I appreciate it deeply. Thank you, Senator Joseph. The one thing I'll add is that I know from past history, there was tours and boat landfills. And Director Jackson, if I pick your memory, or even Assistant Director, Steven, Stevenson, Stevenson, Stevenson, Stevenson, sorry Clarence, I'm really sorry about that moment there. and I see the landfill operator in the back, Mr. Ashby, that this equipment would not be placed in the front of the landfill. It was a site picked on the southern side of the landfill but facing more of the west of the landfill. If I'm incorrect, Director, or fire, help me out here.

2:12:04 as far as I know in St. Croix was supposed to maybe the body slab area St. Thomas particularly, sorry about that in St. Thomas we was going to put it on the landfill but we don't have a specific area this time because I know that the bottom gets really hot so we're trying to figure out that part if we're going to actually put it on the landfill or somewhere close to it all right at some point in demo as the landfill operator mr. Ashby to come in because we did have a site placement at the time and it was situated on the rear of the landfill director Dutton yes senator direct director Josh and firm by Tima yes when we did our orientation on that site we said the entrance where it currently was located it was not the best place to put it we wanted to move it towards the back side more towards the Oceanside and like you said more oriented away from the overall landfill side of the house that was what the the direction was going to go but of course it was going to be a cost to move that so I think based upon the situation we do get an air curtain burner that location would be pretty much susceptible to a concern if it was down at the entrance. Thank you. Director Stephens. Yes, In St. Croix, you have a lot of, I don't want to say bush burning, but a lot of more like forestry burning happens in St. Croix. Yes, Senator. Tell me what happens. What happens? Fire department comes, what happens? The fire department comes when they have brush fires. Brush fires.

2:13:50 We come, we extinguish the fire, but most of those fires are caused by farmers who are trying to control their brush, and sometimes it gets out of control, usually due to high winds. So the atmospheric conditions do play a role in when we authorize burning. Throughout the year, everybody's aware that the fire service does ban burning, open burning, and even with this technology, we will do so as well, depending on the atmospheric conditions, the wind. However, we do have a dry season, a specific dry season, and we take that into consideration as well. What I think, what I'm listening to is there might be some confusion as to when we talk about 50 feet away from a structure.

2:14:46 That is what we talk about people who are living in neighborhoods and those who are authorized when they come into the office and they pay for a burn permit. The inspector comes out and does an inspection of your burn site, the debris that you're going to burn. And this is just for those in houses or offices. is let's say you have a whole bunch of files that you want to get rid of. As long as you are able to put that in a 50-gallon drum, somewhat similar to an aisle drum, and the inspector comes out, deems it safe, make sure you have the appropriate extinguishing equipment just in case it does get out of control, then you're able to burn.

- 2:15:30 But I want to make sure that we get that clear. And it has nothing to do that our burn permitting process has nothing to do with the air curtain process. Outside of when we decide that the environmental conditions are not conducive to burning, we'll ban burning throughout the territory, specifically by island, depending on what's going on atmospherically. Thank you.
- 2:15:57 If Louis comes in and gets a permit for burning, the neighbors call and say that Louis is burning, what happens then? If the neighbor calls and says, Louis is burning and it's bothering me, then Louis will have to put it out. We issue burn permits for a 30-day process. Usually the hours that you can burn is really, we say, when everybody else is at work. Between the hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., never on holidays and never on the weekends. So who does that enforcement?
- 2:16:38 The fire service that our enforcement team comes out, does the inspection, making sure that your area is good to go, you're not encroaching on your neighbor's property. and the fire service as well, that the responders will come out as well and make sure that you're good to go. If you have any questions or if you have a concern, something is going on, you call the nearest fire station to that property for assistance. Thank you. Senator Carla Joseph, recognize for your point of information.
- 2:17:09 Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I want to pose this question to Mr. Griffith, CFO for the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority. Now, you now accumulate green waste. You have to ship those green wastes off-island or you just allow it to disintegrate naturally? They sit and disintegrate naturally. That's why we're also purchasing the mulchers for them too as well. okay okay now I completely understand okay thank you thank you Senator Ray Fonseca you're recognized for your four minutes before I begin I'd like to say happy birthday to you Senator Fonseca as well well sir Popa thank you thank you mr. chair and a pleasant good morning to all of the testifiers. Mr. Chair, I want to follow up on the line of questioning from my good colleague, the Madam Chair of the Rules Committee, regarding the health risk to nearby communities. The respiratory issues, you know, lung issues, increased risk of heart disease like mr guanel guanel mentioned even the sargassum can have arsenic in it and you know the air curtain incinerators are machines that use to burn large amongst of you know green waste sometimes wood etc etc but while they may burn more efficiently they still release chemicals harmful chemicals into the area and right now this is in a community and
- 2:19:03 there is environmental concerns with the smoke the airborne particulates so I wanted to ask a couple questions there's a meeting this afternoon at 530 schedule with the Bovoni residents waste management yes sir yes as a meeting schedule so you see I think we we're kind of like leading the cart before the horse because I'm getting comments from and they told me to call their names the The president of the Bovoni community, Ms. Blyden, Lynette George, you know, some other names. I'm not going to call all of them. They told me to mention a name. They would like to have an ability to give comments and provide input because when you presented with them before, you did not give them the sufficient details that you have now presented to this legislature. You see, we in the legislature, the last time Bovoni came before here, oh, we had to approve them solar panels because we were going to lose money. But now you're giving testimony that you haven't even purchased the equipment. You don't even know exactly where it's going to go, if it's going to go in the front or going back.
- 2:20:32 But you're still coming to the legislature to get approval. the residents of Bovone needs to consider and review and give comments we have a school there remember when we had this fire two years ago in 2024 the school had to be closed for one day because of the smoke there's a daycare there this is not only Bovone this affects nada like my colleague the Madam Rules chair said it affects Frenchman Bay we're building a head start there's kids in the area that children i'm sorry in the area people live there also there's a noise pollution this thing here is operated by a engine i don't know if it's going to be a engine there's a fan there's noise people want to be able to rest out there this is not properly before the legislature we need to have dpnr i have some questions for dpnr regarding the permit because you know there could be improper material being burned you know the treated wood cannot be burned because that is not um that release the the plastics cannot be born okay that could release the mercury the dioxins the lead we got testimony that the sargassum can release arsenic these are toxic chemicals we are going to burn and potentially release in the atmosphere of our community you know that's why there's many communities and it's have real strict mr chair if i can just be allowed to finish because i'm definitely going to vote no on this because the residents of the communities need to be allowed to get input we cannot treat our residents like that the last time we came with the solar panels or we had to rush it we had to approve it because we won't lose money they ain't even buy the equipment they ain't even know where it's going to be located this is not how we should operate mr.
- 2:22:39 chairman we have to give the residents of Bovoni up an ability to come and listen and give comments you cannot tell me you have a meeting with the residents this afternoon at 5 30 where you're going to say oh the legislature don't approve it so this is what we're going to do are you ain't got no input that is not the way we conduct business in this community this is not properly before me and i cannot support this thank you and for the time Mr. Chair. Thank you. Director Stephens,

you wanted to do something?

2:23:17 Good afternoon, Senator. If I may. A couple of things I need to make clear. One, no sargasm will be being burnt in the air curtain. None. It is not designed for that. The sargasm will deteriorate what that system is designed to do to time and time again we've mentioned the fires that occurred two years ago which was very hazardous to the community at last not just to the community but to my employees who had to be out there for those days but for 17 to 21 straight days battling battling those fires just over the weekend we We had a fire again at the landfill in St. Croix for three days.

2:24:06 My employees were out there battling those fires. If we have a controlled environment with significant reduction, we talked about the percentage of reduction when you do a free burn as opposed to a burn using the ice incinerator, it is safer for the community. That system would be being used and no one would know it's being used because there would no harmful if the harmful effects would be significantly reduced to include smoke that you will not be able to pick up. I am looking out for not just the community but for my employees. Everybody understand being in a landfill or in those type of fires is cancerous. That's why I force my employees to always use their PPE. Those people downwind do not have PPE and we cannot relocate them. It's important that we use the air curtain to support the community and to get the existing, I want everybody to understand, the existing vegetative debris that we have on these landfills that they can't take on them all. We need to get rid of it and we can't ship it no place.

2:25:22 Thank you. Point of information Senator Carla Joseph. Thank you so much Mr. chairman for recognizing me because like i said who feels it knows it and i lived in bovoni community for over 26 years that's that's a very long time and i knew and i felt it when the the fires broke out now director stevens you indicated that no sargassum will be burnt in these incinerator what prevents that what prevents someone anyone from throwing the sargassum in these incinerators what um thank you sender for the question the the air curtain units will be managed by um a9 and by race management hear me out by Good afternoon, morning.

2:26:22 Sheena Isanason, Chief of Solid Waste. When we get the incinerator, the team on the landfill, we will begin to sort and go through the green waste before we throw anything into the incinerator. As Mr. Griffith stated earlier in the testimony, we know what can be burned and what cannot. Plastics will be separated. Everything will be separated into piles. And we will be there to manage the burning of the incinerator as it should be.

2:26:53 Okay. You know, I don't already have any issues, right? I'm sorry? I am already having some challenges with that because I know our government. I know the human beings. And I know we would say the best things here. But when it comes to reality and what happens, it's two distinct differences. it's two distinct difference there's nothing wrong with this bill you know I can tell you what is the issue here is us as a human beings to implement with a level of fidelity and diligence that's the issue okay that's the issue to know the chairman talked about the love to know that we have that major issue to be sure that we are protecting and doing everything in our power to really align. If we need to make safeguards in this bill to assure that happened, it needs to happen now than after to assure that the human beings on your end do what they say they're going to do and if they do not do what they say they're going to do, we have to penalize them this is because i'm not playing with no human being like hey not today not coming from where i know in bovoni okay so i have that concern deep concern and that's why i i am very reluctant on this measure mr chairman and colleagues thank you kindly mr chairman for the leeway i appreciate it deeply thank you um cfo griffin when and if this machine is purchased when and if this machine is purchased and set up station, would it be run by waste management or a contractor or a combination?

2:28:51 It's always a combination because at the end of the day, it's waste management who's over the landfills, and we hire contractors to administer the rules and laws that we tell them. Mr. Bruni, you wanted to state something? Good day. I'm Alex Bruni, chief engineer. Currently, the Wastemater Authority has already begun separating green waste from sargassum. The sargassum is stored in one location in the landfill. The green waste is stored in another location. So mixing the two will not occur. When the sargassum comes in, when it's sargassum season, we have certified hunters that come in, and they place the sargassum, like I said, in a designated area. There are certain items that we know for sure that cannot be burned in the burner, and it will not be.

2:29:37 But more importantly, we visited the site back in September, October, standing right next to this burner where it was engaged in the process. There was very little emissions coming from this unit to the point where I stood right by the box and did not smell anything, did not inhale anything. it didn't bother me whatsoever so as far as it being able to to move past the bovoni area or the landfill area and have any kind of effects on the residents of bovoni i don't see that happening at this point at all thank you yes your information i will ask for a point of information senator clipper joseph you're recognized for your point of information Yeah, since we're speaking about pollution, I mean, again, this bill, this bill is for us to be able to get the machines here as far as where they're going to be placed.

- 2:30:47 That's a question that we're asking right now, but on a strong point. And let's be real, one of the most highest concentric pollution to most of us here in the Borden Islands, and I'm sure, individuals own large trucks in these same areas. and that's i'm gonna ask dr gwinnell what he thinks about that the pollution forget about the this this incinerary for a minute where you have large diesel trucks within the communities that we do live and there is no separation i think as far as a cancer cancer agent that's one of the highest cancer agent agent you can be around just starting up these large vehicles and i'm sure they have them in the area but staying to the subject this bill is to allow us to be able to be able to get rid of some of our green waste that we're piling up in symptoms right now you guys are not accepting the greenway so where is the green waste all over the island i don't know we're not accepting it at the landfill, so where is the green where it's going presently, that's my question Good afternoon thank you for the question about the emissions from the car, I think you have a very good point Senator that's something that is very worrisome I have a meeting tomorrow with the EPA to see if we can start a program that measures particulate matter throughout the islands and i think these emissions for cars is is one thing that we're looking at trying to better understand last year during the peak of summer we had a very high concentration of ozone in smith bay and we believe it may be linked to the to the car emissions so again that's something that we're looking at at the university uh that's something that we also discussed in the past related to the lack of car inspections many places have car inspection that include emission controls that's something that we don't have in a territory we believe that because we have trade winds everything dissipates but like i said there are many months with very little winds um so your point is well well taken and i think that uh control of emissions for cars, especially big trucks that you see in town with the black smoke. That's something that, from a health concern, needs to be looked at. But we at the university, in the meantime, just starting to collect the data. And hopefully we will continue this summer and present the data to you all so you have a better understanding of the issue. Thank you.
- 2:33:46 Thank you. Senator Nobel Francis Jr., you're recognized for your four minutes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon to everyone, and thank you for your testimony thus far. And I really want to say that today, you know, we're having a discussion in respect to our green waste. However, we have a broader discussion that needs to be had, and we continue to kick the can down the road, and it's really talking about recycling.
- 2:34:13 um you know my colleagues spoke about the abandoned and derelict vehicles we got tires in the hundreds of thousands in our community that needs to be addressed we have our landfills you know just flying over this morning you know i saw a large volume of this green ways at the Anguilla landfill. I was over at the horse racetrack this last weekend and individuals talked about when they were able to see one side from the car track to the horse track. Now we have a whole mountain in between and we can't see either way. Anguilla, I remember when we basically had a molehill. Now we have a mountain there. We enjoy and love managing by crisis. We have to wait for things to explode in order for us to act.
- 2:35:11 Can I get a status of the current Anguilla fire? Good afternoon. Sheena Sennison, Chief of Solid Ways. As of right now, the fire on Anguilla has been extinguished, so it's no longer on fire. Very well, thank you. Can I say something about the recycling and waste diversion? Do you promise to be brief? I only got four minutes. We've had several meetings, the executive director, Wei, and I, over the past two weeks with several waste energy proposals that we have been discussing.
- 2:35:48 So we are working towards that. So I brought that up because we continue to wait and we have a risk. Right now we have a risk because we have the Anguilla landfill or the landfills. as well as these green waste in our community. If those things catch on fire, everything stops. Endanger the safety of our firemen. Endanger the ability to fly out of St. Croix in some instances. On Friday, individuals had to wear a mask at the airport. Again, because of that fire at the landfill. So what are we waiting for? How long do we wait? A decision will have to be made at some point. we enjoy managing by crisis and every time we delay every time we kick the can down the road all we doing is creating havoc in our community because it gets worse and worse and worse so i'm hoping that you know today that we could really set aside and we know that there is a risk associated with with the the um air curtain but what's worse yeah which one of the evils do we intend to undertake and i'm hoping that my colleagues will will really just take a good look at that because what we're doing on the behalf of our people is to hopefully ensure that we're protecting them in the long run uh so in talking about the current um green waste that we have in our landfills who is responsible now to separate those green waste?
- 2:37:23 At this time, on the island of St. Thomas, we have A9, and they are managing the green waste section. On St. Croix, it will be the Waste Management Authority. And we're satisfied that this, again, this managing of the green waste and the separation of the green waste will ensure that we are doing the right thing in separating them out? When we talk about the sargasm, when we talk about the other contaminants that may be in the current green waste? Yes, as Mr. Bruni stated earlier, the sargasm is in one area, far away from the green waste that we collect daily.
- 2:38:04 Mr. Chair, my time at call, can I just wrap up with a couple more points? Thank you. in respect to the so what is the current green waste what is the amount of current green waste that we have at the landfill at this time at both landfill I would say about 700,000 cubic yards a little bit more that's just an estimation at this time again on St. Thomas we don't

collect the green waste we don't have the space for it so that's just an estimated amount so where is the green waste on St. Thomas right now In St. Thomas, people are probably holding it in their yard. They're burning it. They're throwing it on the side of the road. But we are currently trying to work with a private entity that would allow for the residents to begin to bring green waste at their area. What is the risk of that happening?

2:38:57 The risk of what? Of the individuals holding it at the yard, dumping it in areas? It can cause fire, just like it can cause fire in the landfill. It could be a risk of causing fires, termites, for the residents. So there was a suggestion in incorporating the grinding, composting, and mulching. How serious are we about ensuring that that occurs? Next month, we are going to look at some demonstration for a shredder. It shreds green waste. It also shreds bulk waste and white goods.

2:39:28 so that would be one way that we can also shred some of the green waste to assist us okay and my final question on this particular round I wanted to ask you CFO in respect to your testimony you talk about the startup of the incinerator could allow for a 35% impact oh what is the impact of that 35% you say it could go from 0 to 35% what is the impact into the community well with that 35% percent impact you know in terms of the first half an hour. So in terms of the first half an hour at 35% is the amount of smoke that can accumulate so we actually did a video because I think our ED once said a picture is worth a thousand words but a video I guess is worth ten thousand words so we have a video to actually show you the actual startup impact so you can see it with your own eyes. Very well and that's well concluding with this morning that I I think that a video would definitely be able to get the public to understand what we're talking about and what we look into as the proposed incinerator. And we actually have three videos.

2:40:37 So Mr. Chair, at some point I think the videos will be a good time for us. Let me know when they're ready. So Wild Media is queuing up those videos and go to the next senator. And right after her, then we'll show the video, which is Senator Alma-Francis Heiliger. you recognize for your formant thank you so much hold one second senator Joseph you recognize for your point of information thank you thank you so much mr. chairman I appreciate that I want to ask you miss is Anderson kindly indicate for us what prevents, what mechanisms or controls do you have in place now and checks and balances to assure that your regular green waste, your lumber and the ones that fall off the tree is not mixed with the sargassms that you collect or any vendor collects and places at the landfills? When the sargassum comes in, it's placed up on the top of the hill and there's someone there directing where they should be dropping the sargassum. Okay so does the EPA or any other authority come to do any checks?

2:41:59 Random spot checks, not daily. Conducted by? EPA. Okay all right thank you. Thank Thank you. Senator Frances Heiliger, please proceed. Thank you for your patience. Good afternoon to my colleagues, good afternoon to the people of the territory, good afternoon to testifiers, staff. I've been listening attentively for the past a very long time it relates to what's happening in regards to this piece of legislation. And my first question is, I was kind of, why isn't DPNR here? Because, you know, they focus a lot on our environmental protection. And I would have thought that they might have also been here to speak a little bit more on the environmental side of this. Was that an oversight or they couldn't come? If somebody could share that with me, I would appreciate it. Does anyone know?

2:43:14 There was an invited senator, but nobody could have made it at this time. Okay, they couldn't make. Okay, thank you. Because the reason why I say that is because a lot of this conversation focuses around health and environment of the people that are going to be directly impacted, specifically out in the Bovone Inata area. And for me, my job is always going to be looking out for that aspect as well. I heard some of my colleagues speak a little bit earlier about you know things building up into a mountain and you know we have to act but what i also am mindful of is it's our own neglect and our own inaction that allowed this to grow into this huge mountain so the question is do we just rush to do something because it's now a mountain or do we make sure that we still do our due diligence to try to protect those that might be affected the most um i also want to ask another question were there any town hall meetings in regards to this because potentially putting in an incinerator and the smoke and the wind and all of these other things because while there are a lot of months there's not a lot of wind there's quite a bit of months that there are. So it's always going to be a situation of say one say two and as a representative I have to look at the entire gamut of the situation. So were there any town halls in regards to this particular implementation? Does anyone know? Does the sponsor no just just for my edification and knowledge

2:45:14 is he there who's the question pointed to senator well i i was asking specifically if the sponsor or anyone had town halls in regards to this in the neighborhood that is going to be affected okay so the sponsor is sharing that he didn't have any okay thank you for sharing that um you know i fully understand we live in a society that one minute and in our need to have some balance. I understand the need for what is being discussed today, but I also have to have balance for the people as well. And I am not inclined at this moment to vote in favor of this legislation, because for me, I need a little bit more conversation in regards to the environmental aspect of it and unfortunately based on what the chairman did share dpnr who is in charge of environmental protection was invited and they're not here so i really don't know what their stance is

what their thought process is in regards to this and the fact that the people that would be directly impacted by this didn't have any discussion on it and at the end of the day we are their representatives and we can't keep could i just finish my statement go ahead senator thank you very much sir um we can't keep putting our people in situations where they're often blindsided by things and then yet we head to the polls and say hey let me represent you. I don't consider that true representation if we're not even giving them the respect of having an opportunity to either fully understand no or have a discussion on things like these. So I will continue to listen but as a voting member at this moment unless I get further information i i am not inclined to support this piece of legislation today thank you very much mr chair thank you um with fundament whether um mr bruni or mr griffin i know some of the videos

2:47:52 are mute so i'd like for you to just um narrate it through so people can understand what's going on media could i have the videos please mr bruni will I don't think there's one. So. Fossil fuels and emits a significant volume of greenhouse gases. Grinding is not an end solution. It's expensive both economically and environmentally. Piles of grindings are dangerous. They outgas methane and can easily spontaneously combust. So what are our options? Air burners. For 26 years, our air curtain burners have been the world's most proven portable solution to burn cleanly. And naturally, no fossil fuels needed. Don't get caught in the grind. Let air burners show you how Mother Nature has been doing it since the beginning of time. Only cleaner.

2:49:25 So, if I may, this is on our visit back in September, October of 2025. During this process, like I said, when we got there, the machine was already ignited. The good thing about this machine is that it operates on its own fuel. Once you light the machine early in the morning and you continue to add more debris to it or more green waste to it, it continues to burn. Now, when we mention the air curtain, the air curtain is basically a curtain of air, just like similar to when you go into a car, so there's one of those stores that keeps the cool air and hot air out from the store. The air curtain operates in the same way. It keeps the emission contained within the box as best as possible. In addition to that, I was able to, like I said, walk right outside the box safely, very little heat exposed to it. And one of the best things about this is the byproduct of this whole entire system. I myself like to garden and farm. During the summertime I spend a lot of time just trying to water the plants and keep the plants alive. With this system, the byproduct of this unit could be used for farming for farming because it keeps the ground around the plants moist making it easier for the farmers and to produce some some produce if you if you look at the video carefully you could barely see any emissions any fumes coming from this unit when senator Senator Francica spoke about having a motor the motor is just to simply run the air curtain and it is a very small unit that's on it smaller than a machine for a truck or a bulldozer if i may very small unit that is it's it's it meets all the epa requirements as well what we speak about um um again the the fumes from it very very very little In my opinion, it smelled like a barbecue grill, quite honestly. And there you see myself and Ms. Anderson looking into the unit that is burned. And for us to be so close to it, and it has little to no effect on us.

2:51:51 Just imagine if we set that unit at the landfill, how much effect would it have on the residents of the Bovoni area. Keep in mind that the whole purpose of trying to get this unit is to look out for the residents of the Bovoni area and the community, trying to avoid the fires that we experienced a few years ago. Those fires are not contained, it's uncontrolled, and when those fires are ignited, the amount of emissions, the amount of toxins that is emitted from the landfill is far more than what you will receive from this unit. What you're looking at right now is there's another component that you can add to the unit which basically generates electricity. So if we want to, we can add that component to it and be able to run our electrical equipment if you do decide to buy them from this unit as well.

2:52:41 Good day, Virgin Islanders. I'm up here in Palm City, Florida, figuring out solutions to our vegetative waste. Now, if you look behind me, what we have here is the air curtain. They're the manufacturer, and they create a product that actually disposes of all green waste. You can see green waste all around me. This is a problem we have in the landfill. When all this vegetative waste starts to pile up, we run the risk of fires like we had before in St. Thomas, and it's also disconcerting. Now the unit behind me you see here is fully burning right now. I'm standing less than, what, 15, 20 feet from it. I cannot smell anything. If you look, there is no smoke escaping. Now there's five tons, five metric tons of debris in that that's burning right now. particular unit is actually hooked up to a generator they use a heat to generate power which actually charges a battery station that they use around here to power the equipment so they have all the electric equipment running on this particular site using it to put the waste in the burner so we're talking about getting two of these one for St. Thomas one for St. Croix because we think that be able to take our capacity right now but eliminating the storing and the amassing of large green waste woods logs everything you cut from your yard can be put in here now here's the good part what comes out of here is pure char that's like a charcoal material that can be used to enrich soil so out of 10 tons of waste you get about 100 pounds of ash so we as a win-win-win Even if we don't use it in our agricultural product, we can still go back and put it in a landfill. It's a lot smaller than putting in a sizable land waste like this in the landfill. So we're working hard to get this done. I'm up here with the waste management CFO and some other people looking at this thing to establish that it's now safe to burn. There's no smell emitting from this. Like I said, you can't smell

a thing. There's no smoke, any particles coming out. and how this works is everything goes into this chamber and then there's a 60 mile an hour wind over the top that's called the wind curtain or the air curtain as they refer to and that seals in all of the waste all of the smoke and that continues to burn until it's nothing but ash so we're looking to get a couple of these and bring uh more and better ways and solutions for fighting our waste and managing our waste in the territory. Thank you.

2:55:21 Thank you. Mrs. Anderson, when you were claiming up and they were on? Yes, it was on. And you don't feel the heat like everybody thinks it is. it was there, actually climb up to the top and were able to look inside. God, I take your word for it. Thank you. Senator Joseph, Clifford Joseph. Well, again, good afternoon to everyone. I want to make it clear that this bill is about bringing a technology forward because the key thing is we don't have any other technology here um i think director steven alluded to what's real we stay questioning what's going on and both dumps and then when we got fire you guys saw clearly on the video not a third of the smoke that you will see half of any fire that's set in the land for the landfill or any one of the um landfills either here on St. Thomas or St. Croix could burn. One more key point I want to get clear to is um they also have a smaller unit so I heard my colleague earlier mention about a third unit they have a small unit that could be used in rural areas as well because we do have although we're small we still have rural areas in our small little island here that could be uh like one of those bin that you haul on and haul off is the same size of a 20 yard container that you would pull on the truck for the regular dump session you also have a small unit like that um again within this same um with having these the the this mechanism in place to have

2:57:25 on island, if we're going to dictate where it's going to go, then that's a different question, but I know for sure we're just introducing the technology. It's something that's needed. We have to try and get rid of some and be prepared that if we do hit with a storm, what are we going to do with all our green waste? It's clear that FEMA is not moving it, so it's time to still think about what we're going to do going forward. this bill was strictly so maybe that's why i didn't even reach out for the tongue have and a personal base because i am worrying about getting the technology here to solve people here in the borderlands so location you saw it clearly this thing could be rest at any location in island if you guys feel you don't want to burn it up this side we want to burn it down that side then you have to clear an area that is going to go that you could get the green waste days so we can get rid of. Thank you. That's it for me. Thank you Senator Joseph. Colleagues we're gonna go to a rapid round. One question. Senator Kittens. Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chair and good afternoon to all again. I'm not going to ask any questions, but I'm just a little disappointed in some of the debates that I've been hearing earlier. You know, as we consider this piece of legislation, and excuse me, I'm a little winded, you know, but as we consider this piece of legislation

2:59:12 here today regarding the disposal of green wastes in a modernized way of doing things using modern technology, I just want to remind my colleagues of our responsibility here in this legislature. Because you could tell when there's a lack of preparation. We're not here campaign and pontificate and measures or score political points and I'm gonna call it like it is because I'm a little disturbed I'm truly disturbed as we're here discussing ways of bettering the quality of life for Virgin Islanders this is what I have to sit here and endure today. I'm just asking that we prepare ourselves so that when we come we could have live debates. Every one of us sitting here have our own opinion and we are entitled to our own opinion. That's that's a fact and healthy debate is part of this process but my gosh let's be prepared to discuss the matter at hand what we have just saw especially in the videos explains it if we want to really and truly address these fires at the landfills you heard um the the finance chair talk about the the employees and people at the airport especially on st croix using masks you heard colleagues talking about the folks in in the bovoni area that have to to suffer when they this um landfill uh ignites

3:01:17 come on here it is before us we have a proposal that will address the problem that we're experiencing so simply put colleagues I ask that we give this matter serious consideration and just take a look at the bill if there is any concerns work with the bill sponsor so that we can get it we have the subject matter experts before us and I'm the first to say that subject matter experts aren't always correct but I do my research and if my research corroborates with yours then what we have a solution before us I say let's work on it all right our lack of preparation just know is a disservice to the people of the Virgin Islands and thank you all for your testimony thank you Mr. Chair and I'm in a position to support this piece of legislation once it's called. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Carla. Joseph, you're recognized for your burning question. Yes, thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Like I mentioned, I didn't have an issue with the bill. I understand. My issue is with the fidelity of people doing their work, being able to separate that greenways from the sargasms, and who does the checks, who does that, and the like.

3:02:45 Now, I wanted to, because I'm reading, I'm rereading Director Daryl Jashin's testimony. And I don't mean to get on in the weeds, but I got to get on into the weeds, because it deals with the operation, and we are in the committee on government operation. And we as a government sometimes are derelict in taking care of equipment and preparing for natural

disasters. And this mechanism, this technology is deemed as a method to assist us after a storm. We're getting rid of our green waste, which is a natural thing to happen. Kindly indicate for me, when or if this incinerator is purchased, how do you, and like I said, I don't mean to get into the weeds, how are you going to assure and you're going to be able to make the necessary preparation that this incinerator doesn't fly away or harms anybody? Has it been ever tested in when you're looking at those areas to withstand a certain level of wind force and the like?

3:04:06 I don't know if you've considered that. I want the technology here, but I don't want us to waste money and waste time. And then go right back where we are right now when a hurricane comes. We don't have an incinerator to actually get rid of the green waste because guess what? It has blown away. We see that happening right there at the Bovoni landfill where they had purchased over years this burning unit with government money and nothing don't happen to it. It's not operable. So that's my concern. My concern is that, and I don't know, pun intended, that we don't waste our people's money, the taxpayers' money. That's my major concern.

3:04:58 Mr. Beaumont? Bruni? Sorry. Mr. Bruni, I'm so sorry. Mr. Bruni, I should know that. You want to comment on that? okay alex brownie chief engineer this box or this air curtain is so heavy that if a storm was able to pick up this box in reality we all did plain and simple it's the the box is is made to withstand a certain temperature on a continual basis so it's made out of steel and it's lined with a material that is is very durable and it's extremely heavy that a storm just can't come and pick it up just like that you're saying that does not assure me i'm going to tell you now if i need to see it or see where it has it like that because anybody could come and see that and i know you and i ain't a matter of trust for me okay i have i have people that i am answerable to okay and they're gonna tell me carla how you didn't get this but i'll research it i will go on their site and see And I'll even ask them whether or not, because those are assurances that we need if we're going to bring in this technology to us.

3:06:12 I don't want us to waste the money or waste the time, okay? Because we want it to be here to actually do what you're proposing it to do, is to get rid of the mulch, get rid of the green waste after the storms. We want it to happen. So I really thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for the time. Thank you. Senator Fonseca, your burning question. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we've received testimony here that DPNR was invited. They did not attend. We've also received testimony that they have a meeting this afternoon with the residents of Bovoni but the residents have not had a chance to give input to this concern.

3:07:06 You see the fact is is that there's health risk to the nearby communities. People living or working near the accelerator may be exposed to smoke or airborne particles. There's toxic metals and chemicals that's released during burning that's right when you burn toxics chemicals will be released um you know there there must be strict permit restrictions that's what i wanted to ask dpnr what are the strict permit restrictions uh there's schools in the areas um you know it's a dense population. The Bavoni housing community is one of the most dense populated areas on St.

3:07:56 Thomas. There's health risks to the nearby community. Pollutants travel in the air and they travel long distances. The fine particulate matter, the PM 2.5, can enter deep into the lungs, cause respiratory problems asthma bronchitis there's even testimony today that these things can cause increased mortality risk i'm saying i'm a representative of the people i am thoroughly prepared however i want the residents to have a chance to input i read i represent the residents of the whole community these airborne contaminants can travel i don't even know if i can rely on your testimony that sargassum wouldn't be throwing into it even though you tell me so the government of the virgin islands have a way of not being responsible once these permits are issued once this is approved by the legislature why can't it go through the regular process the other senator the female senator um independent senator asks if there was um any public hearings conducted on this matter what is the big rush we've got testimony that the the the material is not purchased we don't even know where it's going to locate be located in proper material can enter into this burner? Treated wood. A lot of our debris that we have contain treated wood. That's right. We use treated wood to reduce the instances of termites, etc., etc. Plastics can get in. You showed me a picture of a small truck loading matter into this thing. How do you know small plastics are not going to be in there what are the insurances that all of these poisons toxins are not going to enter and they get into our air yes we want to address the issue of the bovoni fires but we need to do it the proper way and the residents bovoni nada bulungo

3:10:20 These toxins get into the air. It's poison. I cannot support this matter unless the residents have had a chance to input or unless I have heard from the agency that regulates environmental protection. They are not here. There's been no public hearing on this matter. So this is not a matter of being not prepared this is a matter of rushing something that could probably provide good to the community but at this time i don't see any possible way that i can vote for this because residents have not been advised i represent the residents that is my job i got to represent the residents the health and the safety especially school-aged children there's a big school in that area right in the direct line of the wind any wind that blowing going straight to that school and there's a daycare we're building a head start there this is a densely populated

neighborhood thank you uh mr chair uh for the time thank you senator fonseca you know i i listen closely and i hear a lot of things being thrown around here today but i know for a fact both landfills burning every day burning every day but the epa all day or not the landfill operator is here he could tell you both landfills burning every day we have some bigger issues coming i read somewhere in the daily news on the consortium

3:12:06 somewhere that this year coming this year we're gonna have much more sargassum coming what we're gonna do as a body we have to get together collectively to see what measures we're going to put in place, waste management, EPA, health, all of us. How are we going to remove this sarcasm? How are we going to dispose of it? That's another thing. So, I mean, I understand the community should be involved. But as leaders, something we have to lead.

3:12:39 We have to take the ball by the hand and do certain things. We're not sarcasm getting the weed out of the Red Hook. eudoric in school calling waste management every day saying there's a sewage leak but you know what it is the sarcasm we trap in between the mangroves go to the hotels they call in government house they call in the legislature what are we going to do about removal of sarcasm weeds our tourism product is impacted right there in the same bennaby and all of those what were they talking about in Red Hook, in Frieden Hoy, the sarcasm when he comes in. Everybody brings the sarcasm to the landfill as well. So I hear you. But we have to make some tough decisions. Some tough and popular decisions. What is health safety and doable for life?

3:13:34 senator novel francis junior you're recognized for your burning question thank you thank you very much mr chair i i agree with my colleague that perhaps we need some additional testimony and there's no reason why this is a first step there's no reason why that can't be considered in the rules and judiciary committee i um in addition to dpnr i will also implore that we bring the Department of Health as well in this full discussion, but this is just the first step. There's no rush here. This is part of the process, and certainly in the Rules and Judiciary Committee, we could be able to get some additional bet in. We keep talking about the global warming and climate change and what we're up against this environment, and we need to be ready for what is about to come here. I wanted to ask Mr. Ashby, who kind of manages the...

3:14:29 Hold a second, Senator. Mr. Ashby, please, your full name and position on the record for me, please. My name is Jamez Ashby. I'm the landfill contractor for St. Thomas and St. Croix. I'm the contractor for St. Thomas and St. Croix landfill. Full name? Jamez Ashby Sr. Thank you. Mr. Ashby, I wanted you to weigh in and give some perspective. Obviously, you're in the fight every single day, and I'm one of the operators. I wanted to get your perspective on this proposal.

3:14:57 Proposal, very good proposal. The machine is over 8 to 10 years old, not old but machines, but the technology has been out for over 10 years and every year the EPA has tested this machine over and over and over. EPA is not going to give sight or permission to use a machine that's going to cause havoc to people in the community or any place in the world. EPA stands over certain categories and certain air emissions. These machines put out less emissions than your car you drive. So if we're talking about emissions and particles per per million, then stop driving all cars on the island. Because the cars are putting up more emissions than the air curtain burner. So if we're worrying about that, then stop all the boats, stop all the cars stop all the generators okay that's what we have today this machine needs to be here i fight these fires repeatedly over and over and over my guys are there every day day in day out my life my guys are at the forefront with the fire department so my guy is them is the one fighting it every time it happened this machine is very very good it doesn't have the emission way but i think it has it's way better than waste energy because waste energy has so much other parts to put into it to make it work now on the sargassum side now the sargassum comes from the ocean there's not much stuff in the ocean besides seaweed and whatever we put in there The seaweed comes up the land, the truckers bring it in, put it back in the landfill. The sargasm we smell in, which we call seaweed, the real name is sargasm, but we call it seaweed.

3:17:04 When it decomposes, that's when the smell comes to a gaseous stage and it gets so decomposed that it turns negative pH level and that can cause explosion. That's why it smells like a rat in sewage. But it's not sewage, it's the level of decomposition. So it has to move and go to an area that suffice to maintain it. It will never end up in the machine.

3:17:35 If I'm the one to run the machine, I would do a three-step process. Sort, then shred, or grind. Because when you do shredding and grinding, you have a material now that can reduce to 80% or less. What you saw in the video. You take a piece of lumber, you shred it. So now you have minimal stuff that you can see. And if it's a big piece of item of steel or whatever, you can see because the machine is going to jam. You take the parts out. And if you get some piece of material that is bypassed, there will be 20% of the material from 100%. So that material would end up burning way faster within the air curtain burner that it won't be an emission problem or parts per million problem. That's the key.

3:18:28 So separating, shredding, and then burning will be the three steps that I will take to make sure that the mixture of other items won't be within the greenways to put into the machine. but the key thing is to shred it first then put it in because we

have all our material here in the original mix, we don't separate nothing here we need to separate but we don't so the key factor is to separate shred and then place in the machine Thank you Complete your thought The mic of Senator Novo Francis Thank you very much Mr. Chair Thank you, Mr. Ashby, for putting that perspective on record. I just wanted to conclude by asking the CFO, Waste Management, Griffith, whether or not the Waste Management, as well as working with UVI under the Caribbean Green Technology Center, prepared to perhaps develop some rules and regulation to ensure that regulatory responsibilities would be adhered to and that there will be some accountability moving this forward. We are definitely prepared to prepare rules and responsibilities and procedures, policies and procedures as well, sir. Thank you. And just to add to what the previous Senator was suggesting, as well, I know there's some independent entities that would like to give way in on this conversation as well. So, if need be, in the Committee of Rules and Judiciary, we could also further this conversation. However it goes today, we could out-forward this conversation. That's right. Senator Alma-Francis Heiliger, you're recognized.

3:20:15 Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I sat here a little bit entertained by quite a bit of the comments that were being said, questioning Senator's leadership, questioning whether some of us were prepared or not. I could only speak for myself and my leadership style has always been to put the people first and I've never wavered from that and I have no intentions to. When it comes to me, I have never been a follower. I can't say that for all of us that have been elected but I don't follow anyone. I always make up my mind based on information, research, knowledge, education, and that's how I function. So any questions y'all have about my abilities or integrity, you know, you could share them with the public, but it's really none of my business, because at the end of the day, I'm going to do the job I was elected to do.

3:21:20 and I am not making a decision willy-nilly unless I have all the pertinent facts and if we have a whole agency that speaks to the environment and they're not even here and I have colleagues saying well it's no big deal we could send it to rules I'm a member of rules rules is a clearinghouse I we don't really have much debate and rules over anything let's be honest most of the time when stuff gets there it's already vetted in the communities they've been assigned to so if you have several out of the six of us here today half of us have concerns but the best some of y'all going to do is try to diminish those concerns into political pontification you're going to diminish them into leadership style, but not a single soul who is on the opposite side is saying, hey, maybe these people are just genuinely concerned with the process and the people of this territory. So, I mean, y'all could perform however y'all want to. I'm not getting involved in that too much today, but at the end of the day, I am still standing that I am not supporting this legislation at this time and I do support the concept but until I get the additional information that I need to make a fully informed decision and the people mostly affected by this piece of legislation gets to hear a little bit more about it my answer will be no so thank you so much for you all of your

3:23:07 thoughts today and have a blessed day senator clicker joseph would you like another you're the sponsor of the bill you have your clothes out well um again i was bringing the technology to the boys and islands and clearly um ashby is clear i've worked i've worked on many fires with him being at st croix so if he's telling you now his men he used to do it himself when i was and in the field he was out there with us tons and tons of trucks of dirt to move to out fires but i mean we're talking about kind of changing some of how we're going to operate because if we start add less green waste to somebody to the landfill chances of fires are less because when it goes on green it sits and it gets down underneath it runs down then it turns it have something to burn because they already dried out so it's now we could burn when it's green it wouldn't burn as easy and when it's not it's gonna burn um my one colleague got wondering about the weight of the the piece of equipment the piece of equipment is nearly 10 000 pounds so if if it could be moved from a hurricane or not it's about ten thousand nine thousand eight hundred something pounds of again as we speak you said it to mr chair every day the dumps are burning every day you're smelling something different so so if if for some reason you got a whole bunch of rain because this this is my experience you got a whole bunch of rain so as we can't get up on the hill to move the tractors and it starts to spread you're going to be getting smoke for days so again this is about getting the technology here so we can move on to rules if some of you guys want but if you don't want to and you want again i i want to believe if not i know i didn't have any tongue house um the the

3:25:19 present ed right now might have met with some of the people in the in the in the residence as well but at this point they're going to be clear going forward we'll see what we want to do because when it's burning everybody running for cover this is to save all of that and again we can move it down today and listen to written rules and bring the other individual that you guys want to hear from in rules and even then if they could convince me then to in rules that I'm a member so we got i'm a member alma is the mem i mean um senator francis is a member senator we're gonna call no senator name senator okay sorry i ain't gonna call that a name but you have two francis so nobody know who i'm talking about right now but at the end of the day i know i'm a member of rules as well and if somebody from dp and i could come and tell me something different and i know they could convince me to vote now as well so i know this is in the best interest bringing this technology here to the point that is in the best interest of us as a people and i rest my case at that point we'll see where we

go from here thank you thank you senator joseph uh colleagues we exhausted all around and this matter our inquiries uh director stevens i give you a 30 second close Good afternoon, Senators, and the listening and viewing audience.

3:26:53 Again, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be able to testify on this bill. This bill affects my staff significantly and the men and women in the community. One of the things that I want to make sure that I point out is that we failed. Well, this bill came before the Senate, a similar bill a few years ago. I think it was the 32nd or 34th legislature. And it was unsuccessful.

3:27:30 Hence, the situation that we're in right now. The air curtain was introduced. Back then, we were ready to bring it in. It was going to be paid for by FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers, at no cost to the government. a bill was created that stopped it from happening and since then we've had the Bovoni landfill fire the most major one that we've had that lasted between 17 and 21 days there were ways that we could have prevented it before it got to the situation that we are currently in and we didn't do anything about it we have the opportunity to do something about it now let's take the action that that need to be taken. I keep hearing the mention of a town hall not being held. I know for a fact this evening I'm attending, along with my waste management counterparts, a town hall at the Bovoni discussion with the Bovoni community. So again, those of you that would like to be there, please come. Voice your concerns. We're there and again, it's about the safety I know for the entire community, but let's think about the community at large, not just that community, but everybody else that's affected, and I think we'll be better off for it. Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. Thank you. Director Joshin. Thank you, Senator. You know, in 2017, we had the opportunity with the same technology, like Director Stephens said. We chose not to. Since then, we've been educated. Leadership has gone up and seen this technology work. the EPA is even weighed in on this. It's a visual inspection so the technology is there. We stand behind us as leadership and we're looking for the legislature to provide leadership support for this also. We'll thank you for the

3:29:18 opportunity to present testimony from Vitima's perspective today. Thank you. Dr. Gunnell? Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Like I said I cannot take a position on this. I hope that the information that I gave was useful. If there is a need for more information or for more data collection, we are happy to help. That's what we do at the University. I just also want to take this opportunity to mention that the issue of air quality in a territory is an important one, especially the car emissions as Senator mentioned and as the gentleman mentioned, so we're also happy to discuss any need or interest that the legislature have regarding car pollution or air quality effect from cars. Thank you. Thank you. CFO Griffith, Darrell Griffith. Thank you, sir.

3:30:18 As was mentioned in the testimony, we've had over 15 fires in the landfill in the last two years, so that means every other month there's a fire at one of our landfills. So we want to use this technology to help reduce the number of uncontrollable wildfires that are happening on the landfill and this will give us a way to have a controlled burn that would dramatically reduce the amount of emissions that are being put into the atmosphere so we ask for your support we're gonna share the message with the videos to the community and we want to be able to move forward to help safeguard the lives of all of us here because we're all Virgin Islanders and and this will directly affect every single one of us thank you sir thank you and before i release the testifiers i want to say thank you all to include you mr ashby for being here today um i just want to take this privilege before we break and carcass and i dismiss the testifiers to introduce my intern from the ivana you'd reckon miss fritz Mr. Lani Fritz, come in the front here for me, please.

3:31:33 So everybody, I was boasting about their zone, but this is my hidden weapon in the background. Ms. Fritz, 17-year-old senior, hailing from the Ivana-Uduraken High School, the Devil Rays Country. Her future goals and aspirations, she's a senior, like I said, to graduate from high school and get into the Air Force, and she wanted to graduate from basic training with high honors as well and go to the University of Emery-Riddle and study aviation. She wanted to become a commercial airline pilot and fly in the Boeing 787 and rank up and become a captain. She also wanted to rank up and become a colonel in the military and retire.

3:32:14 Before retirement, she wanted to buy homes and invest in stocks and properties and become a multimillionaire. so we're going to uh we're going to continue to support miss fritz and her endeavors and as a good community spirit we're going to continue praying for her and her family her parents are uh lister fabian fritz and her father is so some fritz so mess fritz and um this is miss fritz and i present miss fritz to you and this wider community miss fritz i i i admire you you don't don't become a senator you'd never become the multi-millionaire you may sit down testifiers you are dismissed colleagues the committee and government operation veterans affair is going to take a five minute recess as we caucus on this bill We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you.

People named in this transcript

SUSPECTED, and a finding aid only. Names were matched by machine against the spellings used across all 426 of our transcripts, and the title is the one used in the room. Being named here is NOT evidence that a person attended or spoke · only that the name was said. Speech recognition mishears names, so a spelling may be wrong even where no alternative is offered.

- 10x **Senator Carla Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph
heard in this transcript as: Carla J. Joseph, Joseph
- 8x **Senator Avery Lewis**
heard in this transcript as: Avery L. Lewis, Lewis
- 6x **Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger**
heard in this transcript as: Alma Francis Heiliger, Alma-Francis Heiliger, Frances Heiliger, Francis Heiliger
- 6x **Senator Novelle Francis**
heard in this transcript as: Francis Jr, Francis Jr., Nobel Francis Jr, Nova Lee Francis Jr., Novel E. Francis Jr
- 5x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**
heard in this transcript as: Giddens, Gittins, Kenneth L. Gittins
- 5x **Senator Ray Fonseca**
heard in this transcript as: Fonseca
- 4x **Senator Franklin D. Johnson**
heard in this transcript as: Franklin D. Johnson's, Johnson
- 3x **Senator Clifford Joseph**
heard in this transcript as: Clifford A. Joseph Sr, Clifford A. Joseph Sr.
- 2x **Senator Donna Frett-Gregory**
heard in this transcript as: Gregory

Bills and acts referred to

Matched by number against our own acts corpus. The number is what the recognition heard, so it may be wrong; where it resolved, the title is the one the Legislature gave the act.

Act 8018 Act 8018 · An Act banning the burning of all fallen trees and other vegetative debris generated us a result of a natural disaster ---()---+

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Bill 36-0232