



## | Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection

Legislature USVI

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- 0:00:00 if you're going to ask questions i'm going to out again let you know that you should come up to one of these mic and speak in the mic okay that's the only way we're going to be able to hear you and that's how we would like to have it run today this evening you have anything to say please take one of the seats if you're representing an association take a seat have a seat Okay? And what we're going to do is we're going to allow you each five minutes. If anyone is interested in speaking, like I said, we have somebody. I have someone in my office here who is going to be scribing. I ask that you take a seat. Now, five minutes. Okay? We don't want you to be running over that time. So five minutes time frame for you to be able to speak.
- 0:01:02 Five minutes for each. I think so, yeah. I also want you to note that this is really uh an atmosphere of respect that we're having this town hall meeting and in that vein we're going to ask you to kindly put your cell phones on mute if you haven't done that already kindly place your cell phones on mute okay so that they're not vibrating we don't allow picture taken in here only by our professionals who you see here and some senators may also take pictures but for you so know that i am very all of us here are very disappointed that no one even not even one of the commission members found it necessary to come to this town hall meeting but like i mentioned miss gums uh mr what a gentleman who is the clear one one of the law enforcement agents as well as the secretary for the taxicab commission was to the town hall meeting on june 23rd in St. John. I don't know what her apprehension was or the apprehension to come this evening, but they had ample notice. Okay. So we're going to go in this order. We're going to start with a gentleman here in the red, and we're going to work our way this way. If anybody else is interested in testifying. We have enough. One, two, three, four. You can fill up any of these one, two,

- 0:03:09 three seats and the seven. Okay. Madam timekeeper, you ready? Okay. Okay. So remember the housekeeping keeping rules, five, certainly, and be sure to say what your name is, too. Question before you start.
- 0:03:38 Kindly recognize this, Mike Media. Yeah, Marvin Smith, Eastern Taxi. I just wanted to find out because you have an agenda. So I just want to know if I could just speak about what I want to speak about or do I have to follow this agenda? We're going to open it up because we're here to serve you. And if it's on your heart and your spirit to speak about something, speak it. You have freedom of speech under the United States Constitution. Okay, just let me know when my time starts. Okay.
- 0:04:13 And be sure to say your name, Mr. Smith. All right? Okay. Clerk, you ready? Okay. You can go ahead. Okay. Marvin Smith, Eastern Taxi President. I didn't come here to make any statement on behalf of Ms. Gumbs because Ms. Gumbs is about probably a year in her in this taxicab commission and after speaking with other people today, I found that she is doing certain stuff behind the scenes to try to get rid of some injustice that was done in this taxicab commission with sorting corruption where that's going on. So I ain't come here for that. What we need to do, what we need here in front of us is the board members. Those board members that have been sitting there for years upon years and have not been implementing and doing the right things on the board. And as far as I I know only about one of them is still eligible to be on the board. So the governor needs to replace those board members and get new board members on there that could do for the taxi industry. But my gripe here today is what is affecting us as taxi drivers. And I am a second generation taxi operator. And right now, our industry is being overraned by what they are calling the so-called limousine. And it wasn't done by the Taxicab Commission.
- 0:05:47 It was actually done by this institution. What I have here in 2012, this bill was amended. And I'll go limousine, which are not considered automobile for hire. and are exempt from the jurisdiction or application of any rules and regulations implemented by the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission. Limousine service providers are exempt from complying with the provision of any franchise agreement granted to taxi service providers at any Virgin islands marine terminal or airport and has the right to transport passengers to and from any airport or marine terminal in the virgin islands this is abomination upon the taxi industry and this here need to be repealed and so and do whatever because wherever it was before it need to go back this open up the doors where we have so-called limousine drivers doing shuttle service in the border islands they're running our shuttles you have we personally at eastern taxi we had a contract with dolphin water taxi which and we was running for a certain price which was under a little bit below the tariff when the price when the taxi uh thing raised the tariff raised we raised our price on them to suit our affairs which was thing they in turn went and negotiated with a limousine company and take and they take over the job right
- 0:07:36 now i'm understanding that the owner of dolphin water taxi by their own vehicles now are running the work with private plates you also have imi which used to provide taxi service with work with work on this island they are now having buying vehicles and running with this lack any hotel could go and buy get a limousine license and run and where does that leave us as taxi drivers okay so this is something that needs to be addressed immediately um we also have infringement and sorting in our organization everybody i know we are all taxi drivers but all of us need to get together on one scale and start to do for each other because guess what you might get a job today or tomorrow you want to come east end overrun east end do whatever you want pick up as you want do what you want i need some guidelines with this limousine thing we're going back to this because this is why it is i really here for today this we need them to be regulated could anybody tell me what is what is the specs on limousine in the virgin islands could anybody tell me what is the fair for a limousine to transport from red hook from red hook to to the airport could But could anybody tell me to answer those questions? Hello? They ain't hearing me?
- 0:09:14 It's not regulated. So therefore, it is need to be regulated. What's this? They have... The timekeeper is trying to... Okay. The timekeeper is trying to make sure we stay within the boundaries of what we said, five minutes. Please put on the timekeeper's mic. Can we donate any of our time? Testing, testing, testing.
- 0:09:57 Testing, testing. Okay, again, we are allowed to have two medallions if we want to buy two medallions and that's it. A limousine operator can have, they don't even say they don't operate on a medallion, they have one business license and they operate 120 cars, as much as they want. That's unfair to us as taxi drivers, and I will pass the mic on. The next testifier, please state your name. Good evening, my name is Annette Morfus.
- 0:10:44 Mic number two, mic number two please, media. And come up a little bit, Ms. Go ahead. Testing, testing. Oh, we could hear you do. You're coming through loud and clear. All right. Continue. Okay, good evening. My name is Annette Morvis. And the reason why I came up here this evening was for one reason. If the people to whom we are speaking are not here to listen to us, I heard you saying the pen is my tear. You know, yes, down the sword, yes, and I know that, but we would still like to face them face to face because this is where some of our problems are coming from. So we need to speak with them, to them, and all around them. So we need to have their presence, and this is why I came up, was to ask

to have this meeting postponed until we can have those who, as we need to be open to hear our cries. Okay, so we can't call them in in the future, no, this body has, this committee has called them in before, and what occurred in those meetings, if you saw it televised, was Ms.

0:12:05 Gums said that she couldn't speak, and she said she couldn't speak, and then Ms. Loh Ms. Lloyd, Ms. Lloyd was speaking on her behalf, but we can call them in again, okay? In a more formal setting. But one of the reasons why we wanted them, we asked them to be here. They chose not to, and definitely they are going to see that pen being strike with regarding their no show. But we can and we will call them in in the future again because it's really unacceptable. It's unacceptable and it shouldn't be tolerated that you as taxi drivers are not getting any satisfaction from them relative to your service. So we will be doing that again. And then there's, sorry, you wanted to say something? Yes, I would really like to say if we can get such disrespect, we probably should be withholding our fees. We should probably be withholding whatever business we have to do with them until they can hear us. Because we need to be heard. We're not here, we didn't leave what we have to do just to come and sit. I mean, we appreciate you all being here, but we also need to have them here. That's the purpose that we're here. Right. want to we don't necessarily need Miss Gums to speak because like you said we know that she's new and she has inherited a lot of mess if you want to put it that way so we're not looking for Miss Gums one-on-one to speak we would like her to be present but we are looking for the board members that have been there for aeon years to speak we would like to dialogue with them thank you oh i still have a little time you want to conclude or you're fine with that time yes i'd like to

0:14:10 conclude because i have to leave i have prior arrangements but i really wanted to say thank you all for listening to us thank you all for being here and please I'm asking you all don't forget next year and this is not a trip this is just a statement next year is a voters year so we are looking um we have not just the taxi drivers the the few thousands of us we have our families we we have our friends, we have, we do have a lot of voices, and we have a lot of influence. So, we would also like to have the board, I know the board is selected by the governor, appointed by the governor, but we would like to, since it's representing us, since the taxi board is representing the taxi association, we would like to elect who we would like to be on that board. Because we don't need people there that's not representing us, We don't need people there that's not standing up for us. We don't need people there that we cannot dialogue with. We don't need people there who have no say concern in the taxi association. Some of them have no idea what goes on in taxi. And they don't know what taxi is about. They should not be on the board.

0:15:26 We need people there that's in our interest, our best interest. Who do we run to if we have a problem? And we need this law on the limousine from 2012 that was placed there, this is not the first time that, or the second time that we're coming here concerning this, and we would like this to be resolved. Speaker 2 Revealed. Speaker 2 Yes. Speaker 2 Revealed. Speaker 2 Okay. Speaker 2 Revealed. Thank you. Speaker 2 Now I got several things, and you said a lot, Ms. Movis, and I welcome it because you're making some point, you see when you're having these kind of dialogues, it's not just for those individuals who are working at a taxicab. We are the lawmakers. We can write the law on what dictates that they do. And that is also one of the things and reasons that we had this meeting. That's a strategy. We wanted to hear your concerns, hear your resolutions to some of the... Because you know best, you know better than us how to resolve issues that are happening in the taxicab industry and what needs to be done to fix it, okay? so we really value your input this evening and just don't think because the representative from the taxicab commission are not here means that action isn't taking place that's why we are here listening keenly to you and i'm taking notes and we have backup notes so thank you so much for that we colleagues you have any questions will we finish everything miss movers do not leave if we can or if you need to go you can uh but we're gonna go on with the others uh next testifier mike three okay yes uh kerry harrigan best taxi it's only a few issues kerry harrigan best taxi there's a few issues um yeah i'm with the taxi car commission

0:17:21 One of the things is fees In the past I've requested a list of the fees How long have they been there How they've been written I'm getting satisfaction to date Just a slight example, Senator Joseph If you are late with your medallion lease Let's say it expires on the 30th of September And you're going on the 1st of October You'll charge a \$300 late fee plus \$50 because a new month has started. It expires September 30th. And because you go on October 1st, it's \$350 initially, and \$50 a month after that for being a day late. May I ask a question? Sure. That's in a regulation that you receive when you get your taxi medallion?

0:18:13 No. Do you? No. I haven't received it yet. It's not delineated in any writing because if that's part of their policy they should have been able to share it with you from the inception when you get your medallion so that's not written nobody has ever seen that written in any document i didn't say i have never seen it how long you've been a taxi driver 21 years how many 21 21 you've never seen that okay anyone else has seen a document that states what mr harrigan indicated that if you're late your taxi medallion expires the 30th of this month your lease a letter of lease and you lease it to somebody else right they are now being charged like 300 uh to they have to to pay so people have seen that in writing from the

taxicab commission? It's not in writing, but it's implemented. Okay, noted. You had another item to say, Mr. Harrigan, you want to continue? Yes. Also, I was a victim of this about a month or two ago. I purchased a medallion. I was asked to bring the plates and I was renting the same I was asked to bring the plates in off of the vehicle, took them in, and I was told I have to wait until Ms. Grombs is ready to finalize the sale to get my plates back.

0:19:46 Therefore, I have to park my vehicle up for almost three weeks waiting until I sign, sign over to the seller to the buyer for about three weeks. I've known drivers have waited longer than that, just for a transfer. And while this is happening, you're incurring penalties while waiting on them. If it expires during their time having you wait, they'll charge you penalties on top of that. I've also been a victim of that while Ms. Gumbs has been there. Another thing is they're interpreting the laws, some written laws that I've seen, how they want to and enforcing them by how they feel it should be not not what's in black and white they have enforcement officers that are doing their duty work when we have these big crew ships in town yep big problem they're sitting at their desk all day doing secretary work as law enforcement officers when you have thousands of tourists on our streets these are all issues that need to be addressed and fixed. Another issue we have we all know about supply and demand. You have taxi drivers retiring, moving away, some are passing daying. We haven't had a class in what?

0:21:09 Three, four years? So now the demand is we exceeding our supply As far as the taxi drivers are concerned. So that's not the train, the tests. That's a taxi driver's class you're talking about. I'm referring to the class for new drivers, to hire new drivers, or give new business on taxi driver's licenses. They will give 100 tests a year.

0:21:39 That doesn't mean they give 100 licenses for that year. Only those who, 10 might pass. There's only 10 new licenses and you have 50 drivers who are leaving the job. So these are some issues that need to be addressed to the Taxi Car Commission. Question I have to ask, is St. Thomas and St. John one district, it's still one district? To my knowledge, I don't think we are, no, yeah, we are one St. Thomas and St. John district. My question is, if we're one district, if I have a Class C license, which is a chauffeur taxi license, why can't I drive if I have a St. John, took my test at St. John, but there's no work in St. John for me, and there's work in St. Thomas.

0:22:29 I'm not bringing my vehicle down. I'm bringing my body and my body to show I'm a licensed chauffeur taxi driver. Why can't I work on both islands if we want this week? These are things that need to be addressed also. Senator Blyden, you wanted to make a statement? Yeah. Good evening, everyone. I must say, first of all, I want to thank all of you for being here this evening. And Senator Joseph, I know you're the chair, and I appreciate you having this tongue out, but I know Mr. Smith spoke to not being too hard on Ms. Gumbs, but many of these policies and structures that I'm hearing were not there before. They were not there before. So my thing is, honestly, moving forward, we really need to not only deal with the board, but we need to deal with the director and see what's going on in our space because there's a lot of changes that affects those drivers and the way they operate. So I look forward to us doing what we got to do to get her in here and have these individuals at the table at the same time and we do what we need to do in terms of restructuring, getting the board restructured, writing some to the governor to do what he needs to do because this is our industry where everyone, these were the driver when they come and when they leave they deal with taxi driver so it's too critical for us to continue on this path and at the appropriate time when everyone speaks I'm going to speak to the legislation in terms of limousine and restructuring that whole industry thank you so much okay thank you so much

0:24:17 senator blighting mr. Harrigan you want to wrap up one more issue I'd like to touch on. I've had drivers that work within Best Taxi who take vacation every year, probably a month or two months at a time. I have one particular driver, he has two vehicles and they're both a nine which are due to register in September. What he did in the past, he knew he's not gonna be here for August, he's not gonna be here for September. He will pay his two license fees in July before he goes away that practice ms gums doesn't want to hear about so what happens now he would leave and when he comes back guess what there are two late fees and plus the penalties exactly okay this is revenue of the government and that's my that's my concern that it is not placed in writing so you know precisely what the rules are what the parameters are because then they are arbitrarily and capriciously making up things okay has it been passed by the board has it been so because they can't arbitrarily implement any new policies and rules right unless it's been passed by the board you're saying the board uh senator joseph yes but guess who they when you go to them guess who they blame for all that's being done down there the executive us the legislature oh so they said we are at fault so uh how are we are far we are not operating down there no let's say the laws have to be passed through this body here they tell us that all the time all the time so yeah that's that's just like

0:26:08 adam and eve you know it's true they will pass in the buck all the time and saying is is the devil when it's them okay so you have you have never seen any of these rules maybe maybe you could probably use your um powers here whatever let me tell you something we did ask them for the rules and regulations you know i've asked them we subpoenaed them uh also their minutes uh they did supply some of their minutes at their board meetings but it isn't anything substantive okay

so uh we will continue to follow up with them okay and have other hearings but we really have uh some legislation that we're looking at uh dismantling hold on dismantling the board and putting the whole entire operation back on the dlca so that they could fix it a bit and then we come back over again to the taxicab commission and so so that that is that is something we are contemplating because we're seeing that a lot of some of the issues are with the board um and it doesn't have like miss morvis said uh the representation from the taxicab industry uh at the on the board level i think it's only one person who is there with um who whose term hasn't expired and that's mr brathwitt uh he was confirmed in what 2021 you remember mr brathwaite frankie brathwaite right And he's a taxicab operator, taxicab man, or he's retired, but he was.

0:28:03 Anything you want to add, or we can go forward with the next speaker. Ms. Moves, we're not moving backward. I'd just like to conclude by saying, if she's sick, I wish her the best, but how can you be sick and everything in the office, working, but too sick to come here? And we're very grateful for the one person that tries her best and does everything. That's Ms. Carol Joseph. She does everything in that office. The other young lady resigned, and so it's Carol alone now.

0:28:43 They're doing everything. We appreciate her very much. We do. Thank you for your time, Senator. And thank you for being here. Thank you for being here and outlining these challenges that you have. Next is a gentleman. Yes, good evening. Oh good, the mic is on. Can you state your name? Good evening, Steven Lewis. Champion Taxi and Tours. I also work with Best Taxi. You may continue, Mr. Lewis.

0:29:16 My number one complaint is about the board because from the last legislation that you all said you're going to pass, which gave the executive director more power, she's still under the board, governed by the board. How can we have a chairman of the board that doesn't even live here? are you aware of that she indicated we did ask her that question she said her resident is in st. Thomas she doesn't live we know she doesn't live here but she she said her residence is in st. Thomas I'm just letting you know what she said okay she our residents is here but she's never here so how can you be chairman of a board if you're never here okay my colleagues before me that spoke before hit on a lot of things that I would I would have liked to have said also so we read it doesn't make sense to go over that again okay enforcement There is lack of enforcement for the benefits of the taxi driver. But let the taxi driver do something. There's enforcement there right away.

0:30:49 Give an example, Mr. Lewis, so we could clearly understand. You have gypsy taxis overrunning the island illegally. let a taxi driver be running a route with an expired business license, they're right there to pull him over. You understand? Another thing, with the enforcement, you call, you take pictures, you send them to the taxi commission, which they ask you to do, nothing is ever done.

0:31:30 You call the enforcement officers themselves, and they say, well, there's nothing we can do because they have us here in the office working. My understanding, I used to be a law enforcement officer myself. Illegal acts is illegal acts. If a police officer sees an illegal act, isn't it upon them to move forward and intercede in it?

0:32:08 If you have a call. if you have if you have an incident going on let's say a private car a gypsy taxi is picking passengers and you bring it to the attention of a police officer that's right there he's going to tell you well hey that's not my job i say but he's doing something illegal well you're going to take it to the taxi commission those things are wrong an illegal act is an illegal act when it comes to the fees and the different stuff the taxi commission has a booklet that they say is outdated. For two years now, they're supposed to be bringing out a new one. I have not seen that. And in the rules and regulation booklet, there's nothing about fees and stuff like that. Something has to be done with our taxi industry. Senator Fonseca, brief me a little earlier about what you said bringing the taxicab under the lca to me that would be a big mistake because they are now issuing licenses from for limousines and and jeep tours that's another problem we have okay who nobody regulates these things nobody pays attention to these are direct competition to to us the taxi drivers and they don't have to pay the fees and go through what we have to go through the regulations

0:34:10 that's totally unfair you know i'll wrap up by saying time what all of the all of us are taxi drivers this uh miss joseph you know without her we would be in a in a grave because a couple about a month ago this uh miss crumbs was out miss joseph was no miss gums was there miss joseph was out nothing could be done miss gums even doesn't know how to go in the computer to pull up a form for you to fill out come on they never have print in the printer but every every month they collect these thousands of dollars from us okay we have to do something i i feel by putting it under dlca that's like kicking the can down the road we need serious people to be appointed in the taxicab commission that's all i have to say okay thank you so much mr lewis at this time i'd like to acknowledge the presence of Senator Donna Fred Gregory okay next good evening everyone my name is Maisie Mohammed what I would like to address today basically why notice being a taxi driver is it's kind of like a monopoly basically because there's not There's nothing for the younger generation. To me, you have an age limit to start at 23 and above and you still get the waiting list to get your taxi license or when they get the axe straight down there. And you have the younger generation waiting in line for how long just to get in as a

taxi driver. And also, they should have a cut off limit.

0:36:36 to me if you 70 and above i don't know basically and you're charging people for a bag and you can't pick up that bag you shouldn't be taxing when the sun goes down you at your house that you get customers in the night they're calling taxi services and nobody able to pick them up So, basically, what I'm trying to say, like, you can't give the younger generation a chance. And, like, how you have a start-off limit, it should have a cut-off limit. Not some of these guys, if I tell them I'm going to drop you a pin, they don't even know the meaning of a pin.

0:37:20 You got so much air B&Bs out there that these older folks, like, wait, wait. and they can't find it they're looking for the house for two three hours that's not fair and that's why the younger generation right now are doing what they could to try to walk so when they claim in limousine or the claiming jeep tours give them opportunity to open the taxi so they could be able to come in not You can't limit it, I went to the classes and I guarantee you, I do better tours than a lot of people here. I ain't trying to brag, but when I go to Drake's seat and hear people say, oh that's Michael Jordan's house. Michael Jordan who? Where's his house? You tell him about Megan's bae, who's out of fair child, I guarantee you. nobody could tell me who's out of HR I know you could tell me I mean some you got some but you got some people you know how did they get it towards by cutting the price not because they know that they don't know the history of the island which is bad and to me a need to enforce classes like give them three question you come register has three easy question if you can't answer that better go class.

0:38:49 Please. So basically I just tried to say these younger generation yes they're doing the jeep tours they're doing this, they're doing that because there's no other opportunity given to them. Give them a chance. If you're 70 and above retire, relax. You can't pick up the bar, you can't see after dark. What are you doing taxing?

0:39:24 You waited to go down Mountaintop Hill, full load of passengers? You don't know what could happen. It's the same how you have a start-off limit, have a cut-off limit. Give opportunity to the other generation. Not have it as a monopoly. That's it. Okay, thank you so much, Mr. Mohamed. You're welcome.

0:39:52 We'll now hear from the next speaker. Please state your name. My name is Eldon Dane Francis, and I'm the owner of Four Virgin LLC. I would like to start off to say thanks for having us, and thanks for having me. but I would be also open to say I'm very disappointed with our senators I said it earlier and I'm saying it again why because our senators are promising a lot of things I'm not saying that they can just wave a magic wand and it's gonna happen but I believe for what we have been going through over the past number of months with this industry that has been creating so much problem for us i think it's about time that something should be done a couple of days ago and miss joseph that is sitting here she can tell you i wanted to change my vehicles into my business name it took me nine days just for a signature, and today I had to rush over to BMW in order to get that vehicle license. I'm a business person, and because of that, I have to make sure that my business operate in the right perspective. But for the kind of hardship that we are encountering as taxi drivers, sometime I wonder about our senators if they really have us as taxi drivers at heart. Are we just push on the side and are waiting until such opportune time come when there is election? I feel that we have

0:42:03 been neglected. Yes, many of us have been speaking about, we being the first persons that you see in the last, well sometime I wonder if we are ever in sight at all. And I also want to talk about whereby we we have asked, when I sat sometime earlier this year concerning the safari buses and up to then none of the senators have even come back to say to us well let me say then to me this is what has been going on if i have a 2017 bus it is good to go maybe for five years six years but if i have a 1997 bus and it's a 27 seater and I need to get it on the road or replace it. I am not getting that opportunity. They're telling me I have to cut it down to 20 seats.

0:43:12 Up to earlier today, the ships that are coming, they're coming with larger capacity and much more to the point of larger boats. What are you doing to help us as taxi drivers? Again, do you want us to go up the hill with a 1997 bus or whatever it is and are not able to stop because we are not given the opportunity to change and to refit and to be at least on the road where we can have the opportunity to be comfortable driving our passengers. They are asking for safety. They are asking for many things. Senators, please help us. The Taxicab Commission, they don't care about us. I've been a part of the board and they could to get me off, I'm not afraid to say it, because I was not standing for any nonsense. But you know what happened? The people that are there now, to me they're all yes people, and they have Mrs. Gums, like a little yo-yo, getting around.

0:44:38 That is the way I look at it. They don't help us as taxi drivers. I am a business person. There are other people here that are also business people, And they would like to see a change as to what is going on. You said earlier, the pen is mightier than the sword. I don't know if the ink has run out. Time. Thank you.

0:45:07 Well, the ink ain't running out here. As you can see, I'm taking notes, and I have backup notes. I just want to remind the persons in the gallery to just practice some decorum and restraint. don't have to applause i know what they're saying is

really good and it resonates with you because you all are definitely in the trenches and you feel the pain every day uh with what is happening or not even happening for the taxi cab but just hold on the applause if you can please we definitely would appreciate it mr mohammed i wasn't going backwards i didn't go i was i know disrespect i have something to do i just want to tell you i have to leave okay mr mohammed you're released thank you so much for your presentation thank you thank you you guys have a good night we appreciate you thank you so much all right okay the next gentleman good evening my name is called richards i'm coming from st john when you are in st john i spoke to you you asked me to reach out if my issues wasn't rectified wait mike go ahead mr richards you can help me now yeah so when you came to st john i explained to you guys what my issue was i even um reached out to walcus i it's still happening it's still happening in eight months it's gonna be two years since i'm trying to get my replacement medallion that's going to be two years of loss of wages when i was young i wanted to pay adidas shelter right i said mom my mother said if you want them you gotta go get a job right i went to get a job i've been doing stuff for myself from then so i have to be begging people for stuff i'm paying for i paid them a thousand and thirty dollars

0:47:01 a thousand or thirty dollars okay start from the beginning so we could get some history because we have members who may not be completely uh following you in what you i i have my taxi license from 1995. right i relocated to Georgia in 1999. I moved back home in 2019. My father died like the man on the end say it's generation. They're going from generation to generation. I did all my paperwork. So when I came here I asked about building a brand new bus. They say call DMV. DMV tell me call taxi commission. So I scratched that one. So I finally find a bus. I got the bus. So then when I went to register the bus they asked me for the medallion. But being so, the Hurricane Irma, my parents homes got damaged and they got misplaced so they say you have to pay a thousand dollars is going to take 30 days I paid the money I called I called even Ms. Benjamin probably know my name without saying my name I'm just asking for help I remember your issue and we were told at that meeting Ms. George Right? Yes. Remember, she said, what did she tell you? And tell us.

0:48:27 She is going to meet with you. She's the secretary. Yes. Right? Am I saying something wrong? No. And they're going to resolve it. Isn't that correct? Ms. George is not working for Taxi Commission. She's on the board. Yes, but... Yeah, go ahead. Let me speak. She's on the board, right? So I did what they asked me to do, like I've been doing for these past years. I dropped it down there personally. I asked her to speak to Ms. Gums. Ms. Gums refused to speak to me. Refused to speak to me. I come here, I've been nice, I've been calm.

0:49:03 That really burned the inside of me because I paid you my money, I paid for the thing every year, and I can't get, what's I supposed to do? I got taxes, I got land tax, I got that kind of thing to pay. I need my money. I need to make my money. I paid you my money. So what's the problem? And I gave, I turned my paperwork in to Ms. Joseph. I made a copy and I took it upstairs to Mona. I made a note in my phone.

0:49:36 I recall vividly, okay, that both Ms. Myrna George and Ms. Gumbs at that meeting on June 23rd when you brought it up, they said that they were going to resolve. I am very surprised to hear that you still having this issue, and we talked about it too. I am very surprised and very disappointed, I'm going to tell you that, Mr. Richards. Because when we left there, and I'm sure you had the same position that they was going to address it and resolve it, they said they're going to take care of it. That was the last thing I remember them saying, and this is very surprising and disappointed. So we are going to have to write them. I could write them, any of the other senators, and I'm sure Senator Bokeh has wrote them as well. So I reached out to Ms. Holliger, and her secretary told me to come here tonight to voice my issues. But I'm tired of voicing my issues, like who's gonna help me? Why are you supposed to start robbing people and say he's a bad man? What are you supposed to do? unfair man i just need some help i don't like to beg for help i need help and you you're not begging because it's your tax money that pays us and pays them that's not begging you need to get a resolution because i remember that vividly that was one of the issues and they said miss george and miss gum she couldn't talk but she was shaking her head in the affirmative said that they were going so i am very surprised that you still have this issue from june july august september we almost four months later okay so we're going to follow up with that and i need to talk to

0:51:28 miss benjamin and tanya the good workers only and ask them what's going on inside because i know she's gone but i need to bring her back because in most companies when you leave a company you need an exit interview. So what is the exit interview telling you about these people? I was asking for help. I want me to sell drugs. I didn't want to sell drugs. No, you don't want to sell any drugs. No, we don't want you to be selling. We want you to earn your living legitimately. Thank you so much for coming here for real because then we would have, I would have thought that you had gotten that addressed. I would have because we left that meeting with the both of them saying that anyhow let's let's go to the next person pull the mic closer to you yes hi good night to all the senators i have said i'm very glad that you guys started a town hall meeting really don't make too much sense with nobody from from Taxi Cab being here. But I have to voice my opinion to you. This is to the senators, and then I'm gonna tell you about Taxi Cab. Every two years, I just stand in a long

line. I don't have no privilege or nothing like that, and make sure that I go and I vote. And I'm very happy with you guys, the work that you senators are doing, but I'm very disappointed in you guys and I'm gonna tell I why. With all of this situation going on with the director, You know, you guys bringing them to the budget, she heard, you know, information, you bring them back. That's a blatant disrespect to all of you guys that are continuously coming here all the time. Why have you guys not requested or talked to the governor about resignations for the director on the board, you know? They're disrespecting you guys and they're disrespecting us as taxi drivers as well.

0:53:27 I have an issue, a little issue with Ms. Gumbs. everybody's saying miss gums this and miss gums that but she is the current director right there whenever i go in and i'm speaking for myself and i don't if anybody else have the issue i have been a taxi driver right now for over 13 years okay she has all these different rules and i'm gonna bring up one that have a real concern about with the tax clearance letter i don't run a company i apologize my name is nilsa my company is live love and laugh i also work for in search of and i'm a member of aaa okay in my business i have employees she insists and she's telling me i need tax clearance letter for these employees i'm asking her why they're only drivers why do you need tax clearance letter that's one thing i have she said well that's the rule so i said okay if that's the rule can you show me where you know where this rule is because i don't mind following rules if you have it written down i'm also in agreeance with kerry and with eldon there is no procedures nothing you just go down there she tells you something you have to do it we don't even really have a choice you know a lot of us we especially our company we need a lot of drivers we need i don't know how to explain you guys the seriousness of what going on with taxicab right now number two act number 6595 i need for all you guys to go back and print it and please take a look at it because that prevents us from getting 25 passenger safaris my truck is a 2004 i wanted to buy a brand new truck and use my same back and they tell me i need to spend money and cut a seat up to now nobody can get back to me everybody talks about the rule dmv taxi cab i said well where show me where how i come up with this rule how i stating that my safari is too large for the road too wide to whatever it is and i really want to know because we have some big truck on the road that bigger than my safari we have the very jeep toes i talking about this it says our truck they're driving right on the road nobody regulating them but here it is i have my business and i'm trying to

0:55:44 do the right thing and i'm getting stopped at every turn all i'm saying is our senators need to go i'm not i don't know the procedure i just talking because i'm just a driver i'm an outside person but somebody needs to go in i really don't agree with it going on the dlc in either that's my opinion it just needs to get fixed somebody needs to go in and straighten it up somebody need to be on our side as taxi drivers we have nobody on our side miss gums is not on our side the board is not on our side so we're going to lean to what all of you guys do with a board for every two years i have no issues with no senator right now but right now i disappointed in are you because i ain't helping us as taxi drivers i understand i better be writing letters and doing what i have to do but nothing is being done that's a blatant disrespect to you guys very disrespectful I really need you all, I mean, take this serious. This is like the second time I come in to the town hall meeting here.

0:56:46 We voice our concerns with Ms. Guns and it's the same again when I come here again. This is not good. This is not good for business. It's not good for us. It's not good for the tourism industry. It's just not good across the board at all. So please help us going forward from today. Please help us. We need a lot of help. thank you guys so much for hearing me okay thank you so much and Nilsa what's your last thing once again Serrano Serrano next speaker good evening good evening my name is Alfonso Stoyard I'm an independent taxi driver and I've been a taxi driver for 50 years I only have one thing to bring up and that's about parking for taxi drivers in the town. I started taxiing in 1998 by the Reese's, AH Reese's on the waterfront. There was parking for taxis and within the last couple of years you find out that there's There's a taxi sign designated, that's one place. There used to be taxi parking by what we used to call by the garden, Continental. They were parking down by the market, and there was parking on Main Street.

0:58:20 Now, when they did, I don't know if you all was aware of the fact, but there are people sometimes with the disabled, and it takes time to park for them to get out of the vehicle. Am I right? Yeah, that's correct. There is no parking space. There is no, and I'm going to tell you point blank, I don't speak my mind. There used to be parking space by Sebastian's on Radix Garda. I went to the dude who did the plans for the streets, and he told me, and I am quoting him, The governor gave the dude who is in charge of some business there on Raditzgarra permission to cut the street down and pay for it to fix or something like that. And I have it in writing. You follow where I'm coming from?

0:59:08 There is no parking by Sebastian as there used to be now. But the thing what brought me here today is where we used to park our cars on the waterfront where it says taxis only. There's a set of taxiside, about four or five of them. When you go there to park, you got people park in the morning, and they don't come back to get it cut till five o'clock in the afternoon, and it stands to reason when the taxi drivers look to park, they got to park behind them. Some of the other guys that come up, they got to park alongside the road, and it becomes difficult for them to find parking space. I went to the police, and

they said the legislature got to take care of that. But I want to ask you all a question. Who is responsible for putting up taxi signs in the town? If you all could answer me, I could understand that, and I'll do it myself.

1:00:03 Because I don't depend on people to look out for my well-being. And these dudes could tell you, when the taxi commission wasn't coming up with a fee schedule, I made sure I went to them in the taxi system. Right, Champy? All right. So now, do any of you senators here know who's responsible for the taxi signs in the town? It's Public Works, and they're in collaboration with the Taxicab Commission. Well, I'm going to say this to you all right now.

1:00:32 You all need to talk to the commissioner of Public Works and tell him to get new signs with a designated time that when you put up a sign that says taxi only, it should be for taxis only. And let me say this to you. There are people living in this community who are not tourists coming and tourist ship. And this is what they tell me. Anybody, anytime there's not a tourist ship in the tongue, anybody could park in the parking, in the taxi, designated taxi only place, right? And I feel this way. There are people that spending big money to come to AB&B and hotels, and when they want a taxi, they can't fly because the taxis have to be moving around all the time. I don't think we should just depend on the tourist ships because now the tourist ships don't even come till 1 o'clock in the afternoon, and by the time they say they leave in 8 o'clock in the night, the people go on half the street by 6 or 7 o'clock. I only talking about what I know.

1:01:37 I don't talk about what I do most of these do they talk about their problems then taxi association I speaking for the independent taxi drivers like myself and I am an independent taxi driver and before they were taxi association there was only one that was the VI taxi my father was one of the stockholders in the VI taxi and he I when he tell me about buying a taxi I tell him no but then he say you could have it. I said, no, I don't want to drive no taxi because I'm working for the government. I was the deputy commissioner. At the time, I was the director of budget. And I didn't want to get into no problems with nobody see me driving a taxi in the day. I taxied in the night by Normandy bar and at the side. You follow where I'm coming from? I don't deal with trouble and I believe in obeying the law. But we need to find place for the taxi drivers to park in the town and not only think on the Torieship, think on the people who come in and stay in the hotels. Another little thing I want to bring up. When you're going to Frenchman with a snow called Western, why is there a big yellow length abode along the black in the government street? Because I know as a young boy, I could have used a hotel up there on the hill named Flamboyant. I don't know much how you could know about it, right? But you could have drive straight down to Morningstar Beach.

1:03:09 Why they got this big sign stopping people and asking them questions when you're on a public road? I don't mind if they put a little piece of yellow wood what they got down at the entrance to Weston, but not in the government road stopping people, public people from driving on a government road. When you tell people that these kind of things, you don't understand what you're talking about. But you all need to take a drive out of Frenchman Reef or Western as it's called now and see if they don't stop you and ask your whole barrage of foolishness. You understand?

1:03:43 I finished with a discussion because I only wanted to come here to discuss about taxi parking. I could hardly rest with what you call it with taxi commission. You follow? Because this is about the first time I know about a meeting with the legislature relative with the taxi they might have had in the past, but do you all remember, we got to the taxi association and got our meetings for the fee schedule where we wanted them, right around Champi. Yes. You see? Sometimes you've got to take the initiative and do things for yourself, and personally I will only ask the legislator to do something about the laws for parking, and you told me that is the Commissioner of Public Works responsible for that, right?

1:04:27 Yes. Okay. Thank you very much. Have a pleasant evening. Thank you. Over here. Thank you so much, Mr. Stalliard. The gentleman over here, in a white shirt. Taxi driver, I'm also a law enforcement officer. I work for the Taxi Cab Commission for over eight years. And I work under Jackie and under Judy Wheatley. And I said, the laws in town, basically the laws are so old, because the law says that if there is no ship, you could park at a taxi stand.

1:05:06 Because one thing I do, anywhere I go to work, I study the law. Because when I go to court, I don't want to look like a momo. Now, when I come to the safaris now, there is no law that says you can't be like 25. No law. I have it right here, Act 6570, Act 6995, and Act 6635. I don't do my study before I talk. I spoke to Senator Dwayne DeGraff on Monday, and we tried to resolve that issue, which is that there is no law, because Judy Wheatley wrote to the AG on that same matter, and that A.G. wrote back to her and told her that, you must go to the legislature to get it fixed.

1:05:54 Taxicab commission is not a law-making body, it's an enforcement body. They cannot make laws just like that. You must come to the legislature so the legislature could verify whatever they do with the law. I walked there, I know the law. I could run taxicab commission with my eyes closed, I'm telling you that, because I have learned. Her sister was there and I could do anything in Taxi Cab Commission. I left because I had better opportunities, but they are doing a human job down there. I could tell you that. Enforcement, I used to be in Red Hook late night. The gypsies used to be running. That's all in taxi Monday. I'll give you a ticket.

- 1:06:33 I'll give you a warning first, but I'll give you a ticket. I don't play around with my job because the taxi industry is very important to the Virgin Islands and we cannot let it go down. have a lot of old safaris on the road that need to be half the road because of the age and if you have a 25 why are you going back to 20 when you have a biggest cruise coming in a general fabric 8 000 people how are we going to move those people how are we going to move those people are we going to destroy st tom the virgin island because we can't move those people because if we cannot move them they're going to give us a negative review because they don't want to move and i think that we should have well basically we should have the opportunity to upgrade our business the arab upgrading their business there could be all kind of gas station the indian could be all kind of stores and i think it's discriminatory that the taxicab commission will tell us that we can't build a 25 passenger it's discriminating discriminate against tax because we're black I'm going to say it as if we're black and we're small black people, but the Arab them, they're colorful and the Indians have money. We don't have the money to give them. It's time the senators need this to change.
- 1:07:45 Act 6695, Act 6570, you all got to read it. And the thing is that we have people who build a safari. And if they alone have to build a safari, anybody could build a safari, but only one person could certify a safari. I could build my house. by myself, but I have to get a licensed plumber to certify my house. Now we have a problem and I have seen the problem that when it was built, the wheelbase was too short and they have to extra sit behind. That was one of the problems. But now we have vehicles that have longer wheelbase that will handle the road. And I think that the senators right now we need to help the taxi drivers those who want to expand the business let them expand the business and i thank you all for coming i'm looking you know i'm looking because most of you i talked to most already you know what i'm saying but is this happening what's happening and let me tell something i ain't gonna blame his gums i ain't gonna blame nobody but the senators have to put their foot down they have when that's when the arm they were billing the hours being all this gas station they put a motorium on them well how can you put a motorium on a gas station and tax you all don't want the same thing in a different way we got to do different because tax tourists is the number one industry in the virgin islands and if we lose that industry that we cannot move those people when they could because sometimes We're going to have all these people, they don't have enough taxi, they don't have enough taxi.
- 1:09:29 And what are they going to do? Bad review. And what will happen to us? We need to make money like everybody else. Everybody, we need to make money. And my concern is today that the 20 and the 25 seat, that's my concern. If you build a 25, what you need to do, put a motorium on it for a while. if you have an old safari in 1999 take it off the road because when an accident happened first thing they're going to say oh the taxi now some of these guys are really old they cannot handle a big safari they are really old that's when the accident happened you can't blame the safari blame the people who drive in be the taxicab commission as somebody said there was an age limit to cut off or go to a smaller vehicle that's all i have to say this afternoon so Again, again, let's practice some decorum. Okay, so Mr. Bernhardt, what's...
- 1:10:29 Bernhardt Moyes. Moyes, okay. I have one of the Acts here in front of me, Act 6570. It's in section 11. first the act 6570 it did say if it was greater than 20 passengers right unless such a vehicle was a registered vehicle on the date of enactment and this particular act was enacted on December 18, based on what my staff has, September 18, based on what my staff has, 2002, then there was, it was amended, it was amended by Act 6595, and it reads, this is what it amended it reads in the section 3 act number 65 70 is amended in section 11 by designating the existing language as subsection a by striking not and by striking unless a such a vehicle was registered vehicle and the date of enactment of this act where it appears and in certain in lieu thereof why only if the owner of a Safari Surrey or other tour bus type vehicle to be registered was the owner of such vehicle on the effective date of the this act and by adding a subsection B to read notwithstanding nothing I'm sorry nothing in subsection a which I read before may be construed as prohibiting
- 1:12:37 the owner of a safari surrey or other tour bus type vehicle that was registered on the effective date of this act from registering another such vehicle so that means if you had a vehicle or equivalent seeking capacity anytime after the effective date of this act so that means that if you had a bus a safari already that was a 25 passengers so so i so to speak and you want another 25 based on my understanding you are now able based on this section that's not what they're doing no it says here right notwithstanding subsection a may be construed as prohibiting the owner of a safari surya other tour bus type vehicle that was registered on the effective date of this act from registering another such vehicle of equivalent seating capacity of equivalent seating capacity that means that if you had a own if you were owner based on my understanding of a 25-seater you were supposed to be able to to register your vehicle anytime after the effective date of this act and this this act was enacted on july 24 2003 is that your understanding mr francis because you are saying that you have owned a safari And I'll come to you next, that you have owned a safari before this. This bill was enacted that was greater than 20, and they're telling you that you can't
- 1:14:36 register additional safaris that you have purchased subsequently that is of the same equivalent. That is correct, ma'am. And is your understanding that you are allowed to register those vehicles because you had one before this law was

enacted and this law allows you now to purchase vehicles of right did you have one before this before 2003 that was greater than 20 capacity yes I have like uh three vehicles of that capacity I would have purchased another vehicle in order as I'm saying it's a 2008 and um I think that was structured then okay we can't we can't hit one moment Mr.

1:15:34 Francis okay pull the mic to you because we can't hear you okay okay repeat what you're saying you had you first you had a vehicle that you purchased that was greater than the 20 passenger capacity before uh 2002 that's correct okay and so now you bought additional vehicles um greater than the 20 passenger because based on my understanding and i guess your understanding as well you can do that because you had already owned that's correct that's what you're saying and now you are not allowed to register your vehicles that is correct sit sitting in my driver now for over six months okay i understand so you and i are in sync because the law base has does say that because you are one of the owners it says it here clearly it says okay our own up right it can be construed as prohibiting and so i don't understand why they're making up these rules the act the law not no rules or regulation supersedes a law that's that's problematic so who is telling you you can't register d bmv between the dmv and the taxicab commission you got okay the dmv and the taxicab commission wait let me just note that dmv no i'm not going to do it is the taxicab commission well again that's one at a time one at a time i am saying that whatever information then then would have gotten from the DMV because they would have to say to them that he's authorised to register this vehicle and when this is not happening, they just do whatever

1:17:42 they choose to do and that's how I look at it okay thank you so much so we we are clear we have one person who wants to testify I kindly state your name Cosmic Aron, Senior, in search of and also Aron Tours and Taxi Service.

1:18:14 First of all, first of all... Speak clearly into the mic, Mr. Aron. Alright, Cosmic Aron, in search of and Aron Tours and Taxi Service. First of all, I'd like to thank you all for having this meeting. I'd also like to say special thanks to law enforcement officer, Mr. Derrick Carlwood, also Ms. Joseph, and also Ms. Mary Lobey, they really do assist us in the taxi business a lot. Now, when I'm listening with the safaris, with the 20-passenger and 25-passenger, if I purchase a truck from Mr. Francis, which was a 25-passenger, and they say, I got to bring it down to a 20-passenger, the truck or the structure of the truck is not being changed. They want you just to block out the seat. So the structure of the truck is still the same structure of the truck on the road. Now, as they say, hey, these cruise ships are coming larger and larger and larger, and we have to move these people.

1:19:14 When you take five safaris and you cut five seats, that's 25 passengers. And then you're not giving no more medallions, you're not giving no taxi license or anything like that. How are we really going to move the people? I heard all the complaints. We had these meetings before. We've been here. I just want to say, who do we hold accountable? Because the simple fact is, we keep having these meetings over and over and over. You hear the cry. I have the same cry that all these people who testified before me. Me and my wife were dealing with a medallion. And Ms. Saranoga testified to it that it take me three months, three months for us to get a transfer. Ms. Joseph helped us out a lot. And even sometimes we had to make calls where hey, just to get a simple Signature. Yeah. A signature. We're in government, we do have electronic signatures and everything like that. I mean, who do we hold accountable for these things?

1:20:24 When was that? When was... When did that occur, Mr. Aaron? That was since from May. This year? May? Yes. And we just finally got it resolved just about the middle of August. So what were you told was some of the... It was a whole heap of things. My wife had to bring her divorce certificate from 2002 to show that she was divorced, even though we provided them a marriage license for me and her when we got married.

1:20:57 These are the things... And you got married here? No, we got married in Miami, in Florida. Okay, you got married in a U.S. jurisdiction. In a U.S., yes. Okay. Yes. So these are the things. I just want to say, you all keep hearing the cry, you're hearing the taxi drivers complain daily in, in, out, please, who are we holding accountable, is it Ms. Combs, is it the most, is it the board, we have to, who are we holding accountable for these things, how much budget hearings have they missed, what is the excuse, how long can a person be sick, please, I Yes, Mr. Stalyard.

1:21:44 When you have a business, and I think with the taxis, the Taxi Commission is in charge of the rules and regulations. And I, for one, feel that they should have these rules and regulations in a book written down so the taxi drivers can read them. they could know what is the law what needs to be done when they go to the Taxi Commission and it should all be in black and white so there wouldn't be no discrepancy or no problems with what you're supposed to do. When you have it in black and white, it's there in front of you and you can't change it unless you go through the legal process. So that's my suggestion. They need to have a book of rules and regulations for taxi operation. Plain and simple.

1:22:32 And we have requested those items, including the board minutes. We did get some, but not most or if all of them. And so the question, we raised that question earlier, Mr. Stalia, before you came in. Most of the taxi drivers and operators have never seen any of these rules or regulations. they're in writing they're not in writing they're either just legislation that's passed but if you don't keep abreast with what the law is in something in regards to a pamphlet or a book everybody will

be up they got to go to the taxi commission and then they told this and then the next day they're going to told that and it's confusion it is alright thank you so much Mr. Stallion Ms. Serrano i'll kindly recognize uh the mic of eight eight number eight mike hello okay okay basically the situation with the safari is act 6595 and i just really want you guys to take some time and take a look at the act it needs to be changed or it needs to be fixed so i could whatever it is amend it and change it that way that we with the 25 like for me my issue with taxicab was i just wanted to change my truck my truck is a 2004 25 passenger and i want a brand new truck to put my same back on it so it's like and then that rule came up down in taxicab and if you speak to the director, the DMV, she's going to refer right back to the act and tell you, you cannot do it. You are to drive that truck.

1:24:33 But that's not what this act says. This act says that you, as an owner of a 25 passenger, you have the authority to register. It says it here. Senator Joseph. It says you registered. Yeah, registering another such vehicle or the equivalence seating capacity any time. Any time. After the effective date. So you should be able to register this 25? The town hall meeting we had just before this. Well, it wasn't a town hall meeting.

1:25:08 It was a meeting for taxi drivers. The director from DMV was on the camera. Ms. Bonis who couldn't talk were there. You were there. I remember. Okay. That rule came up and that is exactly... She said... No, hold on. But she said, we are to drive that truck until it expires. And then after that, it has to be a 20-passenger. That's when the situation came up with, what? With a lot of people. Point of information. Point of information, Senator Fred Gregory.

1:25:41 Thank you, Madam Chair. So, and good evening to everyone. So, as I listened to the discussion around the, All of that has been discussed this evening, but this particular issue, because we have to go back and talk about all these other things, right? But just this particular issue, because I'm looking at the law, I had my staff pull it. So the chair is correct. So what we're going to have to do, because this is, we continue to have a circular conversation about this particular piece of legislation. And there is a clear misinterpretation of those who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the GVI when it comes to administering this law. So what we're going to have to do, this is a commitment that we need to make tonight, that we're going to write to the Attorney General's office and ask them to provide us with that opinion. We have two things to do. I'm not certain what was the impetus for Act 6595 because that was in 2003, that's long before I became a senator, and Act 6570, 2002.

1:26:53 We have to figure out whether or not these acts came about because of matters regarding the federal highway safety. Okay, so we have to first establish whether highway safety created this issue. Okay, that's number one. And number two, we need to get an opinion from the attorney general as it relates to what does this, I mean, we could go back and listen to the hearings because intent is always what matters in the, whenever legislation is passed, the intent is what matters. So we need to get an attorney general's opinion on this particular piece of legislation, we can try to go back in the archives and read the transcript of what was discussed in these particular meetings that caused these pieces of legislation to be passed. But those are two things that need to happen. Because what we're doing, and folks are getting frustrated to hear Mr. Francis say, he vex with us. And I agree, we have to have movement. So it's time for movement, right?

1:28:04 So we need to figure out what is a highway safety issue from the federal government, and we need to get an opinion from, I don't know if it's appropriate if the law is passed already to get an opinion from our legal counsel here, but opinions that are already in law, we really need to get them from the attorney general's office. So that's something that we need to make happen next week. Write the letter to the AG, and we could do that here. saying, hey, what is your opinion on Sections 3 and 3B of Act 6595 so we could really understand what this really means and then determine whether or not we need to make adjustments to the legislation if it is not an issue associated with federal highway. That's my take on this part of the conversation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

1:29:01 You are welcome. You have a point of information, Senator Blighton? Yeah, yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. In respect to Federal Highway, I know that a water issue before for some time and then Director McIntosh met with Federal Highway in respect to the safaris And we had local certified welders in the territory that basically made them able to continue making safaris. So I don't think the issue with Federal Highway was mutated after those meetings. And there are certain individuals who are federally certified by those individuals. So I don't think that's an issue moving forward.

1:29:51 And I also just to reinforce what Senator Blighton stated, I remember vividly that the director mentioned that, as well as the chair of the Taxicab Commission, they mentioned that they are certified welders who can expand your vehicle, federally certified. But the question isn't that. The question is, once your vehicle has been expanded by a certified welder, you should, if you are owner of a vehicle before this act was enacted, right? right with extended 25 passenger capacity and you bought a next vehicle you should post of the same capacity you supposed to be able to register that next vehicle of that same capacity that act states that you don't see that we need to see the document because we pull this from the yeah but it was by virtue I am thinking that it has an act number it would have but we could find out that and research that and then

- 1:31:38 also look at what the objection to by the governor was at that time but by yeah but it should have it but it's by virtue that is an act it was overridden okay um i a couple of hands but let let this young lady she hasn't spoken yet uh she came down from in the well if she could get an opportunity madam clerk put it um five minutes it's now 8 0 3 i will go for another uh hour if my colleagues uh 45 minutes because my colleagues may have questions they want to ask so we we don't we we are your servants we are satisfied to be here but the work has to be that we have to move things along after this town hall meeting you you are recognized and speak directly into the mic one moment your mic isn't on media go ahead and speak and and state your name good evening my name is yolán joseph um thank you for having this town hall meeting but i'm here listening to everything that's being said and all the taxi drivers are pretty much voicing their concerns and issues with either taxi commission the director as well as dmv in the interim what is being placed for us to continue our business because now we don't have a choice we have to pay our fees we have to do as they say and we're not being refunded for anything the guy who hasn't been working for two years is he getting refunded for that time no and the issues are not being solved is there a time stamp that's going to be given for people to be held accountable and the changes the revisions or anything those are those are very excellent questions miss joseph that's why we're taking those this is this is my first time um and my colleagues have we are trying our very best we've called them in
- 1:33:57 uh we've had a lot of resistance i don't know if you know what you know what resistance is And they are, as one testifier indicated, and it's a fact, they are disrespectful to the body. They're disrespectful, more importantly, in my book, to you who are paying your good hard-on money so that you could get the services. At the bottom line, that's what it is. so we have to see what we can do whether it's having a discussion with their head who is the the governor which he's aware because we reach out to him we talk to the chief of staff okay so it has to come to to an end because at the end of the day this is the one industry one of my colleagues like to say this is the one industry that we could look around and say that local own this business this industry okay that's this is the one and so we have to see what we can do to continue to preserve it for our local people and it's not going to take the 15 or even the uh five of us here we're going to need your help what you think we we have this meeting we have a proposal I mentioned it well I said 5 is 6 I forgot Senator Bolquez forgive me we have a proposal I was preempted to really disband I have to say it I was preempted by Senator Fred Gregory but our offices have been working jointly to get it out to really disband the taxicab commission because we as your representatives not only here we gone down there too you think we ain't going down there to see what's happening
- 1:35:47 we're going down there ourselves time and time again there is no what you said is valid there is no one there collecting the fees the law enforcement officers are in the air condition they can't move they can't go out there and enforce so those are red flags and when we have your executive director refusing time and time again to come before us and saying that she has some illness. I appreciate somebody who is ill, but at the same point, they should have a backup. We have backups in here. We should have a backup. So we're going to count, at the end of the day, we're going to count on you. We're going to need you also to be at the table.
- 1:36:36 And then another thing is why do we have board members that are not part of the different taxi association why can't it be built upon the different taxi associations that are present that in it that knows what's going on that can actually voice and represent us why is it board members that don't know what they're doing that don't understand the taxi cab industry that's what it's the same thing if they don't have the knowledge they don't understand they don't know what they're doing and then another thing is the enforcement we have the enforcers we have what just two when there's six five three cruise ships in what happens down at crown bay we have other associations that not there that are going in and taking our jobs and instead of creating rules and enforcing the rules where they can just go behind because we don't have enough taxi drivers they could just stand in line and wait their turn but instead they're going elsewhere and taking other jobs from the associations that are stationed there and it's the same thing that's happening over in haven site maybe the same things that happened elsewhere and it goes back to the comment with the limousines as well as the jeep tours their jeep tours the driver driving drunk the driver is playing music the driver said all kind of things there are people that aren't licensed they're doing things that they're not supposed to be doing and we don't have enough enforcers to help okay thank you miss yolán joseph okay senator fonseca you had a point of information you wanted to share yes yes um you recognize real quickly i just wanted to ask um mr rano and mr francis um real quickly so i can understand that
- 1:38:29 right now both of you have taxis that are 25 or 27 passengers that's correct okay what's the age of your vehicle mr francis your 25 passenger my older truck i'm sorry our older truck is uh 1997. okay and mr rano what's the age of your 25 passenger 19 years okay so potentially what i'm understanding is that it's a safety issue because you would like to upgrade for a newer car to make sure that you have a safe vehicle on the road not what i wouldn't say safety can my truck i follow everything that is supposed to do make sure that my truck is in very good working condition but you it's to upgrade our businesses you know you can't just continue with an old truck doesn't look good you know we need to upgrade and it's just not happening okay thank you Thank you Madam Chair.

- 1:39:29 Senator Seca, we're going to go, if you wanted to continue, we're going to give you five minutes even though you asked for a point of information and then we'll go to Senator Potter, then Senator Boukis, then Senator Fred Gregory and then to Senator Blyden and I'll go last. Okay? Go ahead, you can continue for five minutes to ask any of the drivers any questions you may have.
- 1:39:56 Thank you. It seems to me that a vehicle over 20 years traversing the street would have a lot of mileage. How much mileage does your car have, Mr. Francis? Honestly, I have not checked it, but I know it is a lot of mileage. Like over 200,000 miles? Close to that for sure. Mr. Ranu, how much mileage do you have? 130.
- 1:40:24 130,000. So the chairwoman read the law, and it's pretty clear to me, Act 6595, that if you have a 25 passenger, you should be allowed to have another 25 passenger. So that's an enforcement issue that I think can be clarified real easy because, like was stated earlier, the legislative act, the law supersedes those internal regulations. So we can solve that on Monday because if someone is enforcing something that's illegal, that is something. Okay, but I wanted to get to one particular issue here on why is it taking so long to get the medallions? And you just educate me here. Why do you need a copy of your divorce papers for the medallion? Tell me why is that needed, because I have no idea. I don't know what you're doing. You're incompetent.
- 1:41:28 You know what you're doing. Honestly and truly, I don't know why, but every time we went in, well, every time my wife went in, you know, it's like, okay, you need this. Come back again, you need this. Come back again, you need another thing. Come back again, you need another thing. Why isn't it that, hey, you give me a paper and say, listen, you need all these documents one time so we can submit it in, and then when we submit it in, hey, we get it. After submitting all the documents, we still had to wait a couple of days, I had to make some cars just to get a signature a signature okay um okay uh you finish i'll let you finish no i'm just saying just for signature at the same time you know we run wheelchair tours and everything like that i have a wheelchair bus park up why because of a signature or because of all this harassment just to get your vehicle registered yeah um you know i'm concerned with that um mr Francis I wanted to go back to you again with you you said you were part of the board at one time that's correct you could speak directly into the mic so why are what's the reason because I've heard testimony that there's more cruise ship passengers you can't with you know with less taxis you can't take the passengers what's the reason why no new taxi medallions are being given out what's the reason for that well for the distribution of medallions sometime there are I would say the responsibility of the board if they're gonna have a sale truth and in fact like mr. Aaron is here saying if someone is selling a medallion it does not prevent them from having the necessary signature especially proving the necessary documents that you have but that don't seems to be the case
- 1:43:34 there seems to be a lot of problems that they want to know your entire life story when you're doing something down there now and i'm saying a simple signature on my business license just to change from out of my name into my business and it took me nine days eight to nine days and i keep going and keep going and it is so frustrating i'm not afraid to tell you and it again i am saying being a part of the board i have been sitting there and when i hear what is going on now i'm asking myself so where does this chain come by and why did it come by unlike the young lady saying on the side there they don't want persons who know about the industry to be on the board i've been a taxi driver i've been there from since 1982 i work in the hotel industry for another 30 years and i know what it is for service but that don't seems to be what we get down there at the taxi cab office it should not be like that point well taken madam chair can i just finish okay so i wanted to i wanted you to respond because earlier thank you madam chair earlier we received testimony from a taxi driver mr masa mohammed but he had to leave and he made some statements here that um i was very concerned about so he was saying that the taxi drivers didn't know the history of the island and um is in the taxi course uh first of all is there any taxi driver in here that doesn't know the history of the island when they're giving a tour? You do. You do have books where you can read and learn about the history of the island and stuff like that. But everybody here, if you give a tour,
- 1:45:52 you can give the history of the island, right? Yes. Everyone give a tour differently though, but the history basically the same. Okay. I just wanted to make sure of that because, just to keep the record clear because I know the taxi drivers know this island backwards and forward and I don't want that to get on the record that our taxi drivers don't know the island. That's not a particular truth. So thank you, Madam Chair, for the time. You are welcome. Senator Potter, if I may indulge, be indulged, I saw a young lady who just stepped in here. i don't know if you wanted to say something on the record but we want to give those opportunities to persons i know you arrived late would you like to say something on the record okay kindly indicate your name and then you may be mike two front row mic two okay try try the mic now mic two again hi good my name is alba clark i'm new to the industry what we didn't get your name alba clark alva alva alva okay yes alba yes okay good got it i've been texting from since 2018 when When I first did the class, they had like virtual where they had the class from St. Croix doing it with us. We had a good amount of people in my class. Out of those people were three Arabs, okay?

- 1:47:34 They never said a word in class unless the teacher called upon them. One of them couldn't speak a lick of English, okay? time came for the test none of them show up but then i saw them on the road driving okay just last month no this month we still in september i went to go and do all my registration i was late i'm a single mom of four so i have a lot to do okay i went to register my vehicle it It took me nearly two weeks to get my vehicle registered. Why? Because your director, who you put in place, was out sick for her throat. I think that we did not put her in. Not you, but whoever put her there. Okay. Right? This body. I just want to be clear. Okay. Whoever put her there. The board. She was out sick. The other lady was off island, her backup. and there was no one else there for me to handle my business. So I had to wait patiently. Losing days from work, okay?
- 1:48:49 How many days did you lose, to your recollection? About two weeks. Two weeks? Two weeks, yeah. Safaris, to me, how I see it, is a part of our culture. Over in St. Croix, my grandmother, she taxied for many years. Many years. I don't know how many, but many years. She taxied. She has a medallion over there that her and her husband shared, and they're unable to bring it. Well, her husband died, so my aunt is in charge of the medallion, and she's unable to bring it over here for me to at least work it because of all the rules and restrictions that they have.
- 1:49:28 Right? They said that I could have gotten it transferred after the hurricane. When I went down in the same office to ask them about it, they told me no. But now, years later, I'm hearing that I could have transferred it due to hardship. They're making up all of these rules. And like you say, nobody, nobody writes nothing. You go to DLCA because now I have a van. I wanted to register it as a limousine. They tell me I have to change the seats, put in a minibar, put in three TVs.
- 1:49:58 Okay? That's ridiculous. us. I'm a millennial, right? And when I take these passengers to do tours, these tourists, they'll ask you questions, but they already know the answers because they can Google it. When they go on tours, they want to see our island, not just what everyone else is seeing. I can't take them past the schools. Concrane doesn't have a home no longer. And I saw that as a landmark on the island a historical landmark charlotte amali is on the track so now when i pass in my and i showing them all of that like that's embarrassing you have a bunch of buildings that's broken down like it's embarrassing they don't want to go up mountain top all the time they want to see the island they want to see the culture how am I supposed to show them that how am I supposed to feel good to go out here and taxi when it is I can't even go down into the office and get everything done within at least two three days I could say you understand because ain't everything is perfect we're all human but I should be able to to go down there and receive service and not be discriminated against I've been hearing from the time I came in about this over business they kept saying they're not going to be able to bring over I know one handle wash the next now wheat is grease my hand I go and be with them first right I am going to wait to see what's gonna happen because just how they want to cut off the capacity for safaris they're gonna start limiting other stuff and that's gonna end up happening they said they couldn't do it before because of GPS GPS works down here so it will only take a matter of time before that comes in and then
- 1:52:07 everybody go and turn a blind eye and say they don't know how I see in it it look it really looking like that's what it is going to happen okay so we have time we have senators who just just make it brief and this is the last question and I'm entertaining and then we're gonna move on to Senator Potter okay and then and you are free to answer his questions. Quickly, Mr. Lewis.
- 1:52:46 About the medallions and the classes. How is it that I have children, I have two medallions. If I pass on a medallion to one of my children, they can't get in the class. I feel that when a person owns a medallion, That should be an automatic. You're the owner now, that should be an automatic. I know people that own medallions that have been passed down to them and cannot get a taxi license. And that's a fact. Another thing, my last question is, why is it that they try to limit your business saying that I have a safari, but I can only have one? one i cannot have more than one safari okay i had i had a 14 passenger safari i upgraded to a 27 passenger they told me i had to get rid of the 14 passenger before i can get permission to have my 25 passenger so mr smidge you could miss I'm sorry, Mr. Lewis, you could only own one safari with your one medallion? That's what they told me. I can only... I thought it was two...
- 1:54:12 I'm only permitted to own one safari. No, it's two based on my understanding. It's one safari, it's one taxi per medallion. So how come the Lamazines... If you got two medallions, you have two safaris, but it's one... each medallion number is one taxi okay but if you have three medallions which i think the max is three medallions a person can own okay you can have three safari that's what that's what the clarity needed to be so you only a taxi operator could own a maximum but if you had a business now you could own more than least Mike Mike Nilsa Miserano oh no you could lease if you have a business but each individual you can only own two medallions oh sorry two medallions so each medallion is poor vehicle okay what kind of vehicle you have once you got your medallion so why he say just no but you could have one safari and one you could entitled to two safaris because that one medallion correct let me say something if i have a medallion and i had one to buy a safari i would have had a safari and if i want to have another one i'd have two safari they had nothing saying you could have one small car one safari this is interesting you entitled your medallion title to the car you want to

drive and one medallion is entitled to one car one yes okay that's or one vehicle one vehicle

- 1:56:03 okay entitled to a vehicle don't specify what kind of vehicle it is okay we understand okay mr lewis we're gonna move on to senator potter senator potter Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to say good evening to all of the persons here in this audience this evening. I just have nothing but respect for you for taking the time from your very busy schedules to be here. And it says that you are committed to the growth and survival of your industry, of this industry, of our industry. Really and truly, the tourism is our backbone industry and if you don't have a taxi industry what happens to tourism it feels so we all have an incentive not just the drivers who are directly in the business we all have an incentive to make sure that it survives we are all disappointed with what we have seen for the last couple of years with the taxi industry it has issues it has problems because you hear as a senator doesn't mean that you have all the answers it doesn't mean that you know everything it is important for us to have communication from you the people on the ground the people who run the day-to-day businesses so that we can understand and empathize with you as to what is going on and what needs to change clearly tonight things need to change my dad was a taxi driver for over 50 years. As long as I know myself, I know my father, who isn't around anymore, to be a taxi driver. He drove for VI Taxi Association. He was stationed at Frenchman's Reef for years. I remember us waking up for the morning to wash his car every single morning. So I understand the importance of this industry and I respect and understand that this is one of the last remaining industries that is still in the hands of local people, for the most part. So it is that much more important
- 1:58:09 for us to fight to ensure that it survives. I know that sometimes the belief is that these senators here should be able to do something for us, that's why we elected them. So I understand and I feel your passion, I feel you when you mention that. But the way the structure is, are some things that we can do. However, the executive branch of government is the executor in the sense that we cannot go to taxi association or to taxi commission and say, look, you need to do your job and fire you or select somebody else who can do a better job. We can't do that. That's not the role of the legislature. That is the role of the executive branch. Now, We create laws. So clearly we can try to impact the way things are going by changing laws. We can invite, we have oversight responsibilities, we can invite the folks here and talk to them and chastise them and tell them, oh, you're not doing things well. And then they leave here and we can't make them do it. We can't. They leave here and they do what they want. Very often you say what you need to say, right here in the Senate, and then you leave and you do your own thing.
- 1:59:29 That is why we have been pressured and forced to take steps such as, maybe we need to change the way the structure is by disbanding the commission and putting it on, but we've got to be on a DLCA, but we've got to think it through. And I heard several of you here this evening express a desire to not go in that direction. So we want, it's clear that things can continue the way it is.
- 2:00:02 They say that's the first definition of insanity. Keeping things exactly the way they are and expecting somehow that things are going to change. Clearly we have to do something. I mean, I toyed with the idea of having a number of the men and women on the commission to be elected by the rank and file or the associations to have a say in who serves on the commission. I mean, maybe that might be an approach for us to take. I'm not sure. But what I'm sure of is that we need to meet with you.
- 2:00:41 with you this can't be the last time to figure out a strategy to improve the way things are going it's ridiculous when you're gonna spend half of your day trying to just get basic services done basic things it's ridiculous when you're gonna say well they don't want to talk to me i come there and i try to speak to the commissioner or to the head of the entity and she just refused to speak to me. These things shouldn't happen. The reason this agency exists, the reason it exists is to solve this industry. People like you, men and women who wake up every morning, put on their shoes, drive visitors here to and from the airport to the beaches to enjoy this territory without taxi drivers the industry the tourism industry as we know it will be dead without question so my purpose here today isn't to just tell you this is the solution but it's to listen to you to try to understand the industry to try to understand the problems and to work collaboratively with you to figure out how we can do something differently to ensure that, to ensure the survival of this industry.
- 2:02:05 You know, so, I mean, I'm hopeful that as a result of this meeting here this evening that we'll be able to come up with some meaningful solutions to save this industry. Thank you very much. Nothing but respect. I'll go out to each and every one of you who've taken the time. to be here this evening thank you very much thank you thank you so much senator Potter those were some very powerful observations you made because they are all true we do have like I said to this man because we are frustrated we are frustrated for you you and there you're not getting the services we don't know where does the chairperson she doesn't live here and and those are the persons who pull up the executive director and so we're looking at all of these dynamics and seeing that you're not having sufficient representation we voted for one member I believe the last legislator to to be on the taxicab Commission and I believe he is maybe the only one whose term hasn't expired Senator Boquez you're next thank you madam chair and good evening madam madam chair good evening

colleagues and good evening to the first and the last representation when it comes to the tourism industry here in the virgin islands you are the alpha and you are the omega when it comes to our tourism when it comes to our public and private transportation our economic development and even our virgin islands culture because my understanding is that you also share that with those individuals who come and visit us here in the virgin islands I have heard your complaints this evening, and I am ready for affirmative action. And I know my colleagues will join me in that, but there is a process that we have to follow and abide by.

- 2:04:00 We need to harness information and data so that we can make informed decisions for you, for your behalf. Because we want this to change. We don't want you to have to deal with what you've been dealing with for so many years. This is ridiculous. Plus, we need a taxi industry that is primed and ready to go. The Virgin Islands is always on the top ten when it comes to tourism. We cannot have you suffering out there. That's backwards thinking. That's not something that we want to have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. I've heard the complaints about the board members and their functions. We want to regulate the limousines and the jeep rentals. We understand that there's a revisitation of the fee structure, regulating gypsies and safaris, supply and demand and succession planning. I believe the median age of a taxi driver is likely over his 50s or her 50s, and we want our young people to also be a part of this industry as well. Of course, that is no disrespect to anyone. That's just what we see in front of us, and I agree with you when you say that. There's complaints about the rules and regulations booklet. I've heard individuals say that these rules are not in a booklet, but when you go down to the taxi commission, you're hearing that this rule, that rule, and the next rule is what you have to follow. That all makes sense to me.
- 2:05:23 We're also hearing, well, I know for a fact, and I visited along with many other senators, the facility, and everything is paper-based. We are in a technological age now, and I know COVID has taught many of us to use these devices to do what we have to do. And we need to make sure that we have accurate information. Mr. Court Richards, who was here earlier, I dealt with him earlier in a year. He told me about they couldn't find his payment because they don't process credit card, this, that, and the other. Come on. We really need to do better than this. I don't usually go on like this, but this one touching me hard.
- 2:06:01 You are the first and the last representation of our society when it comes to tourism. And I am with you, and I'm sure my colleagues are with you as well. I'm disappointed that the executive director is not here with us this evening. It is not to put her under the table, however. She has her role to play in the commission. There is a board that oversees the policies and the regulations. You have a job to run the office. You should at least be here, to hear from the stakeholders of your industry, the individuals who keep you in your job. Pause. Period, like Senator Bly didn't say. She should have been here. Or send a representative on her behalf. And I hope she's listening because it's not to throw her under the bus or not, but I'm just saying she should have been here. We have a concern about the 25 passengers.
- 2:06:55 Let me elaborate on that for a second because I agree with the taxi men and women that we continue to see larger ships coming into the virgin islands and thank god for our tourism department they're doing their job and we're attracting these individuals here but you're trying to tell me that we're going to degrade or or go backwards and say we want less passengers why unless like my colleague mentioned our good finance chair that we need to get the the the information from the attorney general to find out if it is a federal highway issue if not we need to bring the 25 passengers back it's as simple as that you know we don't want to go backwards we want to make sure that we're able to deal with the flux of tourism and passengers that come to the virgin islands here to visit our shores to learn about our culture and our heritage and and and for you to do your job which i appreciate each and every one of you for being here this evening i don't have no questions i am here to support you in each and every way that i can and i thank you for your time and being here this evening and madam chair i thank you for putting this meeting together and colleagues who are here with us tonight i thank you for always being here and supporting thank you madam chair thank you kindly senator bolquez senator donafra gregory you're recognized thank you again madam chair and i i too want to to thank all of the taxi drivers, the families of taxi drivers that are here this evening with regards to this issue.
- 2:08:37 This issue is a vexing issue in our territory. We are about to approach another tourism season. When does it start? October? November. We're on the heels of October, November, late October, early November, right? We had this discussion. We've been having this discussion for a good minute. Now, I hear the sentiments about the senators and the concerns about folks being disappointed with myself, because I'm a senator, and my colleagues.
- 2:09:15 However, I want to make sure that we all understand that the responsibility of the operations of executive branch related matters sits squarely with the governor of this territory. The governor appointed some of these board members. These board members are not functioning. We've had several conversations with the executive branch, not the branch, but the chief executive with regards to this taxi situation that we have in the territory. And nothing has been done. As late as, I think, two or three weeks ago, there was some taxi drivers went to conduct business, 11 o'clock, a sign up saying, we ain't

here, today we coming back. I don't know what time. I sent a picture to the governor, I said, Governor, what this is? What are you doing with this thing? He said, I too am frustrated. That don't solve the problem.

2:10:14 So we, us, as legislators, we say, okay, the legislature of the Virgin Islands is the entity that has created the Taxicab Commission. So the legislature of the Virgin Islands have a responsibility to do what is necessary to address the issue of if it means that this entity is not working. This entity used to be, for those of you who have been around long enough, used to be under Licensing and Consumer Affairs, I think when, on the heels of Charles Turnbull, Governor Turnbull becoming governor, if my research serves me correct. Okay? Right, before, but when he became governor, it moved under Licensing and Consumer Affairs. I looked at the law.

2:11:03 There are several things that the Taxi Commission should be doing. I'm going to tell you something. Based on all the complaints I hear tonight, they are doing nothing that is in this law. Nothing. So what we need to do, we don't need to be emotional about this from our legislative perspective as we make the decision to move this back under licensing and consumer affairs, but there are certain requirements because It is not fair to you all that when you go to an office, every time you go, it's a different rule. We need to be putting in this legislation, upon enactment of the transfer, they need to establish rules and regulations within 60 to 90 days. There are things that need to be outlined in this legislation in order for this to work. There is zero accountability at Taxi Commission. I am the chair of the finance committee.

2:12:02 They came before me three times. And if you left it up to me, I am only one vote in this institution, I would have defunded them. The discussion was, let us fund the salaries only until we make the decision to move them. In our next session, colleagues, we need to get busy. We need to move this. And a lot of times we don't want change and we don't like change.

2:12:30 But it's change have to happen. But it can't just be move them because we're emotional. It has to be move them with conditions. And don't move them with everybody. Because if you're a customer service type of employee, you can't be telling people you're sitting down in your office and come back tomorrow. You are not running your own business. And it is happening. I got a call from a gentleman. And he's been speaking to me for three days now. He's been trying to sell his taxi medallion for over three months. And he sat, yesterday I tell him, sit in the office.

2:13:08 And the executive director appears to be the only person that can, that is allowed to do anything in the, everybody else, they got them choked off, literally, they can't do nothing else. So she's not available. So because, and I'm hoping that she's listening. We can't know the listening. She's not available. So guess what? Because she's not available, nothing gets done. There is no one person in this territory that should stop progress. And if that person is stopping progress, they need to go home. And it's the truth. And if we have board members who are not functioning, the only thing that we could do here is we could call on the governor, so we're doing it tonight, call on the governor to remove those individuals their time has expired so that means we have a dysfunctional board the time has expired so they don't have any obligation they can come if they wish to move them so if the governor hasn't sent names to us ain't nothing that we can do and this is for Mr. Francis because you're disappointed but ain't that we ain't paying attention the names have not come down to this institution so because the names are not here We have to do what we have to do. We have to move this organization from under its own commission and move it back under licensing and consumer affairs. We've spoken to the new commissioner nominee, and they are willing and prepared to do so. This cannot continue to go on. This industry, as my colleague shared, is a backbone of our tourism industry. You are the first and you are the last persons that the tourists that come here see. This can't continue. People can't be coming to your office, sitting on three and four days without no service. And then the last thing that was said to the gentleman was, oh, your name and a list, I'm going to call you when I'm ready. You don't know what people's financial situation is. He's trying to sell his medallion for three months you do not know what if he has a medical condition you do not know what these people's issues are so this is this is unfortunate and very sad that we have to come to a place where we are having this type of conversation where we have one person that's deciding whether or not But the livelihood of the taxi drivers in this territory are able to be successful.

2:15:43 And I understand your frustration. And yes, a lot of times I don't make promises that I can't keep. If I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it. If I'm not going to do it, I'm not going to do it. But if I'm going to do it, I'm also going to do it based on my research. So there are things, it's not only just transfer. There are things that we have to put in this legislation to also hold the next entity accountable. Otherwise, we're going to be in the same situation. Okay, so there are things that we have to do. The issue with the enforcement, let me just share something with y'all from the chair of the finance committee. That's myself. When you look at the fund balances of the taxi commission fund, over the years, y'all generate \$450,000, \$500,000.

2:16:31 The fund balance currently have \$89,000 in it. They're not raising any money or they're not posting the money. I am not sure where the money is going. I don't know if you all are paying your bills. I don't know. And then there's an issue and I have to ask Mr. Harrigan about this, and anybody else in the room. I guess let me just ask side, period. How many

individuals were unable to register, to pay their annual fee and was unable to do so, do so. And then when you finally were able to do so, you were charged late fees. How many? So you had to pay the late fees, right? So now we need to get back. That's why I tell you the legislation has to be properly thought out. Because if you are unable to get in that office to pay your fees, the government need to pay back your money. Because that is black and black suppression. It has to stop. We can't continue to do things like this to our community and feel that it's okay. They got to pay the money back. Wherever it comes from, they have to pay it back. If you can prove that you have gone there, that we need to put this in the legislation to require them to return your money.

2:17:45 They're going to say you're going to get credit. A credit, whatever it is. But something has to give at this point. This year, what we did, we did not legislate. We did not appropriate all of their money. We only appropriate a portion because the plan of action is to move them i want to say move them let me let me use the word move them it's to move the the taxi res licensing and whatever other responsibilities under licensing and consumer affairs so they necessarily mean that the executive director going if you ain't doing what you're doing now i don't know why i don't know why you you should be going anywhere but they're making up their own so that's the thing so and the perspective my time oh i'm sorry oh gosh i sorry i did not realize my time was i didn't yeah my time was called but we are going to work on the legislation and do what we have to do there's some other things here that we have to get information on in order for us to circle this up to ensure that we are able to make this make sense thank you madam chair you are welcome I know we're getting a lot of other questions I'm going to just let you know I have to respect my colleagues they've been here from the inception with us and I want to assure that they have an opportunity to ask your question or to also let you know their perspective on the issue so this time I will recognize senator Blyden Sandra Blyden you're recognized. Thank you so much Madam Cheyenne I want to say good evening again to all the taxi operators and one thing I must make clear and of course like my colleague on my left my dad also was a taxi operator for many years from the time I was a little boy with East End taxi and people need to realize and understand each taxi operators most of them are

2:19:44 small business owners why are we putting as much roadblocks in a way for them to expand their businesses that's unacceptable in my opinion i believe that we must make it easier for them to operate and expand the businesses i know mr mohammed spoke earlier to age limit and i believe that like any other business you should be able to expand your business if i have a taxi i don't want to pass it on to my son or listen to someone i should be able to do that so we must find a way to work with the operators in this industry because it's very important because i was stated both of us are locals and those are local businesses so i am on board with that i believe we have heard your disappointment we too are frustrated as you can see and we have heard your cries and I believe we have marching orders and we will be bringing legislation holistic legislation to address most of the issues that we have spoke of today tonight but I want to mention couple things though in respect to your responses because you also spoke to the board and the board played the most important role and I do agree with you in respect to the board members and what the qualifications should be because I know we did something like that for WAPA and it makes a lot of sense and we must find a way to put legislation in place to do just that because you need an individual who understand the industry, who is part of the industry, who cares about the industry, not anyone just to go there and basically make it difficult for the operators and the business owners. I also want to speak to enforcement. That's critical also. As was stated, you know, right

2:21:41 now the enforcement officers are not doing enforcement. They are doing test duties and I believe that's unacceptable. So I believe we also will be doing a mission. We will be going on mission to find a mission to really see what's going on down there effective immediately. I know, as my colleague stated, we have been going down there at times and they have no turn the door, etc. So there's issues, they have issues and they have challenges and we must do what's necessary to correct them. I know also they spoke too, in terms of the 27 and 25-seaters, I know that has been on the table for some time. And I know in respect to the taxis being able to upgrade their business when they have a new safari and being able to continue their business without having to go through a whole process again. And I am happy that we did deal with that challenge in the past, and that's no longer an issue moving forward. In respect to the Department of License and Consumer Affairs putting the taxicab under that department, I know we had a conversation several meetings ago in respect to creating a new department, the Department of Public Work, the Department of Transportation.

2:23:11 We had those discussions. I had a discussion with some of the taxi drivers before, but everything must go through a process and see if it makes sense and how it can work in respect to the government. But I want to say this though, I really appreciate you guys for basically keep fighting for what is right, keep fighting for tourism industry in terms of taxis. And I know that after tonight, we will move forward diligently in respect to solving most of these challenges that you face on a daily basis.

2:23:54 And I must say that, Madam Chair, I must say that this meeting is critical, it's important. And I must say that I am happy with many of the suggestions that were made this evening. by the operators. I look forward to working with you guys and

with them in coming up with a meaningful solution that will basically put our taxi industry back in its rightful place. And again, I want to thank everyone for being here this evening and thank you so much, Madam Chair.

2 : 24 : 27 Thank you so much, Senator Blyden. I will speak now. you can you can speak uh if you like miss alba yes i have one other thing to say governor bryan gave his approval for people outside of the territory to be on the chair board for the taxi commission that's not right that is not right because it has one person on there right now and he's not a part of this territory that is not right he like what she said They need to have people that's in the taxi industry on that board. Sending, moving the taxi commission over to DLCA is not going to do anything because they make up their own rules down there too. So it's not going to change. We need somebody that's a part of our community to represent us in those offices.

2 : 25 : 24 Okay. It's well noted. For me, just to wrap up and look at where we are with some of the items that were outlined, I want to first begin by thanking you. Even though they declined to come here, you stayed and you voiced your concerns. My hats are off to each one of you because this industry is your bread and butter. And it's very important. i take it seriously i know how it is that you have to go out there time and time again to earn your money and it's based on what you present to our visitors you are on the front line of our major industry and therefore it was fitting it was timely for us to have this meeting because we've been calling them since i've been a chair and i've been a chair for the government operations from the 34th and we brought them in brought them in brought them in countlessly okay and we just keep seeing the dysfunctionality of that agency that entity i i don't know how all of you have been able to survive so long and you haven't gotten some type of illness because of all of the run around you to go through because it's vexing and you shouldn't especially knowing that these individuals are being paid your tax dollars to serve you you are begging for their services they are being paid your hard-earned tax dollars to provide you with the services and so are we and we have to be solutions oriented okay i know some of you are not pleased here when we mentioned about dismantling the taxicab commission but that's how i know

2 : 27 : 35 things that change there are some of us in the room we come from a federal side and we know when it's not operating correctly you do one thing you dismantle the board that's what you have to do you dismantle the board it starts with the board this board is the entity that's where is the accountability they are just like legislators like us okay if they are not doing their work the first thing you do is dismantle it and then you put it under a different management because you cannot continue to operate the same way everybody some people were against it i could appreciate it but it's an exercise in madness constantly you're telling me not one of those board members even though their time may have expired could have been here when we take time to to say our oath and they do as well we take it seriously you call us we come in even late in the night sometimes okay so you should hold them to the same or a higher caliber because they're providing you all of you with direct services it is not acceptable it's unacceptable that you're going to their place you're going to the taxicab commission and you are not getting service because somebody doesn't want to come out and talk to you that's crazy that's not how you act professionally especially at that level you don't do it you don't do it and here if you can't speak you have a backup you see my backup them here you see the backup if i need to go to the restroom

2 : 29 : 32 or something is happening with me I could say Senator Fonseca take this chair I gotta go and do this the backup and she has been there for a while she was a backup to her predecessor am I right or am I right you're right huh and you think that is acceptable that they haven't and she we we were helping along to get her started and giving her by by by putting in a a next piece of legislation that allows her to have the ability to hire oh empower her what has happened oh nothing nothing and you think that you you should keep something like that i don't think so i ain't tolerating it and i understand i am going to be up in arms for you because i know better i know how government's supposed to run and so i have really deep concerns about where it is it cannot continue and when they don't show up that's an insult to my people and i represent all of you you don't have to elect me i representing you anyhow anyhow okay i am going to be present and i'm going to go out there and check and i tell you i am the checker ask them right i go out there and i check and see what people doing check and see if you're on the job check to see what you're doing because it's my people tax paying money they're paying your your bill and giving you your check so it's important to me and you could come and check for me too i like that but you we we also had a need for the policies and regulation it is it is driving me crazy that you you have never seen these policies what it'll be talking about how is it you're operating a taxi cab and you have never seen these policies these persons are holding you to you're supposed to be able to see look we can pull up laws that pass hey right how is it you can't pull up they can't be able to show you that or have it in a book to show you that it's problem it is a x this this is madness how this is operated this is not good governance and it's not good operation i'm gonna tell you it's not and then there's also this

2 : 32 : 04 issue with the 20-seater that needs to be resolved because the law is clear people can't come on arbitrarily make up what they want okay we had that right here in this committee i'm going to tell you now with vi lottery didn't want to give the retirees them the money and we had to straight it out right here right here we straight them out and say no you got to do it

they didn't want to give even agriculture the money from the the horse racing improvement fund and all of those things we have to oh it's how we interpret it and how you interpret it it's very clear they just don't want to do they just don't they want to do what they want exactly okay it has to stop it has to stop and we need to hold one head okay that's all it is you know you got to hold your head with your legislators who are fighting for you you got to hold one head you can't be going out hey i don't like this i don't like that you give it a chance to walk you make it you give it a chance to work if it ain't working then we could go back and fix it but right now it ain't working are you agreeing working is it working for you huh so if it isn't working guess what we gotta do what fix it and even if you don't like that it's going under dlc i'm gonna tell you or another entity it got to fix i i asked the commissioner nominee her name is natalie hodge i asked her if she would accept it she told me informally because we were at an event she doesn't mind she'll do she's a good manager okay she's responsive she's responsive uh she's a good manager i would ask you to give it a chance we have to tighten it up for her to clearly delineate what

2:34:05 needs to be done with a taxi and maybe when she fixes it or when we because it's a collective when we fix it and i'm going to definitely ask her to have are you at the table when we fix it because it's a we okay when we fix it then it could maybe go back to what it was with things clearly written out so those are some of the things i'm taking away from this meeting um and so we have to really follow up with them regarding that those things and tighten up the law that uh senator fred gregory pre-empted me with but we're working with we're working with her uh you had a next question miss joseph if you need to go ahead please recognize miss joseph mike here hello oh you're good i didn't have a question but i more so had a comment um i appreciate that you guys are really gonna work with us on trying to find a solution but i'm keep hearing that you guys want to dismantle it and we keep saying that we need to at least start with the board first before and before you guys do dismantle if you choose to go back and like senator gregory said that she does research go back and research and see why it didn't work under dlc before making the decision of changing it it was working you know you could ask the taxi drivers okay look the head is the elder head of hey was it working when it was under dlca okay was it working when it was okay mr penny hey he's all in almost old enough to be my father and i'm over 50 young he said it was working i i i heard i'm okay i'm hearing now that it's working but it had worked we're telling you i remembered i was a younger person but i remember it was working i i'm hearing what you're so you're clear so we are clear it was work i am telling you is give it a chance okay so um who okay well would the kind gentleman come up here we are not going to receive you down down there uh mrs smith well let this gentleman speak first and we're going to wrap up in a few it's 908 we started about 6 30. okay so kindly put your name on the record well I'm Sonny Liston from Sonny Liston Tools LLC and I really appreciate that you

2:37:07 you're delving to get this thing fixed I'm just gonna give you my my situation I have a son who I need to get a taxi license I'm since he was about 21 he's 26 now and every time I go down there that they oh no you gotta wait until they put your name on a list and they're gonna call us this is over five years now number two with the individual with the thing about the safari buses. I own a safari bus. I have a 25 passenger safari bus also. The problem is I'm disabled now. I have a standard vehicle and I want to change the standard vehicle to an automatic vehicle with this. Just take off the front and put it on the back. I want to do that. A lot of running around. What I do on my own, I went and tried to change my truck from a standard to automatic. I spent over \$10,000 to get it done. I didn't get it done because right now the Ford company don't make those harnesses for those vehicles to get it changed. So I now have to return to get back, to go back to my standard that already had changed it to an automatic and now I have to change it back to a standard. I am disabled, I cannot continue driving a standard vehicle.

2:38:40 I need an automatic vehicle. They're saying if I go and change my safari, they want to tell me I have to cut off a seat. I've been driving a taxi for over 29 years here. They're telling me if I have to go and change the safari, I could no longer have a 25 passenger safari. I have to cut it down to 20, and the industry is getting bigger, the ships are getting bigger, why are they trying to cut us down as poor people here in this territory?

2:39:12 So I really appreciate that you are looking to this very, very, very soon, maybe tomorrow, as quick as possible, so we could get it done, and get this stupidity of what they're saying out of the action. Okay, Mr. Liston? Yeah. Mr. Liston? Yeah. Okay. that a bit in 6595 that with since you are owner how long you owned your safari 25 i have my safari from since 2006 i had two you had you had one before 2003 as 25 seater no my okay okay so it had to have been before 2002 or 2003 but i was approved to have the 25 passenger you was approved for 25 passengers yeah both me and my wife had 25 so you may not so you may not have the um correct year you're mentioning so it may be a little bit up senator okay because i own a 25 passenger also the reason how I got my 25 passenger is because my dad had owned a medallion and turned the medallion over to me. I did not owe the bank or anything for the medallion. Once you own the medallion, you're entitled to the largest size vehicle in the industry, which is a, at the time they said 27 passenger. Ms. Julie Wheatley at the time told me she cannot give me a 27 passenger.

- 2:40:48 she can give me a 25 because your room up front is your office space. So once you own your medallion, you're entitled to a 25-passenger by law. Because I had to come to the Senate House to get that. I went to her at the time. It was Celestino White, and he assisted me in that. He tell you? Huh? Celestino White tell you that? Yeah, that assisted me in getting it. Can I ask that question? Once you own the medallion, you're entitled. We want to wrap up.
- 2:41:18 We want to be quick in wrapping up, okay, because it's really late and the time has been spent. We're going to go to Mr. Moyes over here, Mr. Bernard, okay, and then we're going to go to Nilsa Serrano, and then we're going to close out. One thing I got. Oh, I'm so sorry. I missed you, Mr. Smith. Yeah. Okay, so we're going to put you right after, no, you and then Mr. Leibard, it's late, I'm tired, Mr. Smith and then you, Nilsa. No problem.
- 2:41:53 One thing I'd like to say, thank you very much for listening to us, the poor people, I'm going to say it as it is, the black people that have small businesses in the Virgin Islands. Thank you very much. But one thing I'd like to say that the Act 65, whatever it is, I'd like you to do some amendments to it and allow anybody who want a 25, let them have a 25. But you have to put a moratorium on to how long you could build 25. Put a moratorium on it, but allow it right now. Anybody want a 25 passenger, so let it be done. That's all I have to say. Thank you very much.
- 2:42:33 okay thank you mr smith you ready yeah okay thank you very much for um holding this meeting this tongue hall i know i'm i would like for the safari drivers to get their 27 passengers but i would also like because it always is bouncing it bumps over the head it seems like license and consumer right now is licensing industry that is ramp running rampant and the taxi industry i have in my phone right here right i consider we first thing we need to get this limousine thing under control because when i could have when you could have a a license a um a limousine company see right there traffic adventures and limousine and um traffic adventure luxury transport um travels and they could have on their website a comparison with this showing a luxury limousine is cheaper than a taxi we have a problem a luxury limousine is advertising see right here comparison they basically con misconstrued a taxi price and have a group of six from red hook from airport to red hook as 2 21 that's not right because our private includes the um the the um thing and their their private would run you a group of six would run you so they're saying a taxi would be 2 21 and a private limousine would be 1 29. mr smith what was the site what's the website what's the website what's the website address uh it's a traffic tropical adventure luxury travel
- 2:44:40 and it's in thomaslimousines.com well you could um think but senators this lahir that was created right here in this legislature is the problem to this so this is just something that needs amending not not necessarily but put under the taxicab commission right with the in the street but even if even if anything according to what this is saying how can a limousine be operating because it's right here saying that a limousine is not a vehicle for hire so they shouldn't be running passengers period if according to why this is it should go under the regulation and oversight of the taxi cab we you know because i'm telling you because it is transporting human beings it's a transportation even i mean this is just my two cents even the even the water taxis should be under the taxicab that is correct because they have and i and i don't get my soapbox regarding you guys not thinking forward you know they're building these little planes to fly around now right they're building them in ohio okay they're starting to build them in ohio taxi is air too you know about air taxi yeah the industry changing yes yes i mind you let me get this on the record straight i am not against limousine drivers i am against how the structure and we understand we understand need to be structured we have to buy a medallion i understand it needs to be regulated we understand we understand thank you the night is getting one more point just quickly because milsa is there and the time is they also don't
- 2:46:46 even have to have a chauffeur license to operate how is that possible a limousine was supposed to be chauffeur they don't even have they don't even have a chauffeur license they could pick up anybody and just drive okay thank you you're welcome very much you're welcome but be clear it sounds as though the consensus is with the limousine is that they need to be regulated That's what I'm understanding. Nilsa, Ms. Serrano, you're up. Okay, good night. Back again on the Act 6595. I know I say how I really want you guys to take a look at it really serious because I know I follow in federal guidelines and everything like that, but what's the difference between a 20 and a 25 passenger seriously on the road? You understand? So if the federal guidelines is against 25, why are you not against 20? so I really wanted to take a look at it and federal guidelines funny enough if we were following the federal guidelines to a tee we really should be driving on the right but we don't drive on the left so clearly they don't make certain exceptions so please take a really good look at our for me please thank you it is noted okay I would like to close out this evening's Town Hall by thanking you again the taxi drivers and operators men and women who are on the front line of our tourism industry for doing the work that you do every day countless in and out to really make sure the experience excuse me colleagues to excuse me to make sure the experience our visitors come to our show is enjoyable that that is very important um we we are going to work right we are going to work and see what we can do to really make some really positive change it may be a little hard in the beginning right but we will definitely include you in the conversations and get your input that's why we had this meeting

actually to see what solutions you're coming up with we heard that the persons from who have been in this industry for a number of years they are saying that when this industry were under dlca it's been operating it was operating well that's what they're saying okay so so that's one of the things we're going to look and we're going to see what all that we can do the other thing is i want to really thank is again my colleagues and also the hard working central staff who was here uh from the beginning to make sure we kept order i also want to thank my staff and we will be or you will be hearing from us in the near future again

2 : 49 : 58 i just got a note to tell the people not to go out the door by the elevator that means to go down the stairs here because the alarm is going off so you need to take the elevator to go downstairs okay you need to take the elevator instead of the stairs okay take the elevator downstairs to the first floor. Thank you, Ms. Thompson. Okay, so this meeting is, this town hall meeting is adjourned, and thank you so much for being here this evening. Lola, la, le, lo, te lo da Lola, la, le, lo, te lo da Thank you. Thank you. 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.

|    |                                                                                                                                        |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4x | <b>Senator Fred Gregory</b><br>the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory                             |
| 4x | <b>Senator Marvin Blyden</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Blyden                                                                    |
| 4x | <b>Senator Milton E. Potter</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Potter                                                                 |
| 3x | <b>Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Angel L. Bolques Jr., Bolquez, Boquez                             |
| 3x | <b>Senator Carla Joseph</b><br>the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph<br>heard in this transcript as: Joseph |
| 3x | <b>Senator Marvin A. Blighton</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Blighton                                                             |
| 3x | <b>Senator Ray Fonseca</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Fonseca                                                                     |
| 2x | <b>Senator Angel L. Bokes Jr</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Bokeh                                                                 |
| 2x | <b>Senator Angel L. Bolkis Jr</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Boukis                                                               |
| 2x | <b>Senator Dwayne DeGraff</b>                                                                                                          |
| 1x | <b>Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Donna Fred Gregory                                               |
| 1x | <b>Senator Donna Frett-Gregory</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Frett-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.

|                 |                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Act 6595</b> | Act 6595 · (title not held)                                                                                      |
| <b>Act 6570</b> | Act 6570 · (title not held)                                                                                      |
| <b>Act 6995</b> | Act 6995 · An Act amending title 27 Virgin Islands Code to enact the Virgin Islands Medical Practice Act ---0--- |
| <b>Act 6635</b> | Act 6635 · (title not held)                                                                                      |

**Act 6695**

Act 6695 · (title not held)