



Senior Mock Session

Legislature USVI

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0:00:00 Thank you. Oh, my God.

0:01:00 Thank you. so Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. guitar solo

0:06:00 Thank you. Thank you. ¶¶ Thank you. Thank you.

0:08:30 Thank you. Thank you.

0:09:30 Thank you. Thank you.

0:10:30 Thank you. Thank you.

0:11:30 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:13:00 Thank you. Thank you.

0:14:00 ¶¶ guitar solo ¶¶ Hello, my way out.

0:15:59 ¶¶ We'll be right back.

0:16:59 ¶¶ Thank you. Lilo la la, lilo te lo da, lilo la la, lilo te lo da, ¡Oye a mí!

0:18:29 Thank you. ¶¶ so ¶¶ so ¶¶

0:21:28 Thank you. Thank you.

0:22:28 so Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. For more information, visit www.fema.gov Thank you. Oh, my God.

- 0:28:58 We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- 0:31:58 Thank you. Thank you. so Thank you.
- 0:33:58 so Let's go. so so Thank you.
- 0:36:28 Thank you. Let's go. Oh, my God. [3 such phrases repeated 12 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:42:28 Thank you. [1 such phrases repeated 10 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:47:28 Thank you. Thank you.
- 0:48:28 Thank you. Transcription by CastingWords Thank you all for being here, we're going to ask you to rise as we have the invocation by Reverend Deacon Romaine Carter.
- 0:49:56 us pray gracious and eternal God before we ask for anything we pause the thank you Lord for everything we thank you for the gift of life we thank you for your mercy and for the opportunity to gather together for this mock session of the legislature we give special thanks to our senior citizens who are actively participating today bringing wisdom experience and insight to these proceedings we thank you all who have accepted the responsibility of serving this legislative body both those elected and those selected for today remind us all that without your guidance and blessing our efforts would be in vain Grant wisdom, understanding, and clarity to every participant in this session. Guide every participant to act with wisdom and responsibility, always seeking the welfare and well-being of all people. Oh God, your word in Proverbs 2 and 6 and 7 declares, for the Lord gives wisdom from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. he stores up sound wisdom for the upright so now lord we command these proceedings into your capable hands and under your divine covering we bind every spirit of division confusion and discord and we pray that unity respect and understanding will prevail throughout this session these blessings we ask in the mighty name of jesus christ our lord and savior amen amen and amen Come again.
- 0:52:12 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- 0:55:42 Good morning once again. On behalf of my colleagues in the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, it is really my distinct honor and privilege to welcome each of you to this year's senior mock legislative session.
- 0:56:17 This is my favorite session of the year. It is. To our honored guests, our elders, our community pillars, our living historians, welcome to your legislature. These halls belong to you just as much as they belong to any senator here in this house. And today, they are yours entirely. You've spent your lives building this territory. You raised families on these islands. You planted roots in this soil. You weathered storms, both literally and figuratively. And you gave the best of yourselves so that the Virgin Islands could be what it is today. It is only right that this institution, the people's legislature, opens its doors and invites you in, not merely as observers, but as lawmakers. Today, you will deliberate on a matter of profound importance to your generation and to those who walk alongside you in life's later chapters. The bill before you will seek to amend Title 19 of the Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 17, relating to the medical assistance program, especially to establish ancillary health coverage benefits for older adults and disabled beneficiaries.
- 0:57:35 This is not an abstract policy exercise, this is personal. This legislation speaks directly to the dignity, the health, and the security of people just like you, people who deserve to age with comfort, with care, and with courage. We ask that you bring this session, everything you have, you've always brought to life in the Virgin Islands, your wisdom, your candor, your resilience, and your voice. this bill as it deserves to be debated · seriously, thoughtfully, and with the full weight of your life's experience behind every word. This mock session exists because we believe that democracy is not a spectator sport, and that good legislation is strengthened when those most affected by it have a seat at the table. Today, that seat is yours. Ladies Ladies and gentlemen, welcome and may this session be worthy of the lives that you have lived.
- 0:58:39 But before I transfer out of this seat, I'd like to introduce you to the President of the 36th Legislature for today, for at least maybe about three hours. Very distinguished gentleman behind me, Mr. Alphonse Stalyard. Please give him the respect and honor of the president of this party. Thank you. Give him a round of applause. You don't normally do.
- 0:59:12 Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir. Good morning, all. Good morning, Mr. President. I would like to start off by requesting a moment of silence from Ms. Cheryl Shelterburn-Plaskett, who passed away recently. She was an employee of the Department of Human Services for 30 years, and Ms. Plaskett was very influential and played a big role in the Older Citizens Month.
- 0:59:52 And I think we should just give up a little words of thanks. Yeah, I understand. I would also, OK, we sign up? OK. Thank you. I would also like to today, although I a graduate of charlotte amali high school we would like to recognize the ivana

edora ken high school the class of 1976 celebrating 50 their 50th year anniversary they are in the well participated in the mock session today and let us welcome them we have barbara buntun barbara heiliger and and especially Yessa Pupa, Senator Ray Fonseca.

- 1:01:02 Madam Secretary, can we make a roll call? Yes, Mr. President. senator marvin a blyton senator blyton present senator angel l bocas jr senator bocas present senator duane m de graf senator de graf present Senator Ray Fonseca, Senator Fonseca, present. Senator Novel E. Francis Jr., present. Senator Francis, present. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger, present. Senator Francis Heiliger, present. Senator Hubert L. Frederick, present. senator Frederick present senator Kenneth L Gittins I'm here senator Gittins present senator Marie C James president senator James present senator Franklin D Johnson senator Johnson president senator college a Joseph President Senator Joseph present Senator Cliff Clifford a Joseph senior President Senator Joseph present Senator Avery L Lewis present Senator Lewis present I'm sorry I'm present I like that senator Milton E Potter present senator first and senator Potter present senator Kurt a villa President, Senator Veillet, present. Senate President, Senate President, 15 members present for today's mock session.
- 1:03:32 Thank you. Thank you, Madam Secretary. No, we have a quorum. We are prepared to proceed. I am sorry if my hand is so strong. And then you have them introduce themselves afterwards.
- 1:04:09 Madam Clerk, will you please read the agenda and for the record. Enter the record. Enter the record. Bill. An Act Amending Title 19, Consideration of Bill. Bill number 360000, an act amending Title 19, Virgin Island Code, Chapter 17, relating to the medical assistant program by establishing auxiliary health coverage benefits for older adults and disabled beneficiaries.
- 1:04:56 This concludes the reading of the bill. This concludes the reading of today's agenda. Thank you very much. Do I hear a motion? Yes. Senator Gittens, you are recognized for your motion. Mr. President, I move that rule 604 of the board.
- 1:05:32 the rules 604 of the rules of the legislature be waived for today's mock legislative session to allow members to remain seated during debate in consideration of the comfort and well-being of the seniors participants taking part in today's proceedings. I so move. Second. Second. Second. Second. Second. Second. You're going to say properly moved by Senator Gittins. Properly moved by Senator Gittins. Seconded. Seconded by. Senator Blyden. Senator Blyden.
- 1:06:08 And Senator Joseph. And Senator Joseph. And objected to by Senator DeGraff. And objected to by Senator DeGraff. Roll call. Roll call. Mm-hm. This is the correct side. Senator Marvin A. Blyden, Senator Blyden, yes, that's what I have to say, okay. Senator Anghel Bolkis, L. Bolkis, Jr. Senator Bolkis, yes.
- 1:06:57 Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff. No. Senator Dwayne DeGraff, no, nay. Senator Ray Fonseca. After the vote. Yay. Senator Fonseca, yay. Senator Novell E. Francis, Jr.? Yes. Senator Francis, yay. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger? Yes.
- 1:07:28 Senator Heiliger, yay. Senator Herbert L. Frederick? Hubert L. Frederick? Yes. Senator Frederick, yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins? Yes. Senator Gittins, yay. Senator Maurice C. James? No. Senator James, no. Nay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson? Wait, sir. Yes.
- 1:08:01 Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Carla J. Joseph? Yay. Senator Joseph, yay. Senator Clifford A. Joseph, senior? Yeah. Senator Joseph, yay. Senator Avery L. Lewis. Yay. Senator Lewis, yay. Senator Milton E. Potter. Yay. Senator Potter, yay. Senator Carl A. Valey, Kurt A. Valey. Yes. Senator Valey. Yay.
- 1:08:42 Mr. President. Mr. President, we have 13 yay and two nay. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary, for the motion. The motion carries. Not too hard. Now I would like to tell the members all in the legislature So please put your cell phones on, vibrate, or turn them off. Thank you very much. Everyone who are clerks and secretaries and whatever, you have 30 minutes to introduce. Five seconds to introduce yourselves. Five seconds.
- 1:09:42 30 seconds to introduce yourselves. Starting with Ms. Alma-Francis Heiliger. Starting with Ms. Alma-Francis Heiliger. Senator Alma-Francis Heiliger. Senator Alma-Francis Heiliger? Yes, Senator. Be right here. It's time for the start. Yeah. Good morning. I am Leonilda Baptist Jarvis, and I am representing Senator Alma-Francis Heiliger. Good morning, my name is Patricia Sage, and I'm representing Franklin D. Johnson, Senator Franklin D. Johnson, the man for the community. Good morning, my name is Elaine Freeman. I'm from around the field via High Road. i'm representing the senator from savannah senator dwayne de graf good morning my name is edna o'connor freeman and i'm representing love city saint john good morning i'm marlene holiday representing saint croix and i'm representing hubert lucius Frederick Lorenzo, and you can bank on me in getting it done. Good morning again everyone. My name is Verna Azella Rollins. I'm representing Sister Carla Joseph.
- 1:11:32 Next, Senator Paula Joseph. Next, I'm Peter Emmanuel from Twin City, St. Croix, and I am representing Novel Francis, Jr. Senator Novel Francis, Jr. Good morning, my name is Erlene Wagner from St. Croix and I'm representing Senator Clifford Joseph, a man who's here to really serve.

- 1:12:23 Good morning everyone. My name is Luz Maldonado and I'm representing Senator Maurice C. James. I'm from St. Roy. Good morning everybody here. My name is Noreen Joseph. I'm from right here in St. Thomas and I'm representing Senator Ray Pupa Fonseca. chair of Health Hospital and the Human Services Committee good morning my name is Winifred Anthony Todman I'm representing Senator Marvin Blyden real real people doing real things. Excuse me. Good morning, colleagues, senators, staff, viewing and listening audience.
- 1:13:30 My name is Clara Xavier, and I'm representing Senator Kurt Veerle. Good morning, my name is Delores Hodge, and I am representing Senator Avriel Lewis, Chairman of the Committee of Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection. A man of leadership, loyalty, and integrity.
- 1:14:07 good morning everyone my name is dina cruz and today i'm honored to participate in this mock legislative session representing senator vice president kenneth kenny gittins of the 36th legislature of the virgin islands as a young senior citizen it is both a privilege and a meaningful opportunity to stand in this chamber and experience the important work of our legislature. Senator Gittins has dedicated himself to public service, community advocacy, and addressing the needs of the people of the Virgin Islands and I'm proud to represent him during today's proceedings. I also look forward to discussing bill number 36-000 and act amending title 19 of the vi code chapter 17 relating to the medical assistant program by establishing an ancillary health coverage benefits for all the adults and disabled beneficiaries i support the intent of this bill and its goal every time for seniors and vulnerable residents however i would like to hear more discussion on the proposal as some of the benefits online may already be addressed under the existing map i would like to thank the vi legislature on human services for this experience which allows seniors like myself to engage in time engage in the legislative process better understand how laws are made and appreciate get a responsibility time somebody turn up the mic i think we i think there's a i hold one minute please i think we have a partial coup in here it's 30 seconds per person no
- 1:16:10 continue finish i look forward to participating in today's session and thank the organizers and members of the legislature for making this opportunity possible thank you I must say one thing, you are representing Kenny Gittins well, my dear. I am Alphonse Stalliard, representing Senate President Milton Potter. Now, I am from Buckhole, Savanne, Runnifield, and in the illustrious tongue of French Town. And also not to forget, St. Croix, Frederickstead, Campo Rico, Wim. You hear Mr. Gittin? That's my neighbor. He mother used to always tell me when she passed by my house, going down the street, don't forget to cut the grass, don't get too high. That's how life is. But anyhow, we are here today to present some things that will help our elders and ourselves go right ahead well I thank you for that because now I will say I have terminated my time and I turned it over to the floor you're recognized for your point of information senator bulk is i forgot to um say who say who i was representing from the beautiful island of st john love city senator bolquist i thank you senator senator bolquist We have, first of all, I will talk about the post editor, Yolanda Paul, you please introduce
- 1:18:25 yourself. Post auditor Yolanda Paul. Good morning. I am Yolanda Paul. Are you representing? One second. Say who you are representing. Please recognize the mic of the post auditor. Please recognize the mic of the post auditor. Good morning, I am Yolanda Paul, representing Nikia Fleming, Assistant Post Auditor. Legal counsel?
- 1:19:19 Good morning, my name is Delene Smalls and I'm here to represent the Office of the Legal Counsel from the Island of St. Thomas. Journal Clerk. Good morning, my name is Barbara Bunton and I'm a proud member of Ivana Eudora Kent High school class of 1976 and I'm a journal clerk. Archives clerk. Good morning my name is Edith Joshua. I'm an archivist and I represent also from Eudora Kent High School 50th reunion and I'm from Smith Bay. Stenographer. Good morning I'm Lyria Freeman timekeeper and I'm not from the class of 76 I'm from here in St. Thomas content area stenographer good morning my name is Mary Davis and I'm here yes good morning my name is Mary Davis and I'm here representing this that's issues and the legislators legislature reporters very important people timekeeper sergeant at arms
- 1:21:06 Good morning, my name is Barbara Heiliger, and I'm your sergeant of arms for today, so please behave yourself. And the chaplain. Good morning, I am the Reverend Deacon Romaine Carter, and I am proud to represent the The Reverend Charles Brown. Page?
- 1:21:40 Page? Good morning. I'm Victor Rollins, the representative of Strive. I'm Vinton Rollins, representing the Stryb Senior Center. And James Lowes.
- 1:22:11 And James Lowes. Okay. Last but not least, photographer. And she's smiling. My name is Eldora Pierre, and I am from the illustrious class of 1976. Eldora Ken High School.
- 1:22:49 Discussion of the bill? Okay, that's when we move to the discussion of the bill. We will now move to discussion of the bill. Beginning with the illustrious Senator Alma Francis. Heiliger. Everyone will have three, everyone will have two minutes. We got in a minute and a half.

- 1:23:27 Everyone will have two minutes. Yeah, but you got to read it in for the public. You have to read it. Two minutes. Are you going to read the bill, or no? Hold on, Kenny. Everyone will have two minutes to speak. I'm going to read it into the record to the project with no more the bill. Senator Alma-Francis Heiliger, I will read the bill. The clerk asks, would you please read the bill?
- 1:23:58 Again. Again? Thank you. consideration of bill bill number thirty six zero zero zero zero and act amending title 19 virgin island code chapter 17 relating to the medical assistant program by establishing a salary health coverage benefit for older adults and disabled beneficiaries this concludes the consideration of bill thank you madam clerk senator alma francis heiliger you are recognized for your two minutes good morning to the listening and viewing audience i am a senator for the people I am passionate about this bill and about the seniors that will continue to benefit from the passage of this bill.
- 1:25:12 As an advocate for the most vulnerable among us, I receive weekly calls from my constituents seeking relief from rising medical costs. As a result, some choose between paying bills or purchasing medications. Costs of things such as hearing aids, vision care, and dental care impact household disposable income. To many seniors, these costs are exorbitant and impossible to manage.
- 1:25:47 We must ensure that the limits in this bill include seniors who are underserved due to financial caps. As such, I am proposing that the Patient Advocate Foundation, which offers small grants and direct co-pay assistance for patients who meet financial and medical criteria. The bill should therefore be amended to direct the Commissioner of Department of Human Services to apply for this grant and oversee the administration of the funds.
- 1:26:34 Also, as discussed in the bill, the age of 62, I feel it's a little low. Therefore, since Medicare beneficiaries become eligible at the age of 65, I would also move to have the bill amended, Chair. Mr. President, may I wrap up, please? Thank you.
- 1:27:01 amend the age to 65 to align with the Medicare eligibility requirements. This revenue stream would be able to fund the additional costs proposed by the enactment of this bill. This will bring much-needed relief to my constituents. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President, for the additional time. You are welcome. Now we will have Franklin D. Johnson, Senator Franklin D. Johnson giving his analysis. Good morning everyone. I am proud to represent Senator Franklin D. Johnson. In going through the internet I was startled by the many places that they were suggesting people could use the Medicare and being a territory the Virgin Islands was one of them. But then there was a cautionary tale saying that the cost of living in the Virgin Islands is so high that they have to make sure sure the finance is good enough to dwell here. I am the face of the new aging senior citizens, right?
- 1:28:26 My Medicare and my government retirement is not enough to keep me going. And so I am concerned because, as Frankie Johnson goes around in the community talking to people we are concerned that the seniors are not really getting what they need there are too many of us falling through the cracks now I am in support of the bill but my thing is eligibility and the eligibility as my my former senator said should go up higher to 65 but on the same rate it's just for people who qualify for MAP benefits what about those people who are a hundred dollars over the twenty thousand seven hundred and thirty three they are without any kind of assistance so we need to revisit it and look at it and see what we could do to assist those people who just above that mark so I will take that into consideration today thank you Thank You Senator Johnson now we recognize Senator duane de graf for the two minutes good morning my name is elaine freeman once again and i am representing senator duane de graf my answer when it was asked i said no my reason for that is the cost of living in the virgin islands went three dollars and cents for a can of milk there need to be some amending to this bill before it is completely accepted
- 1:30:30 until such time I am not voting do you have any amendments senator well hold on you finish are you complete excuse me yes I'm finished the chair thank you senator DeGraff for your comment the chair recognizes senator Angel Bocas junior good morning again my name is Edna Freeman and I am going to support this bill but i have some questions number one where is the funding for this bill number two are there any providers on st john or do we have to come to st thomas as usual and number three is how many states have a program like this and how it is funded Until those questions are answered, I will not support this bill.
- 1:31:50 Thank you very much for your comment, Senator. The chair recognizes Senator Hubert Fedres for his two minutes. Good morning. For her two minutes. Good morning, again, Marlene Holliday, and I do represent this bill, and my reasoning for this, I feel that this title needs to be rebranded, expanded, and it really regarding dignity and respect and honor for aging adults. With the current state of the economy, with rising food and gas, and not to mention your WAPA bill on a \$1,700 a month income is very hard to sustain. So my goal or what I would hope with your support and supporting this bill is to close the gap. gap for supplemental, for co-pays and lowering these things regarding whether it's the Medicaid Advantage Plan, whether it's a flex spending plan through federal funding or services or grants and things like that to maximize the benefit packet that the seniors will have. like I said to my point is basically the supplemental and closing that gap and it's

expanding it and make and maximizing the benefit for the seniors are you completely finished I didn't know if it was my time time is up all right thank you very much for you okay thank you I didn't say thank you mr. president for the time. The chair recognizes Senator Carla J. Joseph for

1:33:51 her two minutes. Okay we needed to have staff from Human Services to discuss this bill here in the well. Policies should be driven by data and information from experts. We don't know how many individuals are going to be impacted by this bill section 1c of the bill where it states subject to available appropriations and federal participation where is this funding going to come from we are going to be operating in a vacuum in closing I appreciate the intent of of the sponsor of this bill, but at this moment I can't support it right now.

1:34:44 Thank you for your two minutes Senator Carla Joseph. The chair now recognizes Senator Novel E. Francis Jr. Good morning, members of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, and colleagues. Protocol has been established, and I am here representing Norville Francis, Jr. I am Peter Emmanuel. I'm here today representing the seniors of the territory of St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, and water island in recent years the population of seniors in the u.s. virgin islands has been increasing and growing estimate estimated all the adults in the u.s. virgin islands is about nineteen thousand five hundred and growing our seniors are left behind. The purpose, the proposed bill 36-0000 title 19 section 278, I propose an amendment to this bill title 19 because health coverage of the older adults and physically challenge I wouldn't call them disabled physically

1:36:36 challenge MAP beneficiaries if you please mr. chair section 1 title 19 line item 1 2 & 3 states residents with fixed or limited income frequently cannot afford Medicare Advantage Supplemental Plans question what is the alternative what is the alternative time I'm gonna wrap up continue yes I hear the balance of my time i like that okay all right there's no balance the fine the founding source the funding source the funding source the allocation funds and how much it would cost thank you mr chair the chair now recognizes clifford a joseph good morning thank you for that mr francis um okay my name is earlene wagner i'm representing senator joseph um in regards to bill 36 000 and an act of title 19 i suggest that this bill be women be right or whatever this bill is saying that we need we need to change it older americans has done a lot i mean i'm part of the kind of older american this bill does not really do anything for older Americans. We have to actually look at where we're getting this money from. First of all, there has to be money to put this bill in order because we're looking at having it

1:38:55 amend where we can actually have money to help seniors that don't have it. Everybody is saying there's \$20,000. If you get a check for \$20,000 a month, that's no money or a year that's no money the cost of senior living right now in the virgin islands is way over 20 000 a year it's cost to live your rent your mortgage your car your food your clothes your medical everything it is too expensive whopper alone is taking your money i live in a community and i pay two to three hundred dollars a month in light for what i'm never home so imagine a senior that is home that needs medication a breathing machine a heart machine or something like that we can i be you can continue we need to find a way where we can have the money there to help other seniors that really really needs this so my suggestion is please let's try and do this right for our own seniors and ourselves when we get to their age thank you thank you thank you senator jane joseph uh senator james you are recognized by the chair Okay, go right ahead.

1:40:33 Good morning, Mr. President, members of the 36th Legislature, guests, viewing and listening audience. My name is Luz Maldonado, and I'm representing Maurice C. James. and I would like to present my case based on Bill 36000 and I will be going to section 278 where it reads ancillary health coverage for older adults and disabled MAP beneficiaries and it goes down to row number 20 section B where it reads the Virgin Islands medical assistance program should provide supplemental and wrap-around ancillary health care benefits for eligible residents in the maximum extent permitted under federal law. Based on that term federal law, I know that it applies to everyone, but however, I'm going to personalize. This is a very serious case i take very serious but i would like to make just a little joke i do not consider myself a senior i do not consider myself an elder if you put the three first letters of the word senior and the last four letters of the word elder what do we have sender i am a sender i am sending good vibes i'm sending information to those who will be coming after me my case comes from those senders who are already in a further age than mine who are already having to have such a difficult time like my accent said here those seniors who are having to concern with health care visual

1:42:26 dental hearing they already don't have it is not enough of a money especially when you're gonna have Other people live... May I continue? Yes, you may. When other people are living in the home, and if incomes are doubled, it still doesn't give them the benefit because they're applying for double income. I would like for us to incorporate a funding source that will allow the services to continue for services to be covered. Thank you for the time, Mr. President. You're welcome.

1:42:57 The chair recognizes Senator Ray Fonseca. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, members of the 36th legislature, guests, viewing and listening public, my name most times is Noreen Joseph. But today, I am Senator Ray Pupa Fonseca. Well, sir, Pupa. The VI Medicaid program serves about 17,832 persons. This is about 20% of our

population. This program expends about \$126 million.

1:44:02 Section 3 of the bill, no dollar amount is allocated. I have concerns about that. You see, this section, since we are talking about older adults, it is meeting these services. It is supposed to meet the services of the older, senior, elder, older, adults. Mr. President, funding is important. And I suggest that we consider the testimony so that the funding can be appropriated. I thank you.

1:44:45 Welcome. The Chair now recognizes Senator Marvin A. Blyne. Honorable Senate President and distinguished colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to present in support of this bill. I rise today to respectfully ask this body to protect our most vulnerable population, our seniors, by ensuring that they have access to vital and important services and essential care hearing visual and dental care these are not luxury services many of our seniors have medicare but it does not adequately cover these services many of them live on fixed income and if these basic things go untreated we have a greater risk of hospitalization, poor nutrition, isolation, cognitive decline, and loss of independence. And that is also costly and painful for families and for this territory. Approximately 22.7% of the Virgin Islands population, about 19,265 residents, is age 65 and older. This legislature has both the opportunity and the responsibility to take this bill seriously. seriously many of our seniors live on stretched limited income and they use it to cover their medication food utilities transportation and housing yet we still expect them to pay for

1:46:40 hearing aids eyeglasses and dental treatment as a result of that i am asking that we now help our seniors so as to prevent expensive emergency treatment avoidable complication and more dependence on families i also ask that we also not have our seniors forced to not only live with their families master president can i continue you could continue i ask that we not only force our seniors to not only have to live with families because there's no limited uh we have limited assistive living care facilities we have little or no adult day care services and respite care but i ask that we not also force them to rely on the income of their household but more so look at the individual needs in so doing i ask distinguished president and our distinguished colleagues and this community and who we have put you there to represent us that this matter is a matter of dignity fairness and sound public policy I respectfully ask that this legislative body to provide free hearing visual and dental services and if at all possible that we come to zero to pay out of our pockets meaning our seniors zero because we have served we continue to serve and we have put they have put us here to represent them and as you know as the senator for the young young at heart meaning our seniors this is whole and daily important for the survival of our community i thank you you're welcome

1:48:32 senator kirk veilly kirk e veilly good morning senate president colleagues viewing audience my name is clara zavi according to the latest census taken in 2020 21 of the population of virgin islands are senior citizens a rapid increase in that from the previous census. These seniors are and represent our parents, our siblings, and neighbors. A large majority of these 21 percent do not have health insurance because they do not qualify based on federal Medicare laws. that disqualify residents of the virgin islands from participating in certain programs as a result many of our seniors are dying from health care neglect as a god-fearing community we cannot turn a blind eye to the needs of the less fortunate among us without medical coverage to meet the high out-of-pocket expense, many of our seniors are forced to delay, forgo medical appointments, or purchase the necessary prescribed meds necessary to fight health, or to maintain adequate health standards. Ultimately, many fall into medical debts.

1:50:08 Statistics show that a high percentage of our senior population in the territory suffer from hypertension and diabetes, which with timely intervention and a good healthcare assistance program in place can be controlled to prevent the incidence of chronic complications and serious illnesses, and ultimately the hospitals and the limited resources. Increasingly, many of the seniors live alone and care for ourselves. This is happening because of the high cost of living here and where almost every commodity is imported forcing many of our children to relocate to the mainland in search of employment while it is never easy to care for oneself in one's older years all our seniors ask for is a helping hand to help lift them up where there is need to enable them to live as independently as possible in relative good health and peace that they can be examples of fortitude and strength the draft currently before this legislature proposes to find a funding source to help provide and medical assistance to the elderly. In the areas where assistance coverage is not had, recognizes the dignity and right of the elderly population

1:51:58 to adequate healthcare, especially in the area of dental health, vision and hearing. Will not only contribute to the creation of a health care community, but more importantly, a happier community. Towards that goal, we wish to add our own recommendation that the portion of the funding we are located identified to expand outreach the Department of Human Services, Homemaker Division to provide for more in-home senior care, possibly with supply from continuum care. Thanks so much for giving us the opportunity to place our thoughts on the record. And thank you, Senator Gordville. Senator Avery-Lewis, you are recognized for your two minutes.

- 1:52:58 Good morning. I rise in support of bill number 36000. My name is Delores Hodge. This bill is very important and timely. Many of the elderly are on a fixed income and I am a retiree from the Virgin Islands police department after serving 30 dedicated years. Now is the time for me to live as stress-free as possible. Bill number 36000 helps to alleviate some of the financial burdens we face when trying to live long, healthy, and meaningful lives. We have given so much to our community and we deserve to be cared for with dignity and pride. Senator Lewis will be proposing a bill to exempt pharmacies from gross receipt tax and excise tax and prescription drugs. I ask for your support on this measure.
- 1:54:07 finish thank you mr chair thank you senator lewis for your presenting senator kenny giddens you are recognized for your two minutes two minutes thank you mr president i'll keep it short i rise to offer my comments on bill number 36 zero zero zero relating to ancillary health coverage benefits for older adults and disabled beneficiaries as seniors many of us work hard all our lives paid our taxes raised our families and contributed to this territory access to proper healthcare should not become more difficult as we get older i support the intent of this bill and the goal of improving services for seniors and disabled residents however i do believe that some of the benefits being proposed may already be covered under the existing medical assistant program and i look forward to hearing clarification on the measure and if i may add just a little humor the older we get the more our doctor's appointments start looking like full-time jobs going from appointment to appointment and some of us don't have a driver like the governor in us in our seriousness the legislation is about caring for people and ensuring that our most vulnerable residents are not left behind thank you Thank you, Senator Gittins, for your comments. Now, I guess it is my turn to speak as Senator President Milton Potter, but I will speak as Alphonse J. Stallion representing Senator Milton A. Potter.
- 1:56:05 number one I am all for bill number 36 zero zero zero and I will read to you all what I think I rise in strong support of this legislation all the adults and disabled residents did not build this territory so that we could abandon them in the most critical years the sacrifice they contribute and they gave the vi the foundation upon which we all stand today the least we can do is to ensure that our healthcare coverage reflects the full scope of their needs the medical assistant program serves as a lifeline for thousands of our vulnerable residents but the lifeline is only as strong as what it covers when ancillary services are left out of the benefit structure we are accent our seniors and disabled beneficiaries to choose between care they need and expenses they cannot afford. I urge my colleagues to support this bill and send a clear message to every old adult and every disabled virgin elder. This legislation sees you, this legislation hears you, and this legislation will not leave you behind. you but i'd like to finish with one thing remember ladies and gentlemen and all the seniors they gathered in here who feels it knows it i thank you for my time senator johnson you are recognized for your point of information
- 1:57:50 All right, we recognize one school, but there are many different high schools represented in here. 76ers, I represent the bicentennial class of St. Croix Central High, 1976, and they are... I like that. But let's give a shout out to all the representatives of the high schools who are celebrating their 50th. I thank you for bringing that to my attention. And my statement will be, to all graduates of all schools in the Virgin Islands who graduated in 1976, congratulations on your beautiful anniversary. And we thank you for being there and for going that 12 long years to complete your mission.
- 1:58:48 All right. Senator Karla Joseph, you are recognised for your motion. Mr President and colleagues, I move that Bill 36-000 be forwarded to the Committee on Health, Human Services and Hospitals, and that the bill be heard in said committee within the next 30 days. I so move. Properly moved by Senator Carla Joseph and Senator Ray Fonseca.
- 1:59:32 Senator Ray Fonseca and Senator Marvin Blyton and Senator Avery Lewis. All senators who have been, Senator Dwayne McGrath, all the senators have seconded the motion. That means that all the senators are in concurrence with the bill and the motion. Can we have a roll call, please?
- 1:59:59 Can we have a roll call, please? Roll call. I'm going to put this in. Roll call on the motion. Senator Marvin, no. Senator Marvin A. Blyden. Affirmative. Yes. Should it? Yes? Yes. Senator Blyden, yes. Senator Angel Bolkis, Jr.? Yes. Senator Bolkis, yes. Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff. Senator DeGraff, yay. Senator Ray Fonseca.
- 2:00:40 Yay. Senator Fonseca, yay. Senator Novel E. Francis Jr. Yes. Senator Francis, yay. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger. Yes. Senator Heiliger, or Francis. Yeah. Yay. Senator Hubert L. Frederick. Yes. Senator Frederick, yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins? No.
- 2:01:10 Senator Gittins, nay. Senator Maurice C. James? Yes. Senator James, yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson? Yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Carla J. Joseph? Yay. Senator Joseph, yay. Senator Clifford A. Joseph, senior. Yes.
- 2:01:38 Senator Joseph, yay. Senator Avery L. Lewis. Yay. Senator Lewis, yay. Senator Milton E. Potter. Senator Potter says yay. Senator Potter, yay. Senator Kurt A. Valey. Yay. Senator Valey, yay. Mr. President, 14 yay, 1 nay. One, nay. Colleagues, the bill has been, Colleagues, bill number 36000 will be assigned to the Committee of Health, Hospitals, and Human Services for further vetting and consideration.

- 2:02:33 Go right ahead. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, Committee on Health, Hospitals, and Human Services, in coordination with the Department of Health, is conducting a community health fair next week, June 1, 2026 in the old Kmart location in Whitley Center. No.
- 2:03:04 That is at Lockhart Gardens. Screening devices such as blood pressure monitoring and blood glucose screening and mental health. Very, very, very important. Mental health, especially of the seniors. Counseling services will be available. There are over 12,000 Virgin Islands residents living diabetes and pre-diabetes. The health fair will take place on all three islands. Thank you for your support as we work together to bring health awareness to the residents of the United States Virgin Islands. Thank you very much. Hope to see you there. Thank you, Senator Fonseca. Thank you Senator Fonseca for your information.
- 2:03:59 I would like to say something here to the people of St. Thomas and the Virgin Islands. As a former Deputy Commissioner of Health, we are discussing medical health and health for the seniors. But my mission today is to tell the people the virgin islands talk to the people in the health department and tell them they need better public health service because in my days growing up there were nurses going out and serving the elderly walking the street and going to the houses to give them the care they need you could go to the public health service and get whatever jc was there in dental health we are not going forward when it comes to public health. We are going backward. And today, as a representative of the senior citizens of the Virgin Islands, I am saying we must hold our health department accountable to provide better public health service. I thank you.
- 2:05:06 Well said. Well said. Well said. Well said. Well said. Well said. Well said. Well said. Well said. Well said. We are just, we in St. Croix are just asking for a hospital, adequate health facilities. That's all we are asking for. And somebody needs to recognize that and move on it. St. Croix is badly in need of health care. Thank you.
- 2:05:43 Thank you. Senator Bulkers, you are recognized for the two minutes. Well, at least St. Thomas and St. Croix have a hospital, but St. John have nothing. So, please, if you get your finger cut, you have to come to St. Thomas. You have to catch a bird, you have to catch a boat. Everything is St. Thomas, St. Thomas, St. Thomas. St. John, people vote too, you know. But, could I ask a question?
- 2:06:13 Wasn't a clinic built up on the hill to serve the citizens instead of them going to the Myra Keating Clinic down by Coosby? What is the story with that? What clinic? The clinic got mashed up from in my Maria time. But why haven't it been repaired? Ask the senators here, the right here you know and really but really and truly good saint john really really need help because we have a clinic yes but you're all sleeping there if you have to get a baby you better wait until the last minute they wanted to be a saint john young because they're shipping you to saint thomas so you have to wait until the last minute so guess what we hardly have saint johnians now well i want i want i want i want to say john to be born in saint john you know why it got enough saint tomians any final thoughts are there any final thoughts or comments Senator Novel Francis, you are recognized.
- 2:07:30 Point of privilege, Mr. President, your daughter, my chief of staff, Shauna Richards, has prepared you well for today's events. Congratulations. Job well done. Job well done. like Senator Fonseca say Lord Popeye yes my favorite said for my great-grandmother is Lord Harry the judge well I guess that will be the end of this legislative session and we thank every all for coming and for participating the the proper the human says could you kill it but you please come up by day Commissioner George would you please come and say a few words me with the Commissioner Commissioner George would you please come and say a few words oh you can speak commissioner you're recognized you're recognized i'll go i'll i'll yield to the one-minute round for everybody and then i'll save my remarks after thank you one minute to close out yeah 30 seconds everyone has a 30 seconds to see what they got to say and close out we will start with senator alma francis heiliger
- 2:09:52 I would like to thank the Department of Human Services and the people of this territory for this opportunity to present this bill before them. I would like to urge my colleagues to consider funding sources and to also work diligently with the other senators so that we can assist our seniors thank you so much excuse me could the senators themselves also give the final word senator alma francis please well she represented me well so that's good well i first want to say i enjoy today um it's a beautiful thing whenever our seniors have an opportunity to come here in the legislature and engage in the process i mean granted we get blamed for a lot of stuff that has to do with the executive branch but um that's part of the learning process as well but um i hope everyone that had an opportunity to be represented today learn something um this piece of legislation we discussed was a good one because when it comes to our seniors and those that have helped build the Virgin Islands it's great when we okay could I just wrap up quickly thank you mr. president you can wrap up because the clerks at time but the president says you can carry on for a few minutes we will have to leave Stoolad with putter job so I'm gonna quickly wrap up and say thank you once again I hope you guys had a fun time and really learned something today and i look forward to if i get re-elected i look forward to next year thank you

- 2:11:50 yes i'm doing the graph you're recognized uh thank you good morning everyone it's sitting down a little hard is it long enough you know um i am honored to have all of these seniors representing us because you have paved the way for us you know i people don't realize it we may say mark before this session but the issue at hand is very real so i don't really take it as a mark we did it for fun but it is is real and the virginals that i grew up in the village raise the people so we still have the village and time we're going to continue to be here for our seniors thank you to miss freeman for representing me excellent uh thank you to all the representatives of my colleagues thank you for the time mr president you're welcome uh senator angel bokes you are recognized wow thank you mr president and good morning mr president colleagues listening, viewing audience, the seniors that are here before us today, people of the Virgin Islands. I want to first start off by thanking Ms. Edna Freeman, who represented me very, very, very well. She is one of the firecrackers of St. John's, so you know what time it is when she talks. And I didn't realize I was in between two Freemans, so I got to make sure, give thanks for that. Something is happening. I want to say, Mr. President, colleagues, this is one of the two most wonderful sessions that I like to be a part of. The other one is the youth session with the Girl Scouts. We love to interact with our youth and our elderly population. We are here to serve you, and we will continue to do so with integrity and pride. And any time you need any support, you know, our doors are always open to support you. So I want to thank each and every one of you for taking the time out and being here with us and engaging.
- 2:13:50 And we look forward to collaborating in the future. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Bulkens, for your comments. Senator Hugo Frederick, you may speak. Thank you again for the opportunity to have me here to speak. Pleasant, good morning, good afternoon, soon to be. Mr. President, thanks for the opportunity to speak. I just wanted to point out how important it is for everyone to to see how it is to make legislation happen it's it's easy when you see a senator and you throw out this thing ah you need to do this when you come before the body and you see the complication that goes into it you start drilling down deeper and you find out where's the stats where's the money um does it address all three islands you know there's a lot of parts that these legislation need to be vetted and go through a process and it looks easy it is not it's always complicated nothing in life is simple that's what my mom always tell me and she was right and i'm so thankful that we have the opportunity to see what we go through and we love what we do it's hard work but we're doing it for you and we're doing it for us because we will be you in a short order so So keep working with us, keep supporting us, and when I say us, be elected officials, you know, whoever you elect. Because together we could do great things.
- 2:15:23 If we keep complaining and throwing darts at each other, nothing is going to be accomplished. There's no other community in the world that's better than yours. And this is our community. So keep on supporting our leaders and provide them the support they need because you're part of it and we're part of it as well, all right? Thank you very much, Mr. President, appreciate the time. Thank you very much. Senator Carla Joseph. A pleasant good day and thank you so much, Mr. President.
- 2:15:56 This was definitely a joy for me. I enjoy being around seniors. I enjoy seeing all of you. I want to ask you, Mr. President, if we could have media span this audience audience to see how many elders and seniors we have here who took the time and are here today. Can Media, can you take an aerial span? This is a lot of human beings. Give yourselves a round of applause. I also want to thank my dear sister in Christ. I didn't know she was going to be assigned To me today, Ms. Verna Rollins. She's also a member of New Hernhut Moravian Church, where I am a member of Memorial, and we have some Memorial sisters here with me, Sister Winifred Anthony and Sister Dolores Hodge. Those are my sisters in Christ. I know they are going to be well-spoken. We are well-trained, and we give God the thanks for that. And I want to also say thank you to another Moravian who leads, strives, Sister Cherise Yergin. That's my sister in Christ. Our denomination is very old, and I'm talking to a body. And we're very mission-oriented. We take care of our community and our elders. And that's how we should be as God-fearing people, okay? And to have that level of purpose.
- 2:17:27 I really love having these types of activities with our seniors because it helps us to remember who we are working for when we are senators. It helps us, and it helps invigorate us to continue to do the fight and to continue to do the work. So I want to say congratulations to all of your seniors. I'm looking forward to eating with you today. and thank you so much for taking the time out and thank you Human Services and Strive for continuing to do this work and pushing it forward diligently year after year after year. Thank you so kindly.
- 2:18:11 senator francis you are recognized i i recognize that this opportunity of making uh life easier and better for the retirees of the u.s virgin islands as uh as a one that believes in the spiritual intervention of God as a seventh-day Adventist Christian there's a whole lot that is needed and we know Senator Novel Francis Jr. would make a difference in the coming years and I applaud him for his services as a retiree of the Port Authority for 20 years i want to thank the virgin islands and the retirees for representing them thank you uh thank you very much for just real quickly again i want to really commend the organization human services for being here i've been in this body for 12 years and i must say that i enjoy coming here

year in year out i think except for covid and one um time that we had bad weather we have been able to host our older americans and our retirees here at the legislature it's always an honor to be here to host you and we stand on your shoulders this is civics in action we move legislation that allow for civics for our young people and here is it is now we have our seniors here also demonstrating civics so thank you for being here it's not lost on me that there was a lot of movement in getting you to this point i want to take the time to commend the executive the Director's Office, and everyone involved in getting you here today. God bless each and every one of you. God bless the United States Virgin Islands.

2:20:05 Happy Old American Month. Thank you, Senator Francis. Senator Clifford Joseph, you are recognized. Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning again to all the seniors here. Oh, good afternoon. One thing about me, I stand to be corrected. know why? Because I used to be corrected by all of you. That's the way to work. I raised around the time when, if I disrespect you, trust me, the news will reach before me. So when the news reach, I have to face the news. And the other side of that news, they cannot be used to like too much. And again, I'd like to thank you personally, Commissioner George. I know I spent a good bit of time with the seniors on St. Croix as well. I gotta make an effort next year before we close out and spend some time in St. Thomas to see what the action is like on St. Thomas with the seniors. But today was a wonderful day and I thank all of the senators that showed up here today. I think all of you represented yourself well. No one like was better than anyone all i represent ourselves well and thank you for coming out i know i fall in between two ladies because mr idam didn't show up today she had some medicals but like i said all of you represented well and thank you for coming out and have a pleasant day thank you mr cheer mr president senator maurice james representing maurice james good morning or good afternoon mr president members of the 36th legislature guests viewing

2:21:58 and listening audience my name is luz maldonado honorably representing senator maurice james all I would like to say it has been a pleasure and an honor I feel special sitting in this seat I'm a just share something that has been with me for many many years many many years ago although you will not believe I'm a 66 year old sender very proud of it but where I come from I was always asked why do I run for the Senate I appreciate the work that you do but I just take my hat after you right for everything that you do because I know it's a lot of work but I just have to say I'm very pleased for the opportunity to represent Senator Maurice C. James as the only women that I knew of I didn't know you were in the senators of senator but it's been a pleasure to sit in this seat to understand what really takes place in this building that I never been in either so I thank you for the opportunity I thank you for what I represent I also He also worked for the CSEP program in St. Croix. So I say thank you. Thank you for the opportunity.

2:23:19 Thank you, Senator Maurice James. The chair recognizes the Honorable Ralph Fonseca Yesa Pupa. Thank you, thank you, Mr. President, And Mr. President and colleagues, I'd like to thank you for appropriating millions of dollars to health care and the hospitals. And I agree with the sentiments today regarding the hospitals. As you know, I have declared several times in press releases, et cetera, that the governor needs to declare the hospitals as a state of emergency, and it has not been done. This is an election year, and we're going to have a new governor, and I know we have some influential persons from the legislature that's going to be sitting at that table, I hope. And so we need to address the completion of the Wang Louie, the Roy Snyder, and the St. John Mayra Keaton Clinic. Yes, and the Freeman, that's my family. So, you know, we have to put a priority.

2:24:27 I'd like to thank so much Ms. Noreen Joseph for representing me so well today. And the elderly issues are very important. But in addition to that, I'd like to congratulate Human Services. I've seen a tremendous improvement in the Human Services and the Herbert Grigg and the Lucinda Millen Home and also the New Jewel Malloy Complex. All of those things are in progress. So there's good that's coming, but there's a lot more that needs to be done, and the hospitals are an emergency, and I'm asking the next governor to give the hospitals the attention we've given to WAPA and to provide the funds, like the budget stabilization funds, the general fund, and all those areas they've put into the WAPA, and of course we know where we are with that. so i'd like to thank all of my colleagues for providing the funding every time i come to my colleagues for funding whether it's for diabetes uh dialysis kidney additional fundings for the hospital they've always supported and so i'd like to thank all the colleagues blessings well sir thank you mr fonseca senator fonseca the chair recognizes the honorable marvin a blind thank you Thank you so much, Mr. President. Good afternoon to my colleagues, listening to you in R&D staff, central staff. I want to first thank Senator Winifred Anthony Tadman.

2:26:03 You did a very good job. Thank you so much for representing me today. I want to thank all of the representatives of my colleagues. You all did a great job. Thank you so much for being here also. I want to thank all of the seniors in the well for being here. really enjoyed your company today i even enjoyed more doing this all the american month the boat ride that was fun i really make me dance this one i really really make me down but guess what we have a very good time i really appreciate you guys i know to party that's a good thing um commissioner george thank you so much for actually having them do many activities that really keep them engaged and active you know that's important and finally i must say

doing this much appreciated session i like to i would like to really um comment everyone here today i really feel grateful i feel joyful i feel happy that our seniors on the aunt i don't want to use a word that i shouldn't use but they aren't like boring they're really active they're really engaged and they really um they they they're in tune and they're knowledgeable because if you can see base on their performance they're ready you know i mean they're outside and i appreciate you thank Thank you so much. Love you guys. Bless. Thank you, Senator Barra. Me, Senator Blayden. We now have Senator Kirk A. Bailey.

2:27:46 Thank you so much, and good afternoon to the people of the Virgin Islands. Good afternoon, colleagues. Good afternoon to all the seniors. I first want to thank Ms. Clara Xavier for representing me. She did a wonderful job in her testimony and her debate, pointed out a lot of important issues. But I also want to thank Human Services, Avril San, Commissioner, and seniors, I want you to, and Cherise Juerger, San. I want to thank you guys and also everybody, all Human Services employees, can you please stand?

2:28:23 Human Services employees, can you please stand and can we please show those individuals? individuals. I'm thanking them because every single year, human services really go above and beyond to make sure that they plan activities for our senior population. Not only on St. Thomas, not only on St. John and St. Croix, every single island has a slew of activities. I don't even know how I ought to keep up with the month. Because I boat ride, I go to the beach are doing this are doing that so i i really want to thank you avril and staff commissioner george for the wonderful job that you have done in listening to everyone and i'll be quick if you listen to the testimony of every senior that testified there were salient points that came out and you could clearly see that the senior population has a tremendous amount of issues that need to be solved and i know a lot of those issues because i'm a caregiver for my 97 year old dad another 91 year old father-in-law and the issues are immense and as a legislature we have been really trying hard to see what else we could do to supplement what is taking place in the virgin islands but we know the lack of facilities the lack of health care and this body continuously appropriating money and pushing the envelope together that we have to continue to make sure that our seniors are taken care of i heard when the clinic discussion was saying somebody said access senators you can't access senators about the clinic you ask the executive branch the monies are there it's not the senators the senators appropriate money the executive branch to implement not this body but it is so common to

2:30:14 blame the senators who don't have the power and then don't blame those individuals who have the power not doing the job to get it done and are not doing the job we have received federal monies for wang louis schneider the clinic in st john and every other health facility it is for the executive branch to execute and spend those monies and this body has been calling them on a regular basis and telling them spend the money people need care but i thank each and every one of the seniors who did that testimony today, who participated in the debate. You guys did an excellent job. We are offspring of you guys. And in honesty, the Senate have a lot of seniors. A senior represents a senior, senior, senior, senior. I come to know, we only have six individuals that are not seniors in this legislature.

2:31:10 Okay, just so I can know. So we're with you. Thank you so much. thank you every senator every lowest you are recognized thank you mr president mr president i just really have with my i ain't a senior yet but then uh good afternoon everybody good afternoon colleagues good afternoon to our wonderful guests here today you know just yesterday um i was doing something and i went to chat gpt and i put in seniors and chat gpt rewarded it and say the young at heart so i ain't saying seniors no more the young at heart and i mean i welcome you and today it's been a a pleasure because i have miss dolores haj here with me today and she's the mother of my office manager miss laister watley but carrying it a step further back miss hajj and my mom worked together at the virgin isla at public safety i don't know if you all remember one time public safety everybody were under one roof fire health and police you know that you separate out of the fort and thing i didn't remember the fourth part but i was training a little melee then they were in old zoning command they were all over they had the police them all over the place but anyhow and you know that i did they talk about getting right in police car yes i get a ride in a police car several times but anyhow moving on i'd just like to really thank the organizers of today uh commissioner george and your team um shiris yorgan my classmate class of 94 charlotte amali high school chicken hawks in the house that's

2:32:58 right um and you know every year they come out faithfully then they go above and beyond and there's another organization i'd like to train there's many others but aarp too they really go above and beyond too so i really have to give them a shout out as well with the human services and all the other entities that come along and i'd like to thank the different sponsors that also come along and make today possible i'd like to thank us in the 36 legislature for all we do but the legislation today was very timely because every day you go by things are getting expensive more and more but everything going up nothing coming down and at some point in time something will break and that's what our job is in here to do to try to bring the relief to people like you and I all of us because when we're going to the grocery store that I rush to Pueblo Sewell I saw this thing on Facebook when I'm in my office I said you know what today I'm going to eat

some white rice and corned beef and a thing of corn. So when I rush up to the counter now, I got my corned beef, my Libby's.

2:34:12 Eh? That was on Facebook. And I got my long grain rice, because I ain't too good with it. I tried to sell a rojo, but I mash it up. It ain't come out too good. And I got my corn. So when I take out, when I stick it in my hand in my pocket, I had \$11. And the woman says, Senator, come on, you know better than that. You know, don't come in here and make no joke. So I give him a debit card. But when I went to him, I cook it sparingly, I eat it sparingly because I save it for three days. But anyhow, I got rest and I just want to say thank you to all of us. and really and truly I want to give a special shout out to I know she was the superintendent I can't remember the last name right now but she gave a very special prayer this morning and I really appreciate it Dr. Carter Romain Carter thank you very much and I really appreciated that prayer because it really started the week it started the day and you know gave us a good start and I really appreciated that thank you very much and everybody have a wonderful day Oh, and before I go, I just have to throw this one in.

2:35:26 There's a food sale this Saturday for the Memorial Moravian Church. I'm in Emancipation Garden, starting from 11 to 2. Emancipation Garden, they have all your favorite foods come out. And don't forget the little bit of money you have. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Avery Lewis. and now senator kenny kittens the mic is yours thank you and good day to all man i love all of you y'all are some special people and when the majority leader spoke about taking care of his 97 year old father he just took me back to when i assisted with taking care of my great grandmother Alberta, Mesa, and St. Croix, it took me back to my grandmother, Virginia Maria Gittins-Ferris, and to my mother, Daris Williams-Joseph, who was a freeman.

2:36:32 And I'm telling you, today's session is one of the two special sessions that I love. I love when we host the seniors, and I love when we host the Girl Scouts. You all bring out so much in us. Exactly what you saw here today, with the shouting from one end to the next, when you hear something that you don't agree with, that's exactly what happens.

2:37:00 That's part of the process. But as I stand here, I truly want to thank the Department of Human Services, led by the good commissioner. You take a lot of blows. We don't take it with you, we understand, but you and your team, I could see, are trying your darndest best. And the legislature will continue to support you as much as we can with funding. But as I always tell people, we don't have a money problem. We have a money management problem, and at times we just have to follow and do the checks so that things can occur properly i also want to thank my colleagues you see all the troops in and thing over on the one end this is what i'm talking about we go through this all the time but we still gotta love each other it's about just respect of each other when you have the mic i hope your experience today today. I hope your experience today was an excellent one. You get a chance to glimpse what the legislative process is like. Again, what you see today, what you experience is exactly what happens every day, but we have to work with each other. And a very special thank you to my young senior here miss dina cruz who by the way stood her own grounds today and voted her own conscience that wasn't me that was her yeah and and she didn't say when she made her vote or afterwards say well representing senator getting she spoke for herself

2:38:59 unlike the chair but you know again thank you all so much for being here with us and while she voted her own conscience you know when I heard of what they said to myself and I stood on the site and I remember exactly where to tell my colleagues all the time you heard about two saints today you heard from Welsa Popa, you heard from Lord Harry the Judge, but when I heard my young senior today, you know what I said to myself? Every tub must sit on your own bottom. Thank you so much, and it's lunchtime, so I wouldn't hold you here any longer. Thank you all so much. Thank you very much, Senator Gittins, and ladies and gentlemen, before we come to a conclusion, I would love the Senate President, Mr. Milton Potter.

2:39:56 Let me go in the back. Good afternoon. Before he says anything, I will be telling you, the chair is all his now. Good afternoon, everybody. This is unusual, but let me ask you to give the president for the last two hours Mr. Alphonse Stulliard, a round of applause, he handled it well. You could come by any time, and the seat is going to be yours, okay? We have session tomorrow, maybe you could come by and conduct it. But I just want to briefly thank you all for being here. This event is always a special one to me. It is my favorite event. I want to really congratulate Avril George, Commissioner of Human Services. services she has always been here physically she shows up because she makes this event a priority and all the work I know you have on your plate you didn't have to be here so we appreciate you Commissioner George for being here my mother used to say to me she used to tell us child if you're blessed to live long enough you will get old so I am proud every year that I make another birthday. I feel blessed. I feel proud. And so I just want to thank y'all for being here. Thank you for what you do. Thank you for your wisdom. Thank you for the level of discourse that we experience here today. I mean, the level of the engagement was superior. So I want to thank y'all for that.

- 2 : 41 : 34 And we have some food downstairs for y'all. Special food, special lunch, scrumptious meal that we prepared for you guys today, so I ain't going to keep you out much longer. I just want to give our commissioner, Avril George, an opportunity to give a few remarks before we go to lunch, and I promise you an alibi, also, Carla Joseph. And before you start, there's a special one here. He getting up there? He getting up there?
- 2 : 42 : 06 We want to say, you're up there already, we want to say a special birthday, happy birthday, related to our majority leader, the Honorable Senator Court VLA. Happy birthday, Senator. Happy birthday. Commissioner George, you have the floor. After. God is good? All the time. God is good?
- 2 : 42 : 33 All the time. Let me say a pleasant good afternoon, and thank you, thank you, thank you to members of the 36th Legislature for hosting our seniors at this event today. I am tired. I think Senator Veerly asked if they ain't tired. I tired. two more events one on st croix tomorrow and one friday in st thomas but i'll be remiss if i didn't ask my team to stand again guys i want you guys to give my team a round and round of applause charise abigail i kept kishma assistant commissioner taisha dorsett is out ill she would have loved to be here i hope she's watching this team has been going all month and i'll say all year because our senior centers are open throughout the year and this is a representation of our seniors you see on a regular basis guys you just gotta love our seniors whenever you on a regular basis on st thomas and on st croix and i forgot thank you senator getting angela christian and her team is on St. Croix as well.
- 2 : 43 : 49 And I just want to say that I appreciate them very much. I cannot do this alone. It takes a team effort to get events like this going all month and throughout. And in St. John, Abigail is here. Abigail was here. I think she stepped out all month. The seniors are there to us. And they'll tell you, I'm your what? 911. if they can't get anybody don't care what time of the day it is my phone rings and it's an obligation we take when we take these positions to respond we don't take our job lightly at Department of Human Services but I gotta say we do have issues but we try and the fact that we're trying puts us in a better place to know that changes can be made I appreciate the 36 legislature Senator Paddy and your entire team for hosting us today and for continuously giving you giving us your support throughout the year we couldn't do it without the legislature as well so on behalf of my entire team i say a hearty thank you and i'll put on the record i'm from chs class at 89. i I ain't up there yet. Youngster, I'm still a youngster.
- 2 : 45 : 05 I'm still, no, St. Croix Central High School. Caribs, Caribs. But on behalf of our seniors, I will say seniors, happy Oldest Americans Month, and our team this year was championing your health, and we were blessed this month not to have any debts, right? We didn't have anyone pass during the month, so we're grateful that all our seniors are healthy and are here with us so seniors give yourself a round of applause as we close out oldest americans month i just want to thank all our sponsors that's us supported us supported us throughout the month including the brian roach administration vi lottery tourism supplement gaming give me your name again diageo praise jeeps everybody everybody everybody the virgin islands community for supporting us throughout all those americans want to make sure every event we gave was successful and it was all for you so God bless each and every one of you we're gonna close out and we're gonna continue serving you and that's our mandate at the Department of Human Services and we always say on behalf of myself I'd like to thank my entire team not just those that seniors my entire THS team that goes above and beyond to continue to serve our community from cradle to grave thank you have a wonderful afternoon thank you very much thank you very much we got one more thing one more alibi and i i want i definitely this year before i allow senator carla joseph to speak last year
- 2 : 46 : 53 for some reason i kept calling sherry's yogin sherry's i keep calling you lucinda last year for some reason like 50 times right so thank you for what you do thank you very much for you do Senator Carla Joseph, you may proceed with your alibi. Thank you so much, Mr. President, for granting me this alibi. I wanted to note that I'm a member of the Ivano-Eodoro Kinn High School Class of 1988, and I had the pleasure of having, representing me, one of my dearest classmates, who we all know, he's Director Patrick Farrell, and all of us know him as Soldier. This is his mother, and so it was such a pleasure to have her and to know that she is the mother of one of my dearest and more vocal classmates, Patrick Farrell, Director Patrick Farrell for the Veterans Administration. So I just wanted to note that for the record. Thank you so much, Mr. President, for allowing me.
- 2 : 47 : 58 Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, and welcome, Ms. Farrell. So the senior session, mock session for Wednesday, May 27, 2026 is hereby adjourned. Meet you downstairs for lunch.

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.

- 16x **Senator Carla Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph
heard in this transcript as: Carla J. Joseph, Joseph
- 16x **Senator Ray Fonseca**
heard in this transcript as: Fonseca, Ray Pupa Fonseca
- 13x **Senator Novelle Francis**
heard in this transcript as: Alma Francis, Francis, Novel E. Francis Jr, Novel Francis, Novel Francis Jr, Novel Francis Jr.
- 11x **Senator Alma Francis-Heiliger**
the surname alone also matches: Alma Francis Heiliger
heard in this transcript as: Alma Francis Heiliger, Alma-Francis Heiliger, Francis Heiliger, Heiliger
- 11x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**
heard in this transcript as: Gittens, Gittins, Kenneth L. Gittins
- 11x **Senator Marvin Blyden**
heard in this transcript as: Blayden, Blyden, Marvin A. Blyden, Marvin A. Blyne, Marvin Blyton
- 10x **Senator Avery Lewis**
heard in this transcript as: Avery L. Lewis, Avriel Lewis, Lewis
- 9x **Senator Franklin D. Johnson**
heard in this transcript as: Johnson
- 8x **Senator Marise C. James**
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James, Maurice C. James, Maurice James
- 7x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**
heard in this transcript as: DeGraff, Dwayne M. DeGraff
- 7x **Senator Hubert Frederick**
heard in this transcript as: Frederick, Herbert L. Frederick, Hubert L. Frederick, Hugo Frederick
- 7x **Senator Milton E. Potter**
heard in this transcript as: Milton A. Potter, Potter
- 6x **Commissioner Avril George**
heard in this transcript as: George
- 5x **Senator Angel L. Bolkis Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bolkis Jr., Anghel Bolkis, Bolkis
- 5x **Senator Clifford Joseph**
heard in this transcript as: Clifford A. Joseph
- 4x **Senator Kurt Vialet**
heard in this transcript as: Kurt A. Valey, Valey
- 3x **Senator Angel L. Bulkes Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Bulkers
- 3x **Director Patrick Farrell**
- 2x **Senator Karla J. Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Carla Joseph; Clifford Joseph
heard in this transcript as: Karla Joseph
- 2x **Senator Kurt Veilley**
heard in this transcript as: Veillet
- 2x **Senator Paula Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Carla Joseph; Clifford Joseph

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.

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Bill 36-0000