



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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March 5, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR COMMISSIONER TESTIFIES BEFORE HOUSE COMMITTEE

Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol gave testimony yesterday on behalf of the US Virgin Islands before the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Natural Resources.

The discussion before the Committee centered on Chairman Raúl M. Grijalva's draft Insular Areas Climate Change Act, a bill that would provide climate change assistance for planning, mitigation, adaptation, and resilience in the U.S. Territories and Freely Associated States.

"Our islands make minimal contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, yet they are experiencing overwhelming ecological, economic and cultural impacts from global climate change, which will dramatically increase over the next several decades," stated Commissioner Oriol.

Key outcomes in the Bill are: dedicated funding and technical assistance to the Insular Areas and Territories in the amount to exceed \$50M annually in the first three years and \$30M annually after that; a waiver of the cost-share from all the federal recovery funding being received by the islands; and an increase in the federal match requirement waiver from \$200,000 per award to \$750,000 per award. Reducing the amount of local matching funds which are currently required would allow the territory to redirect them into energy infrastructure projects and advancements which have positive environmental impacts on the Virgin Islands.

Commissioner Oriol expressed support for the measure, stating, “Overall, the USVI sees the significance of this bill as the proposed creation of programs and steady funding sources specifically for the Insular Areas and Territories to address impacts related to climate change. It is our opinion that ~~the~~ passage of the Insular Areas Climate Change Act will create more equitable conditions for the islands to comprehensively address the challenges that will come because of climate change.”