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'TOXIC' SUNSCREENS TO BE BANNED IN U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS UNDER PROPOSED LEGISLATION

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CHARLOTTE AMALIE — The Committee on Government Operations, Consumer and Veteran Affairs will hear Bill No 33-0043 on Monday which seeks to ban the sale of sunscreen products containing oxybenzone and octinoxate. The bill is sponsored by Senators Marvin Blyden and Janelle Sarauw and co-sponsored by Senator Javan James, Sr.

“As we forge forward with stronger and more resilient buildings, roadways and technological infrastructures in the Virgin Islands, I am very mindful to include measures that protect the natural playground of both our children and tourists alike – the beaches; as well as one of our economical ways of life

– fishing for sale and food” Sarauw said.

Senator Sarauw said that she has been working very closely with colleague Senator Blyden, governmental environmental agencies, environmentalists, and environmental organizations, reviewing numerous research and studies that have explicitly shown how the use of sunscreen containing the chemicals oxybenzone and octinoxate are not only harmful to your health – the chemicals are absorbed by the skin and have been measured in the blood, breast milk and urine, but also harmful to the oceanic ecosystem because of its toxicity to our corals and other marine life.

“We must protect our coral system and marine life – the very things that bring visitors to our beautiful islands and support our economy. It is time we stopped the toxic sunscreen burn – a measure Island Green has been advocating for since 2016 – and pave the way toward comprehensive sustainability,” Harith Wickrema, President of Islands Green Living Association, said. “I am pleased to offer this critically important piece of legislation. The protection of our marine environment and coral reefs is not just protecting our national patrimony, it is also protecting our economy.”

Several other Caribbean islands and places like Key West and Hawaii have already implemented bans on the reef damaging toxic sunscreens.

“I am especially gratified to have had the opportunity to work in partnership with Senator Sarauw and with a number of community organizations and the University of the Virgin Islands on this important piece of legislation,” Senator Blyden said. “I believe it will help to ensure that our coral reefs remain healthy and a viable tourist attraction for generations to come.”

Scientists studying the effects of these chemicals on reefs have stated that “about 90 percent of the reefs in the Caribbean have disappeared since 1980”.

“We want to encourage a healthier and safer alternative in the use of natural sunscreen, but we also have to be aggressive in saving our reefs now by banning harmful sunscreen – that is our responsibility,” Sarauw said. “I will continue to champion and collaborate on measures that protect and/or reverse the harm done to our environment. A cleaner Virgin Islands, both in the health of its people and spaces, only serves to benefit us all!”



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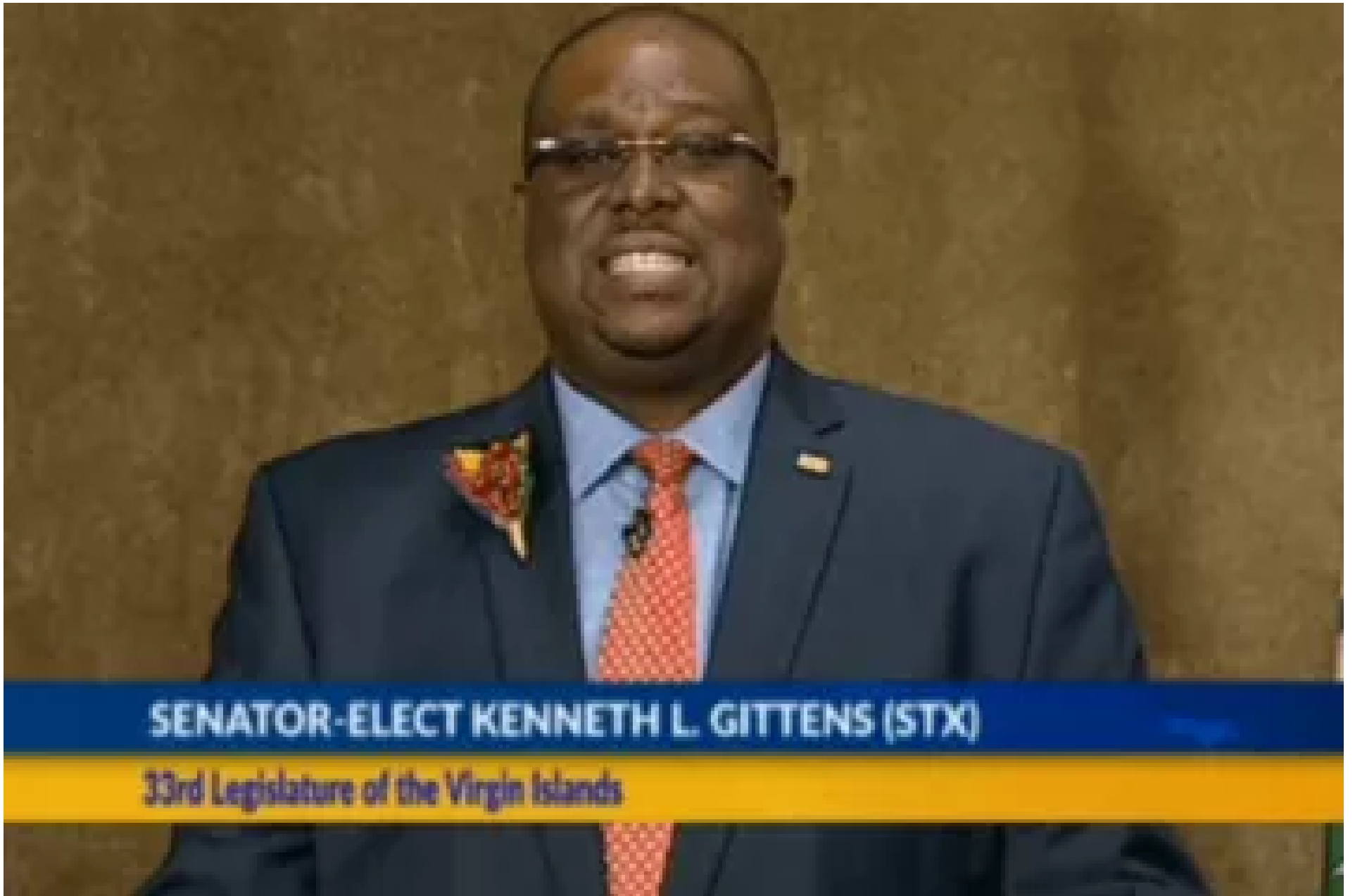
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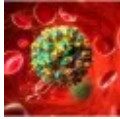
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