



The Virgin Islands

# DAILY NEWS



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## Summer serenade



Daily News photo by LORI ABBOTTS

Instructor Sean Steele Sr. directs the Rising Stars Youth Steel Orchestra summer recruits during the summer program closing ceremony and concert Friday at the Long Bay Panyard on St. Thomas. A total of 69 students participated in the 2019 Summer Recruits program. The orchestra is an initiative of the USVI Superior Court. **Page 3**

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Photo by CARLOS LEZAMA/LIMA 2019

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USVI's late rally falls short

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# Bryan signs into law 'groundbreaking' toxic sunscreen ban

By A.J. RAO  
Daily News Staff

Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. has signed into law a ban on toxic sunscreen products harmful to humans and marine life, making the Virgin Islands the first jurisdiction in the nation to implement such a targeted ban.

The law stops the importation, sale and distribution of sunscreen containing oxybenzone, octinoxate and octocrylene, three ingredients that are scientifically linked to coral and marine life damage, as well as hormone disruptions in humans.

Retailers are no longer permitted to place new orders for sunscreen containing the ingredients, and are barred from receiving shipments after Sept. 30.

The addition of octocrylene means the law goes further than any similar ban in the country. And with the full ban taking effect on March 30, 2020, the law beats out similar bans planned in Hawaii and Key West, Fla.

"Tourism in the Virgin Islands is our lifeblood — but to ensure we continue to entice visitors with our world class beaches and natural beauty in the coming years, we need to protect our coral reefs as part of our quest to initiate sustainable tourism," said Bryan in a statement. "This is crucial all over the Caribbean and I call on others to join me. We all share and must protect our oceans."

The law, which was Bill 33-0044, passed unanimously in the VI. Legislature in June, and was sponsored by Senators Marvin Blyden and Janelle

Sarauw, makes the Virgin Islands the first to embrace the recent announcement by the Food and Drug Administration, which recognizes only zinc oxide and titanium dioxide as safe and effective sunscreen ingredients.

Island Green Living Association President Harith Wickrema, who helped spearhead the effort, called the ban "groundbreaking," and said it will offer protections to the environment and people's health, as well as build awareness of the dangers of toxic sunscreens compared to their safer alternatives.

"We're extremely grateful to the governor, as well as the senators, led by Senators Blyden and Sarauw, for following up on their commitment to take toxic sunscreen away from our oceans," Wickrema said.

Wickrema's St. John nonprofit, which has been leading the campaign against toxic sunscreen since 2016, will now focus on implementing the ban.

Wickrema said as a follow-up to his conversation with former President Bill Clinton during his recent visit to the territory, he will request the Clinton Global Initiative's assistance in bringing together multiple travel partners, like American Airlines, Delta Airlines, United Airlines, Jet Blue, Cape Air, Royal Caribbean, Carnival and others.

Some ideas to be discussed with them include:

- When an airline ticket is issued, an automated notification about the ban is provided, with a link to the Tourism website or Island Green

website for further details.

- All flights to St. Thomas and St. Croix will show a public service announcement before landing, featuring the CEO of the airline or the VI. governor and offer information about what to do upon arrival to declare sunscreen and secure a free sample.

- Once the flight lands, the ground staff can mention a "sunscreen swap" opportunity during the welcome announcement.

- Cruise line passengers will receive a special message with their departure/boarding documents, on their ship's websites, etc.

- Only mineral-based, reef-safe sunscreen to be sold onboard ships.

A list of more than 300 coral-safe sunscreens can be found at [www.islandgreenliving.org](http://www.islandgreenliving.org).

# Nine senators heading to Tennessee for State Legislatures meeting

Daily News Staff

A delegation of nine VI. legislators

will head to Nashville, Tenn., on Sunday to attend the 2019 National Conference of State Legislatures.

The delegation will return Friday.

According to Senate President Novelle Francis Jr., the nine senators, including himself, are Senators Kurt Viale; Alicia Barnes; Javan James; Steven Payne Sr.; Athneil Thomas; Marvin Blyden; Donna Frett-Gregory; and Stedmann Hodge Jr.

"The National Conference of State Legislatures is committed to the important work of strengthening state and territorial legislatures and will go a long way in assisting us, as lawmakers, to confront and solve the critical issues of our time through a public-private dialogue," said Francis, in a statement from his office.

The delegation will attend a num-

ber of conference sessions on topics, including: Disaster Mitigation and Recovery Partnership; Navigating Criminal Justice Reform; Innovations in State Health Systems; and Paying the Price — Strategies To Control Health Care Costs.

The National Conference of State Legislatures is a bipartisan

organization established in 1975 that serves the legislators and staffs of the nation's 50 states, its commonwealths and territories. The organization monitors, tracks and researches state and state-federal legislation that impacts state and territorial politics, according to Francis' statement.

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