

March Date Stands for USVI's Toxic Sunscreen Ban

By **Island Green Living Assn.** - March 3, 2020



ST. JOHN, USVI—In a move underscoring Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s commitment to protecting the environment as well as human health, an amendment added to unrelated legislation, Bill 33-0190, extending the deadline from March to July for businesses to clear their shelves of toxic sunscreen was line-item vetoed.

"We commend Governor Bryan for upholding the original March date for the ban, which had unanimous senatorial support last summer. We are grateful that he did not bend to special interests but instead put protecting human and coral health first," said Harith Wickrema, President of **Island Green Living Assn.**

"The governor recently spent time with Island Green seeing first-hand the sustainable initiatives taking place on St. John through Giff Hill School, ISU EARTH Program, Friends of the V.I. National Park and more, demonstrating the importance he places on being green. Maintaining the March 30 date is a huge victory for the environment and for the people of USVI."

Under Act No. 8185, stores were mandated to cease ordering new inventory of sunscreen containing oxybenzone, octinoxate and octocrylene as of last July, giving them eight months to deplete any inventory ordered prior.

Visitor Education Important

"President Clinton, who drew attention to this issue when he was in the territory last summer for the CGI Action Network on Post-Disaster Recovery, reiterated his support of the measure to me during the Action Network event in Puerto Rico this week and his willingness to help the effort to build awareness," continued Wickrema. "Island Green is eager to help fund education as well. Now it is up to our commissioner of tourism to act on what has been presented on a silver platter to ensure visitor education is included in tourism marketing."

According to NOAA, there is scientific evidence indicating these chemicals are deadly to coral and threaten overall reef health. They also cause human cell damage that has been linked to cancer, disrupt hormones and have been found in breast milk, blood and urine.

The ban makes history with the most far-reaching protections and the earliest implementation in the United States. The inclusion of octocrylene in the ban is critical as it is often used in combination with other dangerous chemicals. Elimination of products containing these chemicals makes safer mineral-based sunscreen (with active ingredients of zinc oxide and/or titanium dioxide) the default choice.

A major event to have national impact is being planned to commemorate the landmark ban.

Established in 2004, Island Green Living Assn. is a registered 501 (c)(3) not for profit organization on St. John dedicated to sustainability throughout the USVI.

Island Green Living Assn.
