

Legislature of the Virgin Islands

P.O. BOX 1690
ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS 00802
(340) 712-2278



The Honorable
Angel Bolques, Jr.
Senator-At-Large
35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

CHAIRMAN
Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, & Parks

VICE-CHAIRMAN
Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture

MEMBER
Committee on Rules & Judiciary
Committee on Homeland Security, Justice & Public Safety
Committee on Housing, Transportation, & Telecommunication
Subcommittee on Energy & Infrastructure Development



For Immediate Release:

April 10, 2024

Media Contact:

Senator Angel Bolques Jr.

Telephone: (340) 693-3571

Email: senatorbolques@legvi.org

MEDIA PRESS RELEASE

Senator-At-Large Bolques attends SeaTrade24 and expresses the importance of the Maritime Scholarship Bill 35-0133: A New Era for Virgin Islanders in the Maritime Industry.

In a significant stride towards fostering a sustainable future for the maritime industry, the recent Sea Trade Conference brought together maritime leaders, keynote speakers, and stakeholders who highlighted the triumphs and challenges of the Global Maritime Industry. "These dialogs only empower me to express the transformative power of the Maritime Scholarship of Bill 35-0133, passed in the last legislative session and slated to be signed into law by the Governor of the Virgin Islands," stated Senator Bolques. This landmark legislation is poised to revolutionize opportunities for Virgin Islanders, propelling them into the forefront of USVI Maritime advancements. "The passage of the Maritime Scholarship Bill 35-0133 represents not just a legislative victory, but a transformative leap forward for our youth and our economy," stated Senator Bolques. "By equipping Virgin Islanders with the investments, tools, and education needed to excel in the maritime industry, we are setting sail towards a horizon of limitless potential for our Virgin Islands," said Senator Bolques.

During the conference, esteemed speakers such as Anne Kalosh from Seatrade Cruise News underscored the importance of environmental sustainability alongside industry leaders Harry Sommer, Jason Liberty, Josh Weinstein, Kelly Craighead, and Pierfrancesco Vago. The panel delved into critical themes such as achieving net zero emissions by 2050, leveraging new environmental technologies, and the importance of a regulatory framework for sustainable marine fuels, reflecting a unified vision for a greener maritime future. In addition, Geneive Brown Metzger, President of the American Caribbean Maritime Foundation (ACMF), emphasized the pivotal role of Maritime education in transforming the lives of local talent in the Caribbean. The ACMF's



**MEDIA
PRESS
RELEASE**

PAGE 2

commitment to alleviating poverty through scholarships, grants, and Maritime infrastructure development are essentially Bill 35-0133's core values and stand as a testament to the industry's potential to drive economic growth and address critical social issues. "Education is the keystone of maritime advancement and poverty alleviation in the Caribbean. This bill and the collaboration with educational institutions and maritime organizations are a source of hope for many aspiring maritime professionals of the Virgin Islands," Bolques remarked.

The SeaTrade conference also highlighted the growth of the Caribbean as a premier cruising destination, breaking tourism records and showcasing the region's unparalleled appeal. This fact underscores the urgent need for all Caribbean destinations to collaborate closely with cruise liners and maritime industry stakeholders, ensuring the Caribbean remains at the pinnacle of cruise destinations worldwide. In anticipation of the competitive shifts in the cruise liner and marine industries in the coming years, keynote speakers stressed the importance of preparing for these changes that will likely lessen destination stops and promote more at-sea options. This shift will inevitably impact economies, making it imperative that governments and private sector stakeholders diversify tourism experiences to ensure their destinations remain competitive and relevant in the changing landscape of global tourism concerning cruise liner travel.

With its strategic position, Senator Bolques believes that The Virgin Islands, specifically St. Croix, is poised to become a central hub for cruise ship maintenance and fueling operations, promising substantial economic benefits, job creation, and sustainability for the island and the territory. "As we navigate the challenges and opportunities of the coming years, the collective effort of the USVI and other Caribbean destinations, in partnership with the global maritime industry representatives, will ensure that the USVI not only remains a favored cruise destination but also advances as a beacon of sustainability, innovation, and prosperity in the maritime world," concluded Senator Bolques.

###

REVIEW BILL # 35-0133: <https://billtracking.legvi.org/>