



## 28<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Capitol Building, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00802

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**PATRICK SIMEON SPRAUVE**

Senator

Committee on Health, Hospitals & Human Services  
Chairman

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### Remarks to the Caribbean Fishery Management Council Hearing Windward Passage Hotel, St. Thomas July 21, 2010, 7pm

Good evening to those present, fishermen and members of the Caribbean Fishery Management Council. My name is Catherine Bryan, Chief of Staff for Senator Patrick Simeon who is a representative for the St. Thomas/St. John District. The Senator asked that I represent him here tonight, at this important meeting. In addition to my responsibilities as Chief of Staff, I am also a member of the Fisheries Advisory Council. Ladies & gentlemen, it would appear that the members here tonight have not fully recognized the concerns of Virgin Islanders as the information that I am going to outline in the next few minutes have been drafted & discussed on numerous occasions over the last five years. It is through the previous statement that Senator Sprauve requests I convey to you, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council, the need for responsible resource management here in the Territory.

It is safe to say that we all want the same thing, a healthy and productive fishery. In fact, the existence of our islands depends on our fishery for our tourism product and food production. The best methods for ensuring the protection and sustainability of our fishery are not as clearly defined. However, I implore the CFMC to fulfill their mandates cautiously. I appreciate the magnitude of the task at hand and I strongly believe there must be discussions with all stakeholders present. However, poorly advertised and facilitated meetings are unacceptable and appear to provide a level of impropriety in relation to transparency. All stakeholders must have an opportunity to be heard and more importantly taken into consideration. The people of the Virgin Islands must be included in decision making which will affect the economics of our Territory.

I must express my concern for the method for which data is being collected. Virgin Island fishermen have submitted catch reports for years to recently learn that their data is not acceptable. Whatever the shortcomings of their figures, have we corrected it so that we do not exacerbate the problem for the future? It is troubling, that the solution for acquiring data was to simply dismiss 30 years of Virgin Islands data and instead use Puerto Rico's fishing data; an island with four million people, and an abundance of conflicting variables that would affect this fishery over ours. Using one island's fishery data to determine the livelihood of its neighbor is irresponsible, disingenuous and borderline criminal. The CFMC and other regulatory agencies may regard the Virgin Islands as a small foreign country that can be easily dismissed. But let me assure you, we will not. I implore you to reconsider the concept being presented.

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**Vice Chairman**

Committee on Rules & Judiciary

**Member**

Committee on Appropriations & Budget

Committee on Housing, Sports & Veterans Affairs

Committee on Planning & Environmental Protection

Committee on Public Safety, Homeland Security & Justice

Again, I realize you are mandated to set annual catch limits this year. Thus, I strongly urge you to use the Virgin Islands figures that are available to set the ACL's for the Territory. Puerto Rico's statistics should only be used to set Puerto Rican data.

Senator Sprauve remains committed to seeing fair and reasonable administration of our fishery. He is willing to assist in facilitating this process so that we can move forward in setting regulations to protect both our marine environment and our local fishermen. Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact me with any concerns at 340-693-3513.

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