

SENATOR-AT-LARGE REPORTS

*From the office of the
Senator-At-Large, Craig W. Barshinger
"In service to all the people of the Virgin Islands"
February 2006*



Sen. Craig W. Barshinger
26th Legislature of the
Virgin Islands

A Message From Your Senator

Greetings Fellow Virgin Islanders: Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Senator-At-Large and to report on how things are going. Much has happened in the Virgin Islands during my first term: amongst the first, the Bellevue Housing residents moved into wonderful, affordable housing on Giff Hill, St. John; the 26th Legislature passed an Animal Cruelty Bill in Legislative Session that all parties supported; the Frederiksted Fisherman's Pier repairs are

totally completed; St. Thomas' Carnival was a resounding success; St. John's Carnival embodied the "Love City" spirit; and St. Croix's Festival was the best ever. The unity rallies hosted on St. John have also made a significant and positive impact on our communities.

In this article, I would like to explain how the office of the Senator-At-Large can help you solve problems. Please see page six (6) for addresses and phone numbers of my three offices

located on St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas. My e-mail address is also listed on the back of this review.

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Supporting local Businesses means building our economy — Sen. Barshinger attending a business opening in St. Thomas.

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Special points of interest:

- *How to get problems resolved*
- *Proposed an Enacted Legislation*
- *Standing up against hate crimes*
- *A new Fishermen's Pier*

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Legislation Proposed by Senator Craig Barshinger

Senator Barshinger introduced several bills to improve the quality of life for all Virgin Islanders. One of these pieces of legislation has been enacted and several are currently before various Senate committees and include:

- A law to adopt a standard, territory-wide definition of and prohibition of sexual harassment, which was enacted on April 7, 2006. This law is based on the

best contemporary standards that acknowledge that legitimate human sexual interactions are based only on mutual consent.

- A bill to rehabilitate contaminated property through environmental covenants. This bill is currently before the Senate Economic Development, Planning & Environmental Protection Committee.
- A bill to adopt the Uniform

Conservation Easements Act, which would allow property owners to maintain ownership of their land while allowing it to be used for conservation or recreational uses. This bill is currently before the Senate Economic Development, Planning & Environmental Committee.

Senator Barshinger is also a major sponsor of the Health Insurance Reform Bill.

A Message From Your Senator At Large

(Cont'd from page 1)

“My technique is to listen to your problem and evaluate it. Then I help you write a letter to the appropriate person in the Executive branch.”

A senator writes laws, appropriates funds, and oversees the expenditure of these funds. It's the oversight function that allows senators to help you directly. Some senators do try to act as “super commissioners,” and leave citizens with the idea that it is senators who pave roads, build schools, etc. In fact, most government functions that affect you directly are done by the Executive Branch, headed by the Governor.

As your senator in the Legislature, there are several ways I can help you when the Executive Branch isn't working well for you. You have a right to ask that it works well, because it is your tax dollars that the Legislature appropriates for the Executive Branch to spend.

Any time you are confused about how government is working, or are unable to get results from

your attempts to contact the Executive branch, you can come to me for help.

My technique is to listen to your problem and evaluate it. Then I help you write a letter to the appropriate person in the Executive branch, which may be someone in the Police Department, DPNR, Dept. of Housing, Dept. of Human Services, etc.

I like to stay in the background at first, because I want the system to work. The government department you contact should respond to your needs without any prodding from a senator. After all, it is YOU who is paying for the services of these government departments.

But if you haven't gotten results after 2-3 weeks, then I get involved by writing a letter on my Senator-At-Large letterhead, asking that the Department help you. I send my letter with

a copy of your original letter. This usually gets some kind of response from the Department. If the first letter did not.

In the event that the Department fails to devote sufficient effort to meet your need, then I can increase the pressure. Ultimately, senators can subpoena the Department head to come before the Senate. We can ask them questions about how they are spending your money that we appropriated for them to provide the services you need. Fortunately, this kind of pressure is rarely needed. In any case, I'm working for you, and will keep working with you until your issue is resolved.

Sometimes my staff or I will make a few phone calls on your behalf to gather information. But usually if you have already encountered trouble and are coming to us for help, we will go right into helping you create a letter. This lets the

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St. John — Senator At Large Condemns Hate Crime

The summer of 2005 brought out a negative side of humanity when allegations of racial hatred surfaced on St. John.

St. John residents, Jerry and Esther Frett, told police they walked out of their house to find racial slurs, profanity and death threats written all over their car.

According to Frett, this was not the first time that they were victims of racial hatred. On June 14th, he found a plastic bottle in his Cruz Bay business, House of Dolls, that

contained profanity and racial epitaphs.

Barshinger said he was very disturbed by the allegations of racial problems in St. John, which is nicknamed “Love City.”

“It is crucial that this situation is resolved for the physical and mental well being of all parties involved, as well as all racial and ethnic groups in the Virgin Islands,” said Barshinger. This case was turned over to the FBI.

The Senator commented recently

on the article written by the St. Thomas resident, Clay Travis, in “The Virgin Verve” regarding a “make believe” interview with Tim Duncan. The article was a tongue and cheek opinion disparaging Tim Duncan, the San Antonio Spurs, and Virgin Islanders.

Sen. Barshinger, like many Virgin Islanders, said he “was appalled by the ‘make believe’ interview with Tim Duncan. Even as a fabrication, the interview was grossly insensitive...it {is} difficult to imagine why someone who harbors such disdain for Virgin Islanders would even live here...ethnic and racial hatred at any level cannot be tolerated.”

“Parking Spot Verification Committee” and “Land Tax Policy Committee give Grass Roots Citizens Political Voice”

Under the sponsorship of Senator Craig Barshinger, St. Johnians have formed the “Parking Spot Verification Committee”. His 5-point plan to solve Cruz Bay’s dismal dearth of parking states that in the future, the off-street parking requirements of the law will be adhered to. For decades, St. John businesses have been submitting building permit applications to the Department of Planning & Natural Resources (DPNR) that do not contain the required number of valid parking spaces. As a result, a parking space in Cruz Bay is a rare find.

The parking Spot Verification Committee consists of St. Johnians who are native, immigrant, young, old, male, female, working, and retired just like the diverse population of St. John. These volunteers will examine all future building permit applications and accompany the builder and DPNR inspector on a walk through Cruz Bay. The applicant for the building permit will have to show the Committee each and every space claimed on the application.

“This will be a tremendous improvement,” says Senator Bar-

shinger. “In the past, many of the parking spaces claimed on building permit applications either did not exist, or were already in use by someone else.” St. Johnians widely acknowledge this practice, and some of the past offenders are now on board, working toward a solution to the crippling lack of parking.

At a town meeting hosted by Senator Barshinger at the Westin Resort on November 29th, DPNR Commissioner, Dean Plaskett, acknowledged the parking Spot Verification Committee, and

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Salute to Our Community Members for Outstanding Service

Rodger Dewey and the St. Croix Foundation—for leading the effort to revitalize ‘Market Square’ and, eventually, downtown C’sted.

Camille “King Derby” Mac-edon— for over 30 years of enriching the lives of our youth through cultural music.

Commissioner Dean Plasket, Robert McAuliffe (deceased), George Flores, and Toby Tobias – for determination and fortitude in the reconstruction of the “Fishermen’s Pier.”

ChenziRa Kahina and Carl Neb Ka Ra Christopher— STJ Unity rally against hate crimes.



Senator Barshinger and Senator Pedro Encarnacion at the grand opening of ‘Market Square’ following extensive remodeling of this historical site .

Senator Barshinger now serving as chairman of Health Committee

With the change from the old minority to the new Senate Majority, Senator Craig Barshinger was afforded the opportunity to serve as Chairman of the Senate Health, Hospitals and Human Services Committee.

Senator Barshinger was ready and willing to accept this new responsibility and has been working to shepherd the various bills in the committee on to other committees.

One such bill in particular is the Health Insurance Bill, sponsored by Senator Roosevelt David and other senators, including Senator Barshinger. The bill seeks to provide health insurance for all employed persons in the Virgin Islands. Several committee meetings and town meetings were held on the Health Insurance bill to take comments, suggestions and ideas from the community in making this legislation work.



How Ready Are You for the 2006 Hurricane Season? The Professor wants to know —



Did you trim all tree branches?

Yes, Professor Disaster Prevention.

Did you remove garbage from your yard?

Yes, Professor Disaster Prevention.

Did you repair your roof?

Yes, Professor Disaster Prevention.

Then Professor Disaster Prevention assesses that you are about 25% ready.

Do you have a battery operated radio, flashlight, and extra batteries?

Yes, Professor Disaster Prevention.

Do you have a cellular phone?

Do you have an extra supply of water and can goods?

Yes, Professor Disaster Prevention.

Then Professor Disaster Prevention assesses that you are just about 50% ready.

Do you have toothpaste, soap, deodorant, and other toiletries?

Yes, Professor Disaster Prevention.

Do you have an extra pair of glasses?

Do you have mosquito repellent?

Do you have extra medicine?

Do you have a full tank of gas?

Do you have extra cash?

Do you have your passport and other important documents?

Do you have insurance?

Yes, Professor Disaster Prevention.

Then Professor Disaster Prevention assesses that you are just about 75% ready. Now the government must do its part in notifying and preparing the public for hurricane season 2006 and together we will be 100% prepared, with GOD's blessing.

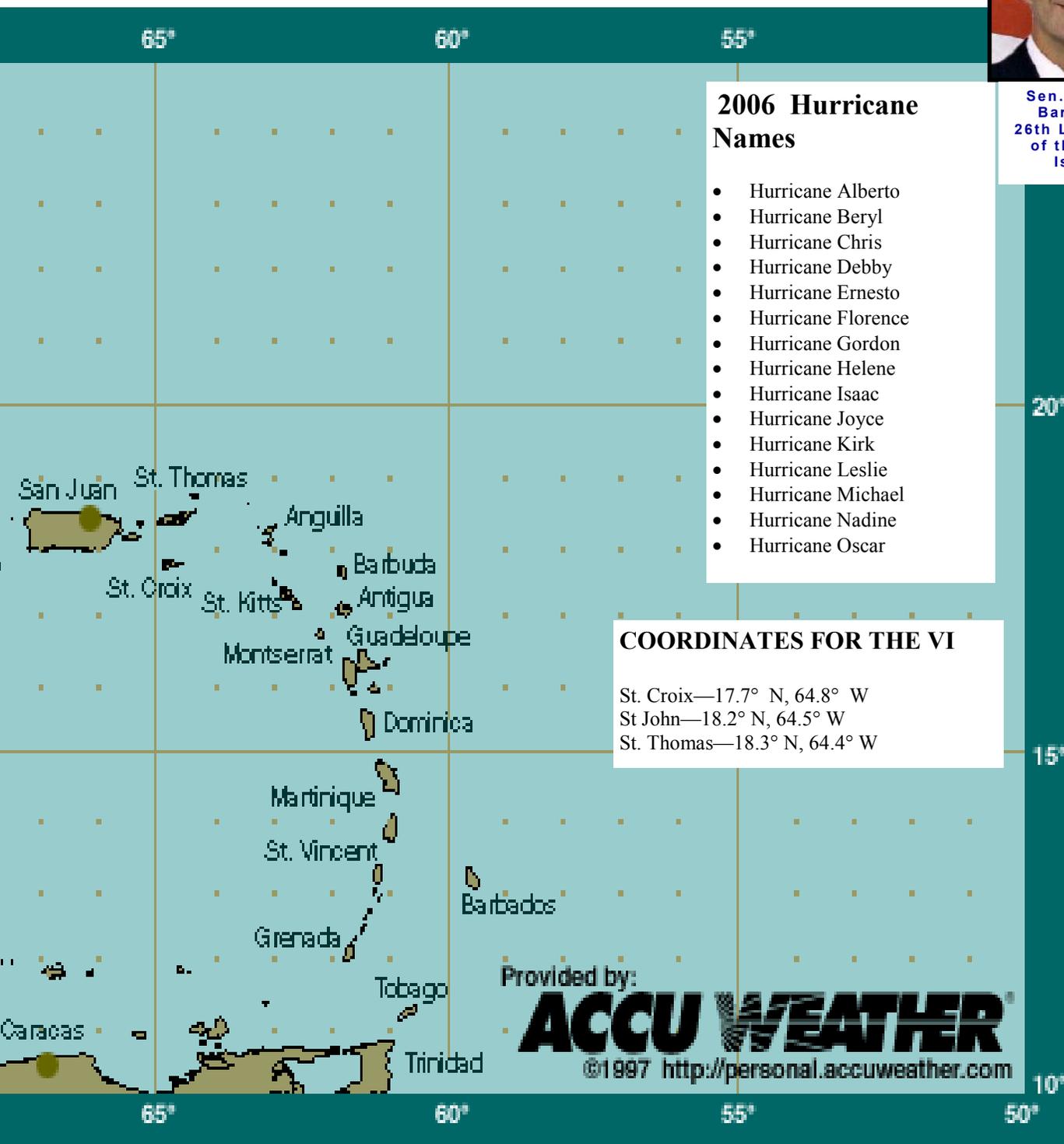
2006 HURRICANE TRACKING



HURRICANE SEASON TRACKING MAP



Sen. Craig W.
Barshinger
26th Legislature
of the Virgin
Islands



Protecting the Environment

One of Sen. Barshinger's major pieces of legislation is The Environmental Covenants Act. This bill protects human health and the environment from potential hazardous substances by placing controls on the use of land that contains contamination, or where contamination could occur because of a project. It ensures that property owners must have an environmental remediation



plan in place with detailed requirements for keeping contamination to a minimum.

In Service to All the People of the Virgin Islands

“Fill A Pack”

Senator Craig W. Barshinger has taken his role as the At-Large Senator very seriously, getting involved with various community projects on all three islands. One of the senator's projects is called the “Fill A Pack” program. This program provided students, who are less fortunate, with school supplies such as a back packs, loose-leaf paper, and pens and pencils. This program was conducted by his office on all three islands. K-mart accepted the responsibility to collect and manage contributions towards this effort. In addition, other businesses and individuals made significant contributions to assist in this worthy cause of helping underprivileged students. Special thanks to American Yacht Harbor, Divi Carina Bay, Emax Financial Group,

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Parking Spot Verification

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agreed to accept the Committee's decisions on whether a parking space was valid. Commissioner Plaskett supported St. John's involvement in the permitting process, saying, “You tell us what you want.”

While the Parking Spot Verification Committee concerns mainly St. Johnians, Senator Barshinger's Land Tax Policy Committee concerns all of the Virgin Islands. With a potentially crushing land tax increase looming on the horizon (See *Town Meeting Hosted by Sen. Barshinger on St. John Land Situation* on page 5), the Senator has formed a Committee to advise the Legislature on how best to formulate the VI Land Tax, once Congressional Delegate Donna Christensen is successful in repealing the stifling 1936 Federal law that prevents us from adopting Tax Policies that preserve our society and culture. “It's more than a matter of raising money”, said Senator Barshinger, “It's a matter of fairness, and no person should be forced from their home by taxes that rise much faster than inflation.”

The Land Tax Policy Committee has openings for participants from all Virgin Islands. Interested citizens should call the offices of Senator Barshinger at one of the numbers listed on page 6.

St. Croix—The Fishermen's Pier

Mr. George Flores and Mr. Robert McAuliffe (now deceased) were concerned about the dilapidated conditions of the Fishermen's Pier and decided it was high time to do something about it.

They held several town meetings inviting Senators and government officials from DPNR, Fish & Wildlife, and Property and Procurement. Although, initially government officials were reluctant to commit funds to this effort, Democratic Frederiksted Senators were able to exert considerable influence that resulted in the government's commitment to reconstruct the pier. Senator Barshinger, taking it a step further, extracted a promise from the officials to begin reconstruction on the pier in April of this year instead of the summer months as originally planned.



Workmen begin reconstruction efforts on 'Fishermen's Pier'.

Unfortunately, the shortage of cement and sand on the Big Island initially hampered the completion of the Pier. But, all is well. As of November, 2005, the pier has been completed and is available for use. Our fishermen have long awaited and well deserve these repairs.

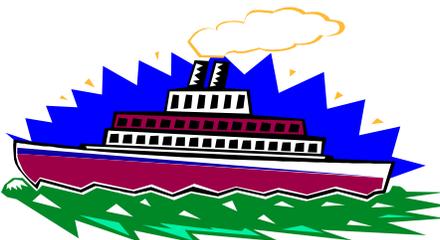
Senator Barshinger Hosts Cruise Industry Forum

Senator Craig Barshinger hosted a forum at St. Gerard's Hall in Frederiksted, St. Croix on August 24, 2005, to discuss the return of cruise ships to the big island. The forum—"One Daily Daylight Cruise Ship Arrival on St. Croix –The St. Croix Wow! Experience," was well attended by approximately 150 interested stakeholders. The forum was geared toward bringing all interested parties together to discuss and commit to action plans for the return of cruise lines to St. Croix.

"The people of St. Croix are eager, ready, and willing to become the foremost Heritage Tourism destination," Barshinger said. "The cruise ship operators are also eager to find new and exciting tourist destinations, and St. Croix is one of them."

Each stakeholder was allotted time to

share with everyone in attendance suggestions, recommendations, and what the individual or his/her company/agency can do to assist in the return of cruise lines to St. Croix.



Attendees discussed:

- What cruise lines want in St. Croix;
- How to get a micro-credit loan of up to \$50,000.00;
- What new service businesses are needed;
- How various government agencies

can work together to bring the cruise ships and keep them coming;

Budding entrepreneurs were also given the opportunity to tell what sales and services they seek to offer to cruise passengers. They were also able to network with others in the community.

Barshinger said, "Each stakeholder is a vital piece of the puzzle, and by coming together in this forum, we can all work together for return of the cruise lines to St. Croix. I am confident that this goal will be realized once we all work together."

For more information on how you can participate in this economic opportunity, call Senator Barshinger's office on St. Croix at 712-2315 or the St. Thomas office at 693-3546.

TOWN MEETINGS HOSTED BY SEN. BARSHINGER ON ST. JOHN LAND TAX SITUATION

The Senator-at-Large Craig Barshinger hosted a town meeting on October 7th on St. John to discuss "The Perils of Rapid Development on St. John."

"The face of St. John is changing fast," said Barshinger, "and we're going to look at what's good, what's bad, and what we can do about it".

Barshinger emphasized that land speculation and skyrocketing property taxes may soon force many local St. Johnians out of their homes; especially those who may feel they have no choice but to sell to developers in order to pay accumulating taxes.

"It's sad, but the reality is that many of the young St. Johnians now growing up may not be able to own a home on St. John in the future unless we do something about it," Barshinger said.

For these reasons, Senator Barshinger supports the Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen's bill to repeal the 1936 Tax law. This law requires that all property is taxed at the same rate.

Barshinger stated during a hearing before the Senate in October that the 1936 tax law, which was appropriate in 1936, is poised to cause grievous hardship to residents of the U. S. Virgin Islands. "The burden would fall particularly to lifelong residents of the Virgin Islands, who are our culture bearers, and who are often retired and live on a modest, fixed income," he said.

"The need for the Delegate's bill is not abstract. If the Virgin Islands are forced to operate under the shadow of the 1936 tax law, native Virgin Islanders will be forced from their homes. This would occur in the following scenario: A Virgin Islander has been living a simple home for decades on

land that has become very valuable due to skyrocketing land prices, particularly on the island of St. John. The Virgin Islander has been able to afford her \$600.00 annual tax bill, with the help of the \$250.00 homestead exemption. The \$2 million house built next door five years ago has not been factored in to date. However, as a result of the current VI Tax law, next year her tax bill will jump to \$5,000.00. Living on social security alone, the Virgin Islander will be forced to leave the home she has lived in for decades. Clearly, this would be a tragedy that must not be allowed."

Barshinger will introduce his land improvement tax bill which is currently being drafted by the Legal Counsel of the V.I. Legislature. It would replace the current property tax law with an improvement tax. Instead of taxing land, improvements to the land would be taxed. In this way, land held for future generations would not be taxed.

Sen. Craig W. Barshinger
26th Legislature of the Virgin
Islands

**St. Croix—#1 Lagoon Street
Complex**
St. John—#1302 Cruz Bay
St. Thomas—Capitol Building

(340) 712-2315, St. Croix
(340) 693-8061, St. John
(340) 693-3546, St. Thomas

**Or E-mail me, your
Senator At- Large at
Craig@visenate.net**



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Your Senator Reports

Department know you are serious and intend to get results.

Of course, you don't need to have a problem to come into my office...I'm working for you, and any time you want to let me know what I need to know in order to represent you, just call or come by.

Serving as your Senator-At-Large is hard work, but I am enjoying it so far.

Thanks for your support!

-Craig W. Barshinger

Meet My Staff -

St. Croix — Mr. Omar B. U. Henry
Chief of Staff

Merlisa R. George
Legislative Assistant

Juan Santiago
Community Liaison

Hector Saldana
Community Liaison

St. Thomas — Michelle Dominique
Research Analyst

Marilyn Chandler
Receptionist

St. John — Barbara D. Thompson
Legislative Assistant

With Unity There Is Strength

Fredensborg— Working towards Home Ownership

Earlier this year, Senator Barshinger met with the residents of Fredensborg to help them organize a 'Community Cleanup Day'. This is one of the first steps a community can take in forming a cohesive caring neighborhood.

The Senator is currently working on a bill to give residents an opportunity to purchase land so the dream of home ownership can become a reality.

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"Fill A Pack"

Horizon Fuel & Financial Management, Kenzie Financial Management, Marmarus Management Company, Paula Corry, St. Thomas Dairies, The March Group, and Trust Asset Management.

If you are interested in contributing to this effort next year, please contact Senator Barshinger's office on St. Croix, St. John and/or St. Thomas.



Senator-At-Large, Craig Barshinger, is working with Fredensborg residents to assist them on the path to full home ownership.