



Island Green Lauds Senate Passage of Toxic Sunscreen Ban in USVI

Landmark Bill Goes into Effect Sooner & Goes Further than Any in the USA

St. John, USVI – June 25, 2019 – Today marked history with the unanimous passage of Bill No. 33-0043 in the USVI senate by all present (13 Yes, 2 Absent), banning the importation, sale and possession of sunscreen containing the “toxic 3 Os” of oxybenzone, octinoxate and octocrylene in the territory. All thirteen senators spoke passionately about their support with one senator expressing the importance of taking the lead on this initiative in the Caribbean. The full ban will go into effect March 30, 2020, with retailers prohibited from receiving shipments of sunscreen containing these ingredients after September 30, 2019. Additionally, from the day the governor signs the bill, placing new orders would be prohibited as well. ***(See image links below.)***

The USVI legislation goes further than anywhere else in the United States including Hawaii and Key West, adding the dangerous chemical octocrylene to its ban and having earlier implementation dates. The groundbreaking legislation will protect coral, marine life and human health while propelling the territory to the forefront of this international campaign. It is expected to be signed by Governor Bryan in July.

“Oxybenzone, octinoxate and octocrylene devastate coral and marine life and are also known carcinogenic and hormone disruptors in humans,” said Harith Wickrema, president of Island Green Living Association. “The Caribbean has already lost more than 80% of its coral due to a variety of issues. Studies have shown that these chemicals are at 40+ times acceptable levels in some territory waters. In addition to environmental and human harm, tourism-based economies will experience financial devastation if coral and marine life die off. The ripple effect would be huge and we need to take action now.”

Island Green has been educating the public on the importance of ceasing use of toxic sunscreen since 2016. Just as important as awareness and education, legislation is needed to guarantee compliance.

Instead of chemical sunscreen, non-nano mineral sunscreen containing zinc oxide and titanium dioxide protect against the sun and do not harm coral. A list of more than 260 coral-safe sunscreens can be found at www.islandgreenliving.org. Coverings such as rash guards, hats also are effective against the sun's damaging rays. Studies have shown that once these chemicals are out of the water systems, the coral can regenerate.

The danger of toxic sunscreen received unexpected coverage thanks to President Bill Clinton, when he credited Wickrema for educating him about the hazards of the "toxic 3 Os" during his speech at the USVI CGI Post-Disaster Recovery Event in early June. Clinton went on to urge attendees to use only coral-safe sunscreen.

"Without the passion and dedicated commitment of Senator Blyden and Senator Sarauw, and their desire to save our coral and marine life, we would not be having this victory today," said Wickrema. "Additionally, the research and wealth of information provided by Dr. Craig Downs of Haereticus Environmental Laboratory was vitally important and demonstrated the proven science behind the devastation."

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

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Image Links:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/h53nsfrx3cnlue0/SenatorsandWickremaDSC_6873.jpg?dl=0

Caption: USVI Senator Blyden, Harith Wickrema, president of Island Green Living Association and USVI Senator Sarauw upon senate passage of toxic sunscreen ban on June 25, 2019

https://www.dropbox.com/s/3ncws0ibzh5jqti/senategroupshotIMG_0837.jpg?dl=0

Caption: Members of the USVI Senate with Island Green Living Association President Harith Wickrema upon the passage of toxic sunscreen ban legislation, Bill No. 33-0043 on June 25, 2019