

I am honored to be a witness in regard to bill H.R.53. I was born on the Island of St. John and I have seen many changes take place. Most of these changes have been positive, mainly because they relate to population growth. I come from a very large family. My Grand father was Halvor Neptune Richards, born on April 15, 1896 and he had 18 children.

My grand father had brothers and sisters but the most prominent was Julius E. Sprauve. Halvor was a foreman with the Civilian Conservation Corp. in 1938 on St. John. The C.C.C. program employed many St. Johnians and helped to maintain the structure of the Island especially our roads. He eventually purchased, Estate of Susannaberg in 1945 and ended his time on earth in 1978 as a successful farmer.

Julius E. Sprauve was an advocate for the people of St. John. He was a Councilman and eventually the first Senator of St. John. Julius help St. Johnian's get their first bank, better roads and much needed employment opportunities in the 1930's. Julius E. Sprauve left a legacy of Community Service but his most far reaching accomplishment was helping Laurence Rockefeller and Frank Stick convince the Department of Interior that a National Park was a good thing for everyone evolved.

This collaboration happened four years before I was born in 1936, and the results are evident today as over 5000 acres is still preserved for our future. The 3000 acres that was left for the family and friends of Julius, and the friendly inhabitants in countered by Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Stick, has greatly diminished in the past 71 years. (1936-2007 Families have continued to grow and many visitors have decided to stay. I attended Julius E. Sprauve School 48 years ago and today our island has out grown it.

The acquisition of the National Park in 1936 has reduced the exploitation of St. John. The families connected to that era are pleased, but the children of this era have little options in regards to land space. We need to secure a safe area of which would be conducive to learning and provide opportunities for vocational and athletic programs.

Julius E. Sprauve convinced the Department of Interior and the local people to present their land for preservation in 1936, we today in 2007, have our Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen and her constituents trying to convince the department of Interior, that to allow Virgin Islanders to lease land for a school would be in the best interest for the entire island and its inhabitants. In 1936 the people and the Department of Interior (even after some opposition), did what was right for the future good of the Virgin Islands and the people that come here.

We are asking the Department of Interior to consider the needs of our children and just as in 1936 there will be opposition, but be aware that the people of St. John will be following this bill with deep conviction of right and wrong. Bill H.R.53 works for our children.

Thank you for your consideration.

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