

ACT NO. 7662

BILL NO. 30-0437

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Regular Session

2014

An Act honoring and commending posthumously Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago, a centenarian who passed at age 102, for his distinguished public service and outstanding philanthropic contributions to the People of the Virgin Islands and further, to name Route 72 on St. Croix, from Estate Glynn to Carambola, in his memory

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WHEREAS, Don Marcelino Santiago, affectionately known as "Vieques en St. Croix" or "Vieques", was born on March 4, 1910, in Vieques, Puerto Rico to proud parents, Hermogenes del Carmen Conception Santiago and Enespuesmo Santiago, who owned and managed a pig and cattle ranch; and

WHEREAS, in 1917 he was separated from his family after the passing of both parents from influenza and was raised in Fajardo, Puerto Rico at the *Casa Catolica para Niños* (Catholic Home for Boys); he left there about 1927, having become an accomplished *Guajiro* musician; and

WHEREAS, it was during the early 1930s while playing the indigenous folk music of the Puerto Rican culture that he met and married Evarista Cajigas of Fajardo, Puerto Rico, a hotel cook and a single mother of two young sons, Jose and Wilfredo Garcia. His desire to provide a better life for his young family and a goal of performing as a musician before larger audiences lured him to New York City where he resided for over twenty years; and

WHEREAS, Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago first came to St. Croix in 1951, in search of his older brothers, Jobito and Cruz Santiago, who had arrived on St. Croix in 1921 as Merchant Marines. He became enchanted with the charm and beauty of St. Croix, particularly its rich culture, traditions and economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, in 1956 Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago and his wife, Evarista Cajigas "Dona Paquita" Santiago, took up permanent residence on St. Croix. They arrived with \$23,000 in savings with a vision to finance the construction of and operate a supper club similar to the

ones they had enjoyed in New York City, which showcased local talent and provided a grand stage for popular Latino entertainment; and

WHEREAS, Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago purchased from his brother Jobito, a plantation manager, one acre of land at 1-C Estate Calquohoun, Kingshill St. Croix for \$1.00. In 1959 it was on this property that Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago, his wife Dona Evarista, his brothers Jobito and Cruz, along with other family members broke ground for construction of The Vieques en St. Croix Restaurant and Supper Club and The Vieques en Santa Cruz Service Station. A Grand Opening was celebrated on December 1, 1962; and

WHEREAS, Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago was an accomplished and highly respected businessman. The Vieques en St. Croix Restaurant and Supper Club was the venue and stage for global Latino entertainers, such as the incomparable and dynamic Queen of Salsa, Celia Cruz, El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico, Johnny Ventura, Hector Lavoe and Fania All Stars, Damaso Perez Prado, Tito Puente, and the Mighty Sparrow, who introduced a young artist named Calypso Rose at the 1972 Annual Christmas Gala. Moreover, Rubén Blades, an internationally acclaimed Salsa musician, songwriter, political activist and actor, appeared as an unknown artist in the late 1960s; and

WHEREAS, Hollywood celebrities of the 1960s big screen, such as Maureen O'Hara and John Wayne, while vacationing on St. Croix, oftentimes had dinner and socialized at the supper club. Later in time, noted actor and performer Freddie James Prinze became a frequent visitor; and

WHEREAS, Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago utilized his astute business skills to mobilize the community. He was a steadfast community activist whose tireless efforts helped to improve socio-economic conditions on St. Croix. He served as a mentor and advisor to many individuals, both politicians and non-politicians, Hispanics and non-Hispanics; and

WHEREAS, during the 1960s, Puerto Ricans were the largest immigrant community in the Territory, especially on St. Croix. Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago continuously sought to unify Virgin Islands and Puerto Rican cultural traditions. He was a founding and executive board member of the Virgin Islands Puerto-Rican Friendship Committee (V.I.-P.R.), which was established in the 1960's at The Vieques en St. Croix Restaurant and Supper Club at 1-C Estate Calquohoun, Kingshill, St. Croix; and

WHEREAS, V.I.P.R. Friendship Day is a recognition of the unique relationship between Virgin Islanders and Puerto Ricans. It is celebrated on October 9th annually; and

WHEREAS, Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago served the people of the Virgin Islands and those of Puerto Rican heritage with inspired distinction. Under the leadership of Delegate to Congress Ron de Lugo and Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen, he was a recipient of five United States Congressional Commendations for his passionate commitment to the preservation of Hispanic heritage in the Virgin Islands; and

WHEREAS, Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago, a centenarian, passed away on June 24, 2012 at the age of 102 years old; and

WHEREAS, Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago was preceded in death by his wife of over 60 years, Doña Evarista, and his brothers Jobito and Cruz. He is survived by his son Marcelo Virola, great grandson Rodney W. Santiago Kidd; nieces Nilda Pacheco and Juanita Melendez, great nieces Maria Santiago de Feliciano and Felicita Maria Santiago Kidd, and a host of other family members and dear friends; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature finds it appropriate and befitting to honor the memory of the late Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago; Now, Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands, honors and commends posthumously Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago for his many years of distinguished public service and outstanding philanthropic contributions to the Virgin Islands community and names Route 72 from Estate Glynn to Carambola, "Route 72 Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago Road". The Department of Public works shall erect an appropriate sign bearing the inscription "Route 72 Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago Road".

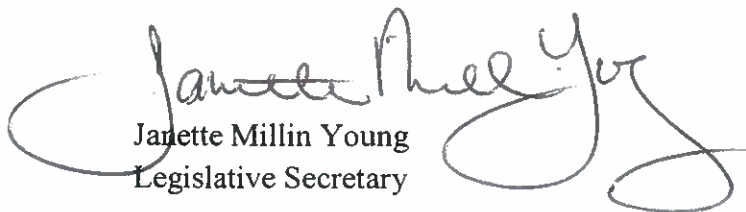
SECTION 2. The President of the Legislature or the President's designee shall prepare a perma plaque copy of this Act and a cast bronze plaque bearing the image of Don Marcelino "Vieques" Santiago and present them to his family at an appropriate ceremony.

Thus passed by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands on September 25, 2014.

Witness our Hands and Seal of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands this 30th Day of September, A.D., 2014.



Shawn-Michael Malone
President

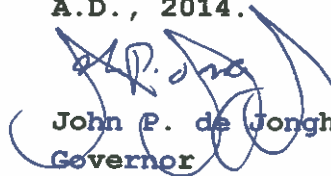


Janette Millin Young
Legislative Secretary



Bill No. 30-0437 is hereby approved.

Witness my hand and the Seal of the
Government of the United States
Virgin Islands at Charlotte Amalie,
St. Thomas, this 13th day of October
A.D., 2014.


John P. de Jongh, Jr.
Governor