

COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION AND AGRICULTURE

06/20/2019-REPORTED OUT TO THE FLOOR

05/31/2019-REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

**BILL NO. 33-0038**

**Thirty-Third Legislature of the Virgin Islands**

**March 25, 2019**

A Resolution posthumously honoring and commending Alwyn “Big Al” Baptiste, Sr. for his outstanding contributions to the music industry and to the Virgin Islands community

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**PROPOSED BY:** Senators Javan E. James, Sr., Athneil “Bobby” Thomas  
and Oakland Benta  
Co-Sponsors: Alicia V. Barnes, Steven D. Payne, Sr.,  
Stedmann Hodge, Jr., Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Myron D. Jackson  
and Donna Frett-Gregory

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1       **WHEREAS**, Alwyn Alexander Baptiste, Sr. was born on the beautiful island of Antigua  
2 on September 21,1953 in Green Bay Antigua to the late Agatha Stevens-Baptiste and the late  
3 Thomas Baptiste;

4       **WHEREAS**, Alwyn Alexander Baptiste, Sr. was known to his fans and younger  
5 bloodline as "Big Al";

6       **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” had four children- Alwyn A. Baptiste, Jr., Kasaun K. Baptiste  
7 (deceased), Tysia Baptiste, and Tanis Baptiste;

8       **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” migrated to the island of St. Croix under the guardianship of his  
9 oldest brother, Conrad Hewlett Joseph;

1           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” was a self-taught musician whose career as a musician took roots  
2 in church music as he grew up in the Pentecostal church and spent his early childhood playing  
3 gospel and spiritual music;

4           **WHEREAS**, while attending St. Joseph Catholic High School in Frederiksted, St. Croix,  
5 “Big Al” became interested in the piano and the organ and made these instruments an integral  
6 part of his life;

7           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” could be found in the gymnasium playing on the school's piano;

8           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” played music on and off the school campus with casual friends  
9 as well as with named bands such as LILO and the Laylights, Mind Body and Soul, Soul  
10 Busters, as well as other backyard groups that never had formal names;

11           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” graduated from St. Joseph Catholic High School in 1972 and was  
12 torn between holding a "regular job" with Hovensa in the oil industry to earn a living for him  
13 and his young family and developing his budding career in music;

14           **WHEREAS**, in 1981, “Big Al” received an offer to join the Caribbean Express Band,  
15 which he readily accepted and relocated to New York;

16           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” joined ranks with well recognized Calypso names such as the  
17 Mighty Sparrow, Arrow, Short Shirt and many others;

18           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” began touring the East and West Coasts of the United States,  
19 the Caribbean Islands and Canada and, shortly thereafter, Europe, Africa, South America, and  
20 the Virgin Islands; during which time he gained valuable insight and experience in the  
21 dynamics of managing a band as well as producing, arranging, and recording music;

22           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” and some members of the Caribbean Express Band broke ranks  
23 from the advisement of his younger brother Dean Baptise to form the Xpress Band in 1987;

1           **WHEREAS**, over the past two decades, “Big Al” toured and recorded over twelve  
2 albums with the World Famous XPress Band;

3           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” owned and operated Backyard Recording Studio, and more  
4 recently along with his brother Dean “Mean Dean” Baptiste, created an internet station called  
5 Xpress Radio which offered a variety of musical programs appealing to people of all walks of  
6 life;

7           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” and “Mean Dean” teamed up to bring life to the small, mature  
8 club life through their weekly gig under the name of "B- Sharp”;

9           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al’s” reputation expanded to include arranging and recording for  
10 reggae, gospel reggae, gospel and other genres;

11           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” served as the calypso chairperson on the festival committee;

12           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” was a very patient and compassionate artist, as demonstrated by  
13 the countless hours that he would spend each year working with the junior calypsonians to  
14 prepare them for participation in competitions;

15           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” gave new meaning to humility by always preferring to shine the  
16 light on others rather than on himself;

17           **WHEREAS**, “Big Al” received numerous awards and honours in music as well as at  
18 community events, including V.I Music Award for Producer and Arranger of the Year; and

19           **WHEREAS**, Alwyn “Big Al” Baptiste lost his battle with cancer on February 25th,  
20 2016; Now, Therefore,

21 ***Be it resolved by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

22           **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the  
23 Virgin Islands, posthumously honors and commends Alwyn “Big Al” Baptiste, Sr. for his  
24 outstanding contributions to the music industry and to the Virgin Islands community.

