



OFFICE OF INSULAR AFFAIRS

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## **News Release**

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### **Interior Provides \$500,000 to Help U.S. Virgin Islands Prepare for Centennial Celebrations in 2017**

*To Create Meaningful Observance and Leverage Celebration to Strengthen Ties  
and Promote Tourism*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 21, 2015) – Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia’aina today announced \$500,000 in grant assistance under the Office of Insular Affairs’ Technical Assistance Program to the U.S. Virgin Islands Centennial Commission as it prepares to organize events and activities to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the transfer of the Virgin Islands from Denmark to the United States on March 31, 1917.

“I am pleased to support Governor Kenneth Mapp, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, the members of the Centennial Commission and the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands as they plan their celebration of this significant milestone in the history of U.S.-Virgin Islands relations,” said Assistant Secretary Kia’aina. “The next two years leading up to the actual Centennial Celebration presents a host of opportunities to showcase their rich history and heritage as well as the future of the Virgin Islands.”

The Virgin Islands Transfer Centennial Commemoration will be a territory-wide, multi-year observation with events and activities beginning in 2015 through December 2017. The Centennial will be marketed to local, national and international visitors and is expected to generate short- and long-term lasting impacts on the territory’s economy, stature and reputation. The Commemoration will be used to build and reinforce local, state, national and global connections.

Official events on St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John will range from parades, sporting events, concerts, and multi-cultural celebrations to exhibitions and festivals featuring local art, dance and food. The program and activities are organized to highlight the continuum of historical events

from the Pre-Columbian Period and Indigenous Inhabitants to Columbus and Early European Arrival, Settlement of the Danish West Indies, Forced Migration of Africans, and the Transfer to the United States, leading to the present day where the U.S. Virgin Islands are proud to be a U.S. territory and her people citizens of the United States.

*The Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas carries out the administrative responsibilities of the Secretary of the Interior in coordinating federal policy for the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and administering and overseeing U.S. federal assistance to the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau under the Compacts of Free Association. The Assistant Secretary executes these responsibilities through the Office of Insular Affairs.*

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