

## Special Session

Legislature USVI

July 21, 2026 · 2.4 hours · gov

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[illegible]

0:29:58 We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.

0:32:58 We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back.

0:36:28 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back.

0:38:28 Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. To be continued... We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll see you next time. We'll be right back.

0:45:28 We'll be right back. We'll see you next time. We run, we run We run, we run Thank you.

0:47:28 We'll be right back. Oh-oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh-oh-oh. Thank you.

0:48:58 We'll be right back. I'll see you next time.

0:49:58 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:51:28 Let's get started. We'll see you next time. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you.

0:56:28 Thank you. We'll be right back. Oh, oh, oh. [3 such phrases repeated 12 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

1:02:28 Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back.

1:03:58 We'll be right back. Thank you.

1:04:58 We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.

1:07:28 Thank you. We'll be right back. Good morning colleagues, good morning to our central staff employees who do exceptional work behind the scenes, truth be told, they are the backbone of this institution. Special good morning to the people of the United States Virgin Islands. The legislative session of Tuesday, July 21st, 2026 is hereby called to order.

1:08:51 Please rise as we ask our legislative chaplain, the Reverend Charles Brown, to lead us in invocation followed by the national anthem and the virgin islands march let every heart pray this is the day that the lord has made we shall rejoice and be glad in it we praise you lord god for your grace and mercy you woke us up this morning and we did nothing to deserve it. It is only because of you that we are here. And even as we rejoice in your grace and mercy, our hearts are heavy because of the loss of Sergeant Kevin Johnson, brother of Senator Frankie Johnson. And we mourn the loss of radio icon Sam Topp, who was an employee here at the legislature god bless their families and continue to be with them comfort them lord god in a special way and help us as a community to continue to support them even now god as we have come today to do the people's business we are reminded in first timothy chapter two that we should pray for kings and all who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and reverence for this is good and acceptable in the sight of god our savior so god we ask for your anointing on each and every one of the men and women of the 36th legislature As we have gathered in this hollow space to do your business, Lord, we cannot ignore the tension that pervades our community, especially now during election season. But, Lord, your divine scripture even now speaks to our spiritual anxiety. In Psalm 2, why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together. Verse 10, now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth.

1:11:14 Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. God, may the words of every testifier and every senator and the meditation of all of our hearts and actions be acceptable in your sight. For you are our strength and our redeemer. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Thank you.

1:12:25 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much, Reverend Brown.

1:14:56 Colleagues, we convened today on the call of Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to consider lease agreements for horse racing facilities on St. Croix and St. Thomas. But the timing and singular focus of this special session are deeply puzzling in light of the crises unfolding all around us. Horse racing is woven into the cultural fabric and economic aspirations of St. Croix and the wider Virgin Islands.

1:15:31 And no one can deny its importance to our people. No one. Because of that very importance, proposals of this magnitude, touching long-term leases, gaming revenues, tax exemptions, and the future of our racetracks deserve thorough, transparent vetting, not rushed consideration. Yet, as we sit here today, this body is grappling with WAPA's reliability. We have to delay our session today because of a WAPA outage.

1:16:07 And cost structure, mounting waste management challenges, escalating crime, and even questions surrounding UVA's accreditation, issues that strike the heart of daily life and long-term stability for our residents. Just yesterday afternoon we received notice that HUD has frozen approximately two billion dollars in federal funding to the Virgin Islands Housing

Finance Authority, a decision with profound implications for housing recovery and our broader economic trajectory. Against that backdrop it is difficult to understand why, of all the urgent matters before us, the governor has chosen to summons the legislature into special session to prioritize a horse racing lease agreement. At a moment when our people are demanding solutions on power, public safety, solid waste, education, and housing, this call raises serious questions about priorities and about the alignment of executive action with the everyday realities facing Virgin Islanders. As senators, we have a solemn fiduciary duty to safeguard the public purse, uphold legislative independence, and ensure that every agreement, no matter how popular its subject, advances the broader public interest rather than narrowing it. We honor the legacy and promise of horse racing in St. Croix and throughout the Virgin Islands best, not by rubber stamping complex agreements in a hurried special session, but by insisting on vigorous scrutiny, balanced governance, and an unwavering focus on the most pressing needs of our people. Yes, I am 100% in support of horse racing resuming on the big island and we will take a vote on horse racing very soon but we will take it we'll take our time and we will get it right mr secretary can we please have a roll call yes yes yes mr president senator marvin blighting Senator Blayden, present Senator Angel Bulquez, Jr.

- 1:18:43 Senator Bulquez, Jr., present Senator Duane M. DeGraff Senator DeGraff, present Senator Ray Fonseca Senator Fonseca, present Senator Novel E. Francis, Jr. Senator Francis, Jr., present Senator Alma Francis-Heiliger Senator Francis-Heiliger, present Senator Hubert L. Frederick Present. Senator Frederick, present. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins. Here. Senator Gittins, present. Senator Maurice C. James. I am here. Senator James, present. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Here. Senator Johnson, present. Senator Carla J. Joseph. Present. Senator Paula Joseph, present. Senator Clifford A. Joseph, Sr. Present.
- 1:19:33 Senator Joseph, Sr. is present. Senator Averya Lewis, present. Senator Lewis, present. Senator Milton E. Potter. Here. Senator Potter, present. Senator Kurt A. Valey. Here. Senator Valey, present. Mr. President, 15 members present for today's session. July 21st, 2026 meeting. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. We do have a quorum, and we're therefore prepared to proceed. Madam Clark, are there any pieces of correspondence to be read into the record at this time?
- 1:20:10 No, Mr. President. Thank you. Before I ask you to read the agenda into the record, I'd like to introduce today's legislative page. Mr. Nizia Warner. All right. Nizia is a rising freshman at the University of the Virgin Islands, and he is a recent graduate of my alma mater, Ivan Eudora Ken High School.
- 1:20:49 He was the president of Rotary Interact Club at Ivana Yudorkian High School. He's a member of the National Honor Society, this young man is going places. His favorite subject is architectural design. His hobbies are watching TV, swimming, and playing games. His career goal, he aspires to be an architect, and he is none other than the son of our employee here at the Virgin Islands Legislature, Ms. Naya Brathwit-Warner. Welcome, Nizaya.
- 1:21:35 And he, okay, I'll give him that. He also is a summer intern of the Minority Leader, Senator Dwayne DeGraff. And so we want to thank you, Nazaea, for being here. We have a paycheck for you for this special service that you're rendering. And we also have a first class meal, top shelf. So welcome, learn something. We appreciate you being here with us today. Salah.
- 1:22:08 Madam Clark, can you please read today's agenda into the record? Consideration of bill, bill number 36-0313, an act approving lease and franchise agreements for the development and operation of the Randall-Dock James racetrack on St. Croix and the Clinton-E-Phips racetrack on St. Thomas, and amending Titles 32 and 33 Virgin Islands Code. This concludes the reading of today's agenda, Mr. President. Thank you very much, Madam Clerk.
- 1:22:41 Do I have a motion? Senator Viola, you're recognized for your motion. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I moved that Bill number 36-0313, an act-approving lease agreement for the development and operation of the Rodnell-Jack, Doc James, Reistruck, and St. Croix, and the Clinton E. Phipps, Reistruck, and St. Thomas, and amended titles 32 and 33 Virgin Islands Code be placed in the committee of a whole for further vetting and consideration and the meeting to be held on August 19th on the island of St. Croix. I so move. Properly moved by Senator Kurt Ville, seconded by Senator Clayford A. Joseph, objected to by Senator Avery Lewis, Senator Carla Joseph, Alma Francis-Heiliger, and Dwayne Degraff, can we please have a roll call?
- 1:23:47 Senator Marvin A. Blyden? Senator Blyden? Yes. Senator Angel L. Boulkes, Jr. Senator Boulkes, Jr. Nay. Senator Dwayne M. Degraff? Senator DeGraff, not voting. Senator Ray Fonseca, Nay. Senator Fonseca, Nay. Senator Novelli Francis Jr. Nay. Senator Francis Jr., Nay. Senator Alma Francis Heidegger, Nay. Senator Hubert L. Frederick, Nay. Senator Frederick, Nay. Senator Kenneth Senator L. Gittens? Yes. Senator Gittens, yay. Senator Maurice C. James? Yes. Senator James?
- 1:24:34 Yes. Senator James, yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson? Yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Carla J. Joseph? No. Senator Joseph, nay. Senator Clifford A. Joseph, senior? Yes. Senator Joseph, senior? Yes. Senator Avery L. Lewis? Nay.

Senator Lewis, nay. Senator Milton E. Potter? Yes. Senator Pater, yea. Senator Kurt A. Valey. Senator Valey, yea. Mr. President, 8 yays, 6 nays. One not voting. Thank you very much. Motion carries.

1:25:17 No. The motion carries. Colleagues, we will move forward with a three-minute opportunity for you to put your positions on the record. Senator Alma-Francis Heiliger, you may proceed with your three minutes. thank you so much thank you so much mr. chair mr. what are you doing oh today are we in session okay thank you thank you so much mr. president as it relates to us putting our positions on the table. This has been a conversation for several months. We were basically dragged into a special session for it. And if the majority of you felt that we shouldn't have done this, y'all shouldn't have wasted my time to even come here today. But I don't have a problem. Rules are rules. And I don't have a problem following them. This situation has been a very contentious one. And not because it's contentious because we want to get a race track for st croix it's contentious because of the route that we want to do it we sat here several years ago with a fight amongst ourselves divided in the virgin islands because while we had offered an extension to the entity we as a government tossed in and asked them to build out a race track We asked them to do that. That was never part of the deal. And I sat here in this chambers and I watched while half of this community through their

1:27:12 representatives fought the other half but we were successful in getting it done. And now we came here today and my goal was to fight the same way to get the same track that we got for St. Thomas to fight to get one for St. Croix because I don't pick sides when it comes to the Virgin Islands and I fought vehemently to get a track for the district of St. Thomas St. John and I'm going to fight to get one for St. Croix even if their own representatives don't want to do it that's my job one minute and I'm going to make it my business I remember when the last situation went down, what we all did. I remember several of my colleagues said, Alma, it's not that we didn't want St. Croix or St. Thomas to get a track. We just didn't want St. Thomas to get one before us. And when you have people in this institution with the kind of mentality that would put their egos before the people this is a direct reflection of what happened in here today 30 seconds so i will deal with it i will deal with it when i go in the committee but my memory ain't shot i have a very long memory and if this was the whole motors operandi today god bless all of you but understand I don't care about other personal issues I don't care about egos what I care about is getting St. Croix track period point-blank time thank you thank you very much Senator Alma Francis Heidegger Senator Franklin D. Johnson

1:28:56 you're recognized for your three minutes good morning mr. president good morning to my colleagues good morning to the viewing and listening audience it's very clear is only one person made a statement, and that's Governor Albert Bryan, that St. Croix cannot get a track before St. Thomas. Only one person made a statement. Mr. Chair, please. I sat here quietly. Only one person said that. Now if the governor called us into special session, this is something we have to come and do it's not we call ourselves into special session it's the governor made that call so that's why we're here we're not here because we choose to be called a special session there's couple things could happen in a special session we could vote it up we could vote it down and the majority of us decide to send it to committee so all the testifiers could have a fair chance to come and speak for everyone in this territory to hear what it's all entail in this measure not just me and my colleagues voting yes for horse racing this is more than horse racing when you will have the word exclusivity telling me that nobody could come in St Thomas for gaming but you but you're coming to St. Croix to open gaming we have some issues there I have some issues I I have some serious issues, and if the governor had called me today to a special session to say, let's get the hospital fixed, let's get WAPA fixed, I would vote with my eye closed today. Closed. We have some serious issues here in this territory, and if we think horse racing will solve all of them, stop fooling ourselves. When we walk in here this morning, power was out in St. Croix. It was told it was an island wide. We don't want to call a state emergency for that. but we want to run in here for session for horse racing make no mistake one minute i've been involved in horse racing i've been on the track i got up early six o'clock in the morning to go train and assist with horse i got off my job five o'clock and went back down to the track again i used to assist my friend with british company in st croix for those of you who know anything about horse racing if you know about that i used to assist my friend with native rhythm on the island of st croix so i got a passion i understand what it is like for the horsemen them my best friend who supports me have horses and i said to him i want what's best for the story territory in the right manner not just to rush nearly dilly i want the husband and being here sitting down because some is for and some is against give these people their fair chance to have a conversation

1:31:54 give these people their fair chance to discuss this matter and that's how we ask them for nobody today here vote to say no time we'll conclude right here mr president everybody vote for it to go to our committee so every single one could come in here and have a conversation i thank you for that leniency mr president and look forward in listening to the rest of the conversation quietly i'm going to starve our soul thank you very much thank you very much senator franklin the johnson senator duane de graf you recognize for your three minutes uh thank you mr president you know the first thing i i heard was the motion to move it to committee the whole on august 19th and i objected and i objected because a committee of the whole we don't vote this need to get put to rest committed a whole we don't vote so i i don't know if i realize it but

that's why i object that's why i i am torn to make sure i had it heard correctly we sent it to committee a whole august 19th we don't vote on it august 19th you know horse racing i met with the individuals for southland gaming and i told them face to face the issue that i had with them and the issue that i told them then an issue that i tell them now i told them one if a casino was coming to saint thomas to establish itself they're gonna have a fight with me because we voted the people of the territory voted to have casinos on st croix and no casinos on st thomas so to take a vlt machine to st croix and establish it over there i think if that's going to be the bill to address that let's do it if we're going to change the laws let's do it but i don't like doing it under the guise of horse racing and i told them that and i could proudly say it now. i could say it to anyone. But the motion that was made was to move the bill to August 19th,

1:34:12 to a committee of the whole, to be heard. It's one thing if we're going to send it to a committee and send it through the process, i'm good with that. But the committee of the whole, we're going to vote in it. And that's one objection i have. So again, i do support horse racing and St. Croix. very much respectfully so but until we decide to change the law regarding casinos versus vlt's in the territory let's don't conflate them and mix and match them and then put us against each other okay you're gonna fight out of me in terms of trying make me your enemy because i didn't support it i gonna stand on my own two feet and make my decision i objected to it and i would have voted no. 30 seconds. But i didn't get it in time. So i stayed undecided at the time i didn't make the vote. But that was the amendment that i was clear on. The senator committed a whole August 19th, which there will not be a vote. So then we'll determine from August 19th when we're going to have a session to determine to vote on it. So that's what i was saying. With a committee, you send it to the committee, you have the different layers. You send it to the committee of jurisdiction, then you send it to rules, then you go to the session. You have the different layers that maybe we could address it then. So that was our side. So again, going forward, for me, i'm ready to vote on it up or down today. Don't make a difference to me. Time. i'm ready to vote. Period. Thank you for the time, Mr. President. Thank you very much, Senator Duane DeGraff, just for the edification of Senator DeGraff and the people of the territory. sorry, we are slated to have the Committee of the Whole

1:36:00 on the 19th, and you're right that there's no vote taken in that Committee of the Whole, but we will be having a session on the 21st of the month, so we'll vote on that measure on the 21st. Thank you. Senator Angel Bocas, Jr., you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning to the listening and viewing audiences, central staff, my staff. Good afternoon. i'm going to be very clear here today. Initially, i was of the opinion that the bill or the agreement should have went to committee, but there were a number of issues with it at the time. Subsequently, the governor, along with those involved, the horse racing associations throughout the territory, met and panned out all of those issues.

1:37:06 The measure before us today, after agreeance with all of the entities that were part of those discussions, i'm ready to vote. i don't know about anybody else, but i'm ready to vote. i know that there's a lot of discussion about grocery seats, this, exclusivity, that. But when you really look at the big picture, you'll see that the casinos are getting exclusivity on their own as well, too. But then we expect a promoter who's already shown what they have done here in this district to be burdened, to operate financially, requested to build a track, which they've already done in this district.

1:37:54 They came to them, from what i understand. Okay? i'm going to be very clear. i'm not chopping or mincing my words. we cannot expect someone to go and build a track and sit down and say well now i'm gonna be burdened i'm gonna be in a red no businessman is going to do that no businessman is going to do that if there is issues let's talk about them we should have been talking about them today that's my opinion and unfortunately other stumbling blocks are continuing to be placed in the path one of disagreement. Personal disagreements or past disputes, competing interests, and matters unrelated with the actual terms of this measure. That's how i see it. That's my personal opinion.

1:38:43 It may vary from others, but that is my personal opinion. We have a lot of important decisions to be made in this legislature, whether it's the hospitals, whether it's energy. This agreement is but a grain of sand in comparison to others 30 seconds this should not be held up this should be something that we can discuss a 12-hour day and get it done that's my opinion thank you mr president thank you very much senator bolquez senator hubert l frederick you're recognized for your three minutes thank you very much mr president a pleasant good morning colleagues uh listening viewing audience my office the office of hubert frederick and my intern and uh the beautiful staff of central staff let me start off by saying i grew up playing music at the racetrack in st croix i played many many of uh even at night i remember playing when the jam went late at night playing at the racetrack so it's going to make senator i think racing was very important uh in my upcoming uh it was fun it was exciting watching racing in st roy it's a cultural event so i i would love to see it happen again it's been almost nine years and i hear it all the time people complaining well when when are we going to have racing this government could have provided racing back to the people of the Virgin Islands a long time ago but we got caught up in these agreements with promoters and it turned into more of a gambling situation who wants to be the one who handling handles the gambling part of this versus in the old days we just raced and that was it i understand the

complexity now since we the government is financially stressed and don't have the money to pay for a track over the last nine years we could have easily appropriated at least two million dollars a year to cover the cost of the racetrack rebuild but instead we got into these agreements with other people to try to build it because we didn't want to spend our money

1:41:03 and so now we're entangled with all this stuff that we're dealing with gambling is is a separate issue. Building the track is where we should have focused our energy. If Sutherland Gaming is an expert in building tracks, we should pay them. Let them bill it. Give them the money for it. Then open up the gaming part as an RFP or whatever, whoever wants to get it. But now we were commingling two issues and it's making it more complex. This issue could have been vetted in my committee economic development and agriculture but because I'm a team player I figured okay fine it could have been in budget as well but budget appropriation and finance 30 seconds but we wanted to make this as quickly as possible hit the floor so we all agreed to put it in committee of the whole which is still faster than if we went through the committee process so no one is dodging everybody wants to get this issue resolved next time we meet we'll hear testimony from all sides let's bring it it can't just be we want it because the governor wants it that is not a reason we want it because St. Croix wants a track needs a track how to track thank you very much for Mr. Chair for the opportunity thank you very much Senator Hubert Al-Frederick Senator College of Joseph you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you so kindly Mr. President. A pleasant good day to everyone, persons who are listening and viewing and of course my colleagues. I voted no to have this bill in the committee a whole and to be heard on August 19th. I'm not really in support of

1:42:59 the delay. We have delayed too long to get horse racing up in the big island of St. Croix. Too long. We just see all of these really scathing remarks from HUD because of delay in spending federal monies. If I could be so kind to ask media. Media kindly casts the video in the gallery here. Place the video in the gallery. You see there are human beings here who are interested in horse racing and this bill that we just I just saw a bill it says bill number 360313. We could have had a committee of the whole meeting today we could have coordinated that and had the horse racing men come in here or join us from the Fritz Lewes conference room in Saint Croix that could have been done that is something that we can do that's when you're focused on the work you're focused on the work to get things moving for the people of the Virgin Islands I remember in 2023 I went down to Puerto Rico I was the only senator that went down to Puerto Rico for this racing commission meeting we had people from St. Croix St. Thomas the former commissioner of sports park and recreation was there I'm looking at a bigger picture I don't know about other people but I'm looking at a bigger picture to increase the experience the experience that people have coming to the Virgin Islands one minute Southland Gaming has demonstrated they can get things done that's not a question they have demonstrated Clinton Phipps racetrack is up and running and I'm gonna tell you this I was going out there to check some of us in the St. Thomas district was going out to check periodically to make sure that they are doing and they're living up to their word we have people here who don't live up to their word but I can tell you something they don't live up to their word you could see it because we have a track and they've been having races periodically on time and it's safe so I was ready to vote today I was prepared to hear have this heard but I will yield to the majority and respect them but I'm ready to vote when this bill comes thank you so much Mr. President for the time thank you very much Senator Carla J. Joseph, Senator Novelli-Francis, Jr., you're recognized for your three minutes.

1:45:49 Thank you very much, Mr. President, and good morning to colleagues, good morning to all in the audience. The Dr. Randall James race track has been closed for ten years. Ten friggin' years we've been waiting. Ten years we've been waiting. This is no rush. When I hear testimony about individuals for rushing this it's true, 10 years we've been sitting and waiting. While St. Thomas has had a racetrack, a number of races have occurred there. St. Croix always has to be an afterthought. I gave up a date based on our discussion, and I'm not opposed to this going to a committee.

1:46:30 I'd prefer to see it go to a committee of jurisdiction, economic development, or budget appropriations and finance. I gave up a date of August 4th because I felt that we needed to vet this measure much sooner. But we chose to give August 4th for Water Island Development, again leaving out St. Croix. Again leaving out St. Croix. Come on, man. When are we going to stand up and ask for some priority for St. Croix? Our horse, man, has been impacted by this. I've been getting calls.

1:47:04 I don't agree with the totality of the bill, and I was hoping that we were able to vet it and we make a decision on where we go from there. But I'd be damned if I continue to allow for Sinkroy to be put on the back burner. Why couldn't we move this much sooner? Why do we have to wait until the 19th? It's unfair. It's unfair. I come to work every single day. I gave up a date for a whole week. I have a schedule of budget hearings. 30 agencies we have already went through. We have a full week next week of hearings. The entire week of August, we had hearings.

1:47:41 I gave up a date of August 4th for us to be able to at least vet this measure. Again, being at the table, bringing everybody, all the stakeholders together so that this measure could be vetted. Come on, St. Croix deserved better. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Novali Francis. Senator Clifford A. Joseph, you're recognized for

your three minutes. Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning to the listening public, viewing and listening public. Good morning to my colleagues. Good morning to the central staff. Good morning to my staff. I, myself, long-awaited Wahas Race, sports of the king, I would like to see it.

1:48:30 Well, I, for sure, stand for fairness. Exclusivity is not fairness to no one. I, too, want to make sure that regardless of what we're doing going forward, we can't continue to look at pasts and sit as new leaders and look at mistakes that were made before us. Any Langley's need to take its time to be vetted. We need to hear from all the stakeholders, regardless of who you is. Is or for or against. When we're talking about fairness and when we're talking about the people in the void in the Netherlands, we don't want to be foul in between what's going to work, what's not going to work. All of it happened before us.

1:49:15 And we ain't supposed to be living to see the same thing over again. To talk and make a joke about insanity. we don't need no more jokes our our time that we living in when it comes to error we got this amount left this amount left for errors so when we even look at housing are we questioning why then people still in my office when you look at a report everybody's supposed to go home before we make our appeal to make sure we're going to prove that the people that we put in this office are going to do their work. We can't don't do what we want to do and get what we want done. I ain't going to have feelings. Nobody don't control me. I control myself. I was controlled as a child and as a man, I'm going to make decisions based. People vote for me to make decisions. I want to see house racing.

1:50:11 I want to see it as racing, but I want a fair system in place. I ain't gonna worry about nobody not having a penalty, I could walk away from something and it's okay. But when it's the government time to stand up for something, we could find ourselves making agreements that allow for somebody else to put penalties against this government. But we don't want to hold nobody. Anybody could switch at any time. So putting penalties in place is how business people take care of their business. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the time.

1:50:52 Thank you very much, Senator Clifford A. Joseph. Senator Murray C. James, you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, Virgin Islands. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning everyone present in and outside the room. I have three minutes, right? Yeah.

1:51:33 Yeah, what would Dr. James do? Yeah, that's what I'm thinking about. Yeah, what would Dr. Randall and James do? I think he would probably be more interested in the hospital right now. He would be. He would think about the urgency of patients not being treated well and taken care of. And he would also want Maryse James to make sure that she's ready to make a decision.

1:52:13 So I say to my colleagues, I am not ready. I am not ready. And that's why I voted yes. You may be ready, the five senators from the island of St. Thomas, because you have experience Southland gaming. So you know you speak from experience, and you're fine with the arrangements that you have on the island of St. Thomas. And that's okay. Nothing's wrong with that. But I am not ready.

1:52:53 I was very fortunate to have a meeting with Mr. Huckabee and I actually learned more about the VLTs and I am very appreciative for his sharing the information that he did with me. One minute. But I am still not ready. And as I came in this morning and I listened to my colleagues going back and forth about the language in the agreement, I realized you're not ready either. You are not ready. Because some of you are saying things that the language doesn't speak to. 30 seconds.

1:53:39 You're not ready. None of you, you think you are, but you're not ready. I want to tell you that right now. St. Croix, the people of St. Croix, good. We fine. We waited a long time, and we're going to wait another month. That's what we're going to do. Because we're smart people on the island of St. Croix. Let me put it straight out there. and we don't rush and we take our time maybe maybe that's why we have a different time rhythm on the island of st croix but we're good with that so i voted yes and i will have my questions on august 19th thank you mr mr president thank you very much senator Senator Murray C. James, Senator Ray Fonseca, you're recognized for your three minutes.

1:54:39 Yes, good morning, colleagues, the viewing and listening audience, and all those in the chambers. You know, I voted no, and in the bill here, it says that, section 10, it says, whereas SGVI Inc. successfully completed the reconstruction of Clinton-Ephib's race track well before the time required and at their own expense so i voted no and i can tell you why i voted no because i'm biased right here in the audience here is my lifelong friend stand up rudy clark stand up rudy clark put it put a camera on him you see i am a part of the bovoni stables with rasul and pecky and larry god rest his soul okay tony jj all are we we even include nick daddy freddy because he lived right across from rasul so i listen i elated when judge ito um you know um expectation beat what when is prime rica from rasul has beat expectation prime america beat axe station you know but i'm gonna tell you what i'm still involved because yesterday i went to the feed shop right in front of the horse track i buy three 50 pound bag of feed i was able to get some oats and some hay and the feed shop full

people are benefiting from that clifton phipps race track okay clinton phipps race track so i vote no and i would like to have this um considered today as a matter of fact i'm gonna make a motion but you know i want to get um i want to get to another issue right because you know it's time to fix wapa you know i have um well let me go let me go quick hold on one minute i even forgetting my security code okay so So, you know, yesterday we got a letter from the Deputy Secretary from HUD.

- 1:57:00 I don't want to call his name. \$1.9 billion is at stake, Housing Finance Authority. It's a very serious issue. The detailed amount of projects, some of them have only been 2% completed. It's incredible. But, you know, in the VI Code here, right, Section 30, Chapter 1, from pages 249 to 266, details the authority of the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission by Code already has certain authorities to regulate WAPA. We need to move WAPA into a receivership, have the Public Service Commission petition the Superior Court to appoint an independent receiver supervised by the court that would replace the WAPA board and WAPA management because we need to have reliable power all the time starting right away. It's time and enough is enough. We cannot live it.
- 1:57:56 As a matter of fact, right now, this morning, the power was out. Power out all the time. Water gone, all kind of problems. Thank you, Mr. President, for the time. Thank you very much, Senator Ray Fonseca, Senator Marvin A. Blight, and you're recognized for your four minutes, three minutes, sorry. Thank you for the four minutes. Thank you so much, Mr. President. I'll take it back. Good morning to my colleagues, listening, viewing audiences, staff, central staff. I must say that today is Action Day. Today is a special session and we took action. That's what we do. Now, I voted yes.
- 1:58:35 i don't make a heap of noise i keep it real i look at the facts and make a decision i spoke to the principals before we actually started and i tell them i'm going to support it but i'm fair i know they met with the horsemen some are for some against i have not met with the horsemen i want an opportunity to to to vet them that's what i do with any bill any bill but at the same time i must say we're talking about the fourth water island i ain't compromising for water island that's a 400 million dollar investment 400 million dollars we gotta be serious about it i ain't gonna take for games that's 400 million dollars that's a lot of jobs for my people that's housing for the workers i could go on and on so i'm not compromising for that my colleague talked about 10 years that's a long time that's too long that's way too long way way too long for St. Croix but one more month ain't gonna hurt nobody that's just my opinion one more month ain't gonna hurt nobody we voted on the 24th we haven't settled on the 24th i think we could wait one more month for that i don't have a problem with that okay i grew up right next to the track i grew up in nada as another man i love horse racing i love horse racing and i'm sure many Christians have missed it and we are going to do what we have to do to assist them in bringing my house to St. Croix. But enough of that because i'm in the mood to vote today. One minute. I'm not in the mood, in a bad mood right about now with what happened yesterday. Everyone knows what happened. They'll be irresponsible of me to focus on what's going on in other areas, especially in the housing space and the recovery funds. I'm the chair of housing, transportation, and telecommunications. I can't do that. I don't feel right about it.
- 2:00:32 I don't feel good at all. And i'm going to take the rest of the day doing what needs to be done in terms of trying to meet with other individuals, reaching out to HUD, doing what i do best to assure that we can deal with this situation moving forward. And that's all i have to say, Mr. President. Thank you so much for the time. Thank you very much, Senator Marvin E. Blyden. Senator Cardio-Violet, you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you, Mr. President.
- 2:01:03 We're hearing all the testimony and all we're hearing is horse racing, horse racing. This is a gaming bill. Don't make no mistake. This is a gaming bill that, if enacted, will be in place until 2049 on St. Thomas and 2046 on St. Croix. 20 years on St. Croix. It's a gaming bill. There are individuals here today who are proponents of the bill who haven't read all of the agreement. But they're proponents, and they're arguing for stuff without reading. That's not fair to the people of the Virgin Islands.
- 2:01:43 There are proponents in here who have not read the U.S. Department of Interior Office and Inspector General report from 2007 in reference to VLTs. but we saw what happened to the Housing Finance Authority when they did not read the Inspector General report. They got cited yesterday. But we want to bypass everything. We want to fast forward because now it's popular to say let's bring horse race into St. Croix. Hopefully they'll get more votes next week. But you could be so concerned about getting more votes that you're not concerned about about what is included in this particular agreement, you're not concerned that they not only would have exclusivity for VLTs and St. Thomas, but there's a clause in here that give them exclusivity for all gaming devices and St. Thomas, that if this legislature pass any language to bring casino gaming to St. Thomas, that you got to go to Southland Gaming.
- 2:02:44 It's in here, it's in the agreement. Paragraph five, exclusive contract, i highlighted. I read it more than one time. It's in here. That's fair. One minute. So we're supposed to lay down and accept everything, because you're a chartered racetrack. But then you're going to reap all the benefits and have exclusivity and symptoms for everything. That's fair. The governor put all type of effort into this. Put the same effort into the hospital. Put the same effort into crime. Put the same effort into

the VA Housing Finance Authority instead of calling it sensationalism. That's what we did yesterday. He ain't addressing none of those issues. But with this, commercial after commercial, interview, everybody doing everything to get this passed.

- 2:03:28 I don't begin to wonder why. This could be more important than all the other issues that we have. We're up out again at St. Thomas today, every single day for the year. But we supposed to all of a sudden, oh, we got to pass this now, we got to pass this now. No, we got to read and bring the relevant parties to the table to have a discussion about this. A deep discussion, not just the government, people on Southland Gaming. Everybody, the casino commission, the hotel industry. This is going to have an impact.
- 2:04:02 Time. I support horse racing. Take out the exclusivity. Take out the self-regulation and you have my vote. Take it out, but you can't take it out. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you very much Senator Kurt VLA. Senator A.V. Lewis, you're recognized for your three minutes. Yeah, I can see how you mix up my name. The previous speaker got you hyped. The previous speaker got you hyped. No problem.
- 2:04:34 You know, I hear a lot of things here being said. Sorry. Good afternoon, colleagues. Good afternoon to the listening and viewing. audience good afternoon to the people in the well good afternoon to my staff good afternoon to everyone i hear a lot of things tasking out here today but one thing i know for sure we have a 12 member majority in here and 11 of us chair committees water island hospitals energy schools waste management vendor payment housing all of them could have been holding committees if people would come to work and hold committee meetings we could vet a lot of these problems sooner rather than later so don't make it seem like these problems just are caught today they've been brewing and meetings been taking longer than usual to come somebody toss out today we should build a track body we have fighting with parley joseph if you don't believe me go saying ask anybody I'm gonna come to fairness there's senators about fairness five million dollars to the Randall Doc James racetrack reprogramming it right now son and the Randall Doc James racetrack you're dealing with a running surface that's what the fairness about ain't us no usher in a horse race deal here today the budget chair gave up the 4th why we couldn't say well in the morning we'll hear water island in the afternoon we'll hear horse racing and vote on it on the 10th right but everything must be spaced out somebody does ball out about how important water island is but we're still hearing it on the 24th from the 4th to the 24th let's be fair one minute they're just about a horse racing deal and while everybody defending St. Croix let me tell you something if this deal don't go through it stop right now until it's
- 2:06:40 passed or whatever it stop horse racing in St. Thomas our neighboring islands our neighboring islands the taller to keep the our way to August Monday other shoes here we could I had a whole a race right here I got shoes a 30 seconds right but hey they're no problem but you know what I came here today to do the people's work and I come every day to do the people walk. I don't show up for my responsibilities. I'm ready to make a decision. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. President.
- 2:07:20 Thank you, Senator Lewis. Senator Gettins, Kenneth Gettins, you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to all. Let me first off say that I too support the revival of horse racing in the district of St. Croy wholeheartedly. I also have a responsibility to the people of the Virgin Islands to look out for their best interest. You know we hear so much things said today and I'm thinking while we keep talking about the chief executive you remember back when they even did the cartoon talking about senators don't read that's why it's important for us to read i was just looking at it where it had the uh reading rainbow swat bookmobile outside the legislature we got to read comprehend and understand what it is we're voting on sincora ain't no different from no place else you know i just read in the antigua observer the other day where they reported that the government is reviewing a hundred million dollar project right now for their uh horse racing investment proposal and i quote the director of communication saying the government will require additional presentations before deciding whether to proceed adding that the proposals financial environmental regulatory and operational implications must all be carefully assessed before they move forward this again as you've heard one minute is not just a horse race bill it's a gaming bill
- 2:09:31 and while i support uh the horse racing revival i also support having one regulatory entity in the virgin islands that's why i have offered legislation to rename the virgin islands casino commission to the virgin islands gaming control commission and also expanding its jurisdiction over all games of chances 30 seconds all games of chance in the virgin islands And on the other note, today is not just about what's before us. It's also about what's missing, colleagues.
- 2:10:17 What's missing? And what's missing here? We were called into a special session today. This is such an urgency. Yet still, we have disaster recovery problems where we have housing, may I, Mr. President, have a housing crisis on our hands. And we need to protect that nearly \$2 billion that they're talking about in federal funding that's at risk.

- 2:10:51 Today, in this territory, we have 27 homicides in the space of seven months. No special session called yet. We also need to stabilize our struggling health care system. As we sit here and talk in our three minutes, you know what they're doing at the St. Croix Hospital? working out a plan with the unions regarding workforce reduction.
- 2:11:24 On top of that, we've got to fix our WAPA issue. We can't even keep the lights on. This morning we come here, we're in pitch darkness. The first branch of government, even the generator ain't working here. I mean, what is our priority? We have to get our priorities in order in the Virgin Islands. Again, I wholeheartedly support the revival of horse racing, but as I look at this bill, what I'm seeing, it's more about the expansion of gaming and VLTs to St. Croix than it is for horse racing. Whenever you set the date, I am here. I am always here and ready to move forward.
- 2:12:14 Thank you, Mr. President. Our people deserve much better. Thank you very much, Senator Kenneth Gittins. Colleagues without question, horse racing is woven, as I mentioned before, into the cultural fabric of our community, without a doubt, particularly in the district of St. Croix. I like to say that people in St. Thomas like horse racing a lot. People on St. Croix are passionate about horse racing. There's just no question about it. I think that a bill of this, and we have not had horse racing on St. Croix for like a decade or so. So we have waited a long time. The people of St. Croix have waited a long time.
- 2:13:01 I don't believe that a couple more weeks of us vetting the bill and getting it right, I mean, it's going to cause any harm to horse racing. It's going to cause any harm to the industry that does not exist right now on St. Croix. It makes sense for us to review the bill, get it right, call in the players who know about horse racing, examine the bill, and we vote on it. We're not voting on it next year. we're voting on it in a couple weeks so I mean it's it's puzzling to me as to why we are not I guess all rallying around vetting the bill more thoroughly that's all we are saying today not saying that when I'm voting for the bill when I saying we don't support the bill, we're saying the bill has far-reaching implications, let us review it. What's wrong with that? That is our jobs as legislators. I understand that we're in a political season. I understand how politics go. I'm not a good politician. I'm not. It's really ultimately about what is in and the best interests are the people of the territory. The lease goes out of 2049, I believe, 48. One minute.
- 2:14:35 Can we wait three weeks to review the bill to make sure that we get it right? Every single major initiative that we have dealt with here that the governor said, let's do it tomorrow, and this body paused. We paused, we paused on the GERS funding bill, and we got a better bill in the long run. We paused on the hotel development bill, and we got a better bill in the long run that protected this territory. The responsible thing for us to do as members of this body is to review the bill, bring the subject matter experts here to testify on it.
- 2:15:16 It's not my money. The funding and this lease, it's really for the people of the Virgin Islands. And I have a responsibility to be prudent with my vote, and that is what I intend to do. We support, I personally support, I can speak for this senator, I support horse racing in the Big Island resuming. The people of St. Croix deserve it. But we also need, we also deserve a bill that is going to be responsible and prudent, and the bill, from all I know, it may very well be. let us take our time and review this bill and we vote on it next month what is wrong with that thank you very much ladies and gentlemen senator francis heiliger you're recognized for your point of inquiry um thank you thank you so much mr president um i just wanted to do through the president to legal counsel based on the rules of this institution was there anything stopping us from having a committee of the whole today even though it was a special session. My question in this is that the impression that is being made by some of my colleagues is that some of us wasn't ready, some of us wanted to rush, I just didn't want you wasting my time. That is where my concern came in today because I came here with the impression that we were going to have a committee at the whole, have some kind of discussion, and as a body we could have still made the decision to send it to our committee.
- 2:16:52 There was nothing stopping any of that. So I need to know from legal counsel, based on the rules, was there anything stopping us whatsoever from having a committee at the whole today and still continue to make the decision we made? Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you. Senator, through the chair, through the chair to Senator Heiliger, you're free to make a motion at any time you feel like. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, Mr. Legal Counsel. Our session, colleagues. What was that? Senator Carla J. Joseph, you're recognized for your point of personal privilege. Thank you so much, Mr. President. I want to take this opportunity to highlight two young men if you'll be so kind and the guy if the camera could switch to them and it can stand who are participating in my summer youth employment opportunity program the young man with the locks his name is Mikel Andrew and he is going to be a senior this year attending the Charlotte amali high school and the next gentleman next to him is mr diego emil and he is a graduate of my alma mater ivana eudora kent high school and he is also going into the military as a coast guard isn't that fantastic and so these are some budding young men and we really want to appreciate all the potential that they have they're here just observing we place them in hearts and service association inc to do some work there good work with a good community organization and they're learning a lot and getting diversified so i really appreciate them being a part of the program and

- mr president i really appreciate you allowing me to highlight them today thank you thank you very much senator
- 2:18:59 of the College of Joseph. Congratulations, young men. Congratulations. Senator Fonseca, you're recognized for your motion. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I motion to hear bill number 30. Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Mr. President, I move to hear bill number 36-0313 on August 4th as a committee of whole and subsequently rise into legislative session to dispose of the matter, I so move.
- 2:19:32 Properly moved by Senator Ray Fonseca, seconded by Senator Carla Joseph, objected to by Senator Kenneth Gittins. Roll call. Senator Marvin A. Blyden. Senator Blyden, absent. Senator Angel L. Bocas, Jr.? Senator Bocas Jr. Yay. Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff. This is crazy.
- 2:20:15 Senator DeGraff not voting. Senator Ray Fonseca. Senator Fonseca, yay. Senator Fonseca, yay. Senator Novelli Francis Jr., Senator Francis Jr., nay. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger, Senator Francis Heiliger, yay. Senator Hubert L. Frederick, nay. Senator Frederick, nay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins, nay. Senator Gittins, nay. Senator Maurice C. James? Senator James, nay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson?
- 2:20:49 No. Senator Johnson, nay. Senator Carla J. Joseph? Yes. Senator Joseph, nay. Senator Clifford A. Joseph, Sr.? No. Senator Joseph, nay. Senator Avery L. Lewis? No. Senator Lewis, nay. Senator Milton E. Potter? No. Senator Potter, nay. Senator Kurt A. Valey? Senator Valey, nay. Mr. President, four yays, nine nays, one absent, one not voting. Please change Senator DeGraff's vote to no.
- 2:21:19 Senator DeGraff, nay. Thank you. The motion fails. Senator Franklin Johnson, you recognize your point of information. Just a point of personal privilege. Good afternoon. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to say thanks to all my colleagues, all the people in this territory who have reached out to my family. It's been a very rough journey this year thus far. we have lost five family members just in this year so it's it's been and that's immediate family member not just family member you know starting with my daughter and then my brother but in between there was a lot of first cousins so it's been a very rough journey but that didn't stop me from coming to do the people walk which I was elected to do but I really want to say thanks to this entire community thanks to all my colleagues and everyone who have reached out to my family to just give their condolence it's been a very uh breath of fresh air hearing from my colleagues i read all the books and all the tributes and everything like that was very touching sometimes they drive you to emotion but that's part of this journey we all have to go to so i said thanks to this entire united states virgin alice and people abroad who have reached out to the family thank you very much mr president for that time thank you very much senator johnson we are We are a pretty small fraternity, but I think that in spite of the fact that we very often times come down on issues, on different sides of the issues, I think we have nothing but love and respect for you, for your family, so we wish you and your family nothing but the best throughout this very challenging time. One more, Senator Hubert L. Frederick. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize one of the most, in my opinion, as a banker of 25 years and having over 500 employees under my tutelage, one of the most amazing young ladies I have ever worked with. She's 17 years old. Her name is Yadea Leo. She's my intern for the summer. Please. This young lady, guys, is
- 2:23:36 amazing. You ask her to do a task, she will bring you back the states that are doing what, certain suggestions that we should consider, where she saw conflicts, and we have never trained she takes personal initiative in whatever she does and I know we will be hearing and seeing this young lady in the future she's that impressive very intelligent very smart and self-motivated thank you so much to her grandmother that called me this morning and said make sure someone is there to pick up my grandchild when she comes to st. Thomas we we had a ride waiting for her so Yeah, Dad, thank you so much, and I know you're heading back to school, and we pray that God bless you and keep you through your college journey. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Session stands, is hereby adjourned.
- 2:24:47 We'll be right back.

## People named in this transcript

SUSPECTED, and a finding aid only. Names were matched by machine against the spellings used across all 426 of our transcripts, and the title is the one used in the room. Being named here is NOT evidence that a person attended or spoke - only that the name was said. Speech recognition mishears names, so a spelling may be wrong even where no alternative is offered.

- 13x **Senator Carla Joseph**  
the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph  
heard in this transcript as: Carla J. Joseph, Joseph, Joseph Sr.
- 12x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**

heard in this transcript as: DeGraff, DeGraff's, Duane DeGraff, Duane M. DeGraff, Dwayne M. DeGraff, Dwayne M. Degraff

12x **Senator Ray Fonseca**

heard in this transcript as: Fonseca

10x **Senator Franklin D. Johnson**

heard in this transcript as: Frankie Johnson, Franklin Johnson, Johnson

10x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**

heard in this transcript as: Gettins, Gittens, Gittins, Kenneth Gittins, Kenneth L. Gittins, L. Gittens

9x **Senator Avery Lewis**

heard in this transcript as: Avery L. Lewis, Averya Lewis, Lewis

8x **Senator Hubert Frederick**

heard in this transcript as: Frederick, Hubert Al-Frederick, Hubert L. Frederick

8x **Senator Kurt Vialet**

heard in this transcript as: Kurt A. Valey, Kurt Ville, Valey

8x **Senator Marise C. James**

the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr

heard in this transcript as: James, Maurice C. James

8x **Senator Novelle Francis**

heard in this transcript as: Francis Jr, Francis Jr., Novali Francis, Novel E. Francis Jr., Novelli Francis Jr

7x **Senator Alma Francis-Heiliger**

the surname alone also matches: Alma Francis Heiliger

heard in this transcript as: Alma Francis Heiliger, Alma Francis-Heiliger, Alma-Francis Heiliger, Francis Heiliger, Francis-Heiliger, Heiliger

7x **Senator Clifford Joseph**

heard in this transcript as: Clayford A. Joseph, Clifford A. Joseph, Clifford A. Joseph Sr.

7x **Senator Marvin Blyden**

heard in this transcript as: Blayden, Blyden, Marvin A. Blyden, Marvin E. Blyden

6x **Senator Milton E. Potter**

heard in this transcript as: Potter

4x **Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr**

heard in this transcript as: Angel Bocas Jr., Angel L. Bocas Jr., Bocas Jr

3x **Governor Albert Bryan Jr**

heard in this transcript as: Albert Bryan

3x **Senator Alma Francis Heidegger**

3x **Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.**

heard in this transcript as: Angel Bulquez Jr., Angel L. Bolques Jr., Bulquez Jr.

3x **Senator Angel L. Bulkes Jr**

heard in this transcript as: Angel L. Boulkes Jr., Boulkes Jr.

3x **Senator Murray C. James**

the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Marise C. James; Neville James

3x **Dr. Randall James**

the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Marise C. James; Neville James

heard in this transcript as: James

2x **Senator Kurt A.**

the surname alone also matches: Dwayne M.

heard in this transcript as: A.

2x **Senator Kurt VLA**

2x **Senator Kurt Viola**

heard in this transcript as: Viola

2x **Senator Paula Joseph**

the surname alone also matches: Carla Joseph; Clifford Joseph

## **Bills and acts referred to**

Matched by number against our own acts corpus. The number is what the recognition heard, so it may be wrong; where it resolved, the title is the one the Legislature gave the act.

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Bill 36-0313