



| VI Flag Day 2023

Legislature USVI

May 17, 2023 · 0.2 hours · gov

Source recording	https://youtu.be/Y3TM8IIQX74
Status	This is a working transcript produced by machine from a recording of a public proceeding. It is a finding aid, not an official record of the Legislature.
Transcribed by	VI Update, using OpenAI Whisper large-v3-turbo, run locally. Not reviewed by a person.
Reliability	Automatic transcription, UNVERIFIED. Verify every quotation against the recording before relying on it. Speech recognition splits spoken digits and wraps figures mid-number, so a dollar amount, a vote count or a bill number can be wrong in a way that reads as correct. Speakers are not identified: automatic speaker labelling was measured unusable and removed.
Public record	The underlying proceeding is a public record of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. 3 V.I.C. § 881(a) defines public records to include all records and documents of or belonging to this Territory or any branch of government, or any "department, board, council or committee of any branch of government" · which names legislative committees by category. § 881(b) gives every citizen the right to examine and copy such records, and the news media the right to publish them. (The open-meetings chapter, 1 V.I.C. § 254, does NOT reach the Legislature: § 253(b) expressly excludes it and its Standing and Special Committees. § 881 does, and it is § 881 that confers the right to copy and publish.) The Legislature broadcast this proceeding publicly itself. The source recording is not ours, is not hosted here, and remains with its publisher at the link above.
Rights	To what we added · the transcription, its arrangement and its description · we assert nothing. A verbatim transcript is mechanical rather than authored, so there is likely nothing in it to own; to the extent any copyright is nonetheless found to subsist, it is dedicated to the public domain under CC0 1.0. Please copy it, quote it, index it, train on it, republish it, mirror it, sell it. Redistribution is the point: a public record with one copy is one fire from gone. No permission is needed, and none is ours to grant or withhold.

- 0:00:00 Today, the Virgin Islands Legislature celebrates Flag Day. Act number 8357 states, Title I, Chapter 11 of the Virgin Islands Code is amended by adding a new section, 200K, establishing Virgin Islands Flag Day and for other related purposes. Therefore, on May 17th every year, we observe Virgin Islands Flag Day. To lead us in a prayer for the Virgin Islands is the Legislature's chaplain, Charles Brown. Let every heart pray. God, we praise you for this opportunity to come together and commemorate what happened 102 years ago in 1921, May 17th, when the executive order was adopted for the flag of the Virgin Islands. And we praise you, God, for the symbolism that is within the flag. We thank you for the olive branch that the eagle holds in its right hand, which symbolizes peace. We thank you, Lord God, for the shield which covers the eagle in the colors of the United States. We thank you, Lord God, for the three crivers or three arrows, each representing St. John, St. Thomas and St. Croix. We thank you, Lord God, for that the blue represents the color of the ocean. We thank you, Lord God, that the red represents the color of your love.
- 0:01:36 We thank you, Lord God, that the yellow represents the golden eagle of the United States of America. So, God, we come together on this day to lift you up because you are a God of peace. You are a God of love. You're a God who has given us white clouds, blue oceans, love that surpasses and pervades throughout this territory. And so we praise you and we magnify you and we glorify you for this opportunity to reflect on who we are and to remember that we are eagles, that we will mount up as eagles and run and not be weary and walk and not faint. In your holy name we pray. Amen. Thank you, Reverend Brown. This afternoon, we will be having simultaneous ceremonies. To start off our remarks, we will have the Honorable Senate President of the 35th Legislature, Senator Novell E. Francis, Jr.
- 0:02:37 I welcome all to the Legislature Virgin Islands Flag Day Ceremony. Today, the Legislature join our fellow Virgin Islanders in commemorating Flag Day, which through Act 8257 is observed each year on May 17th and raising the Virgin Islands flag with pride. We have a beautiful flag that represents our relationship with the United States. Peace on the three islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John. Since 1921, this flag has flown over the United States Virgin

Islands and it flies proudly today. Our flag is the symbol of history and pride. May we hold it there and treat it with respect and pride. I also want to say that there's a proclamation that was signed by the Honorable Governor recognizing the Flag Day and of course, it was signed on April 2023 and it was signed by the Governor of the Virgin Islands and attested to by Novell E. Francis, Jr. at the time, the acting Lieutenant Governor. So, there's a proclamation that's here. But truly, I always pay homage and really respect the flag because, you know, in every ceremony when you begin a ceremony, of course, you have the United States flag that's recognized but the Virgin Islands flag is also recognized at most of the ceremonies here in the Virgin Islands and it brings a sense of hope. It brings a sense of pride. It brings a sense of calmness. It's really evoked that everything's going to be okay. And I think that's the real rationale behind of the flag. And we're very respectful of the Virgin Islands flag. And as I say, you know, it's really rolled out in just about every single ceremony. It flies over our building here and most of the government buildings. Of course, we added a little bit of the legislature flag as well. But nonetheless, the Virgin Islands flag, you know, just really evokes that. One thing that at times really peeves me is that ceremonies when the flag is not respected. When

0:04:54

individuals, you know, just talk and continue the business as usual, when there's a raising or the recognition of the flag, be it the American flag or the United States flag as well as the Virgin Islands flag. I think that we need to do everything in our power to make sure that we're teaching, you know, our children, our students, our family members, the importance of the flag and the fact that there should be some semblance of order to it. And immediately after the flag, again, it brings you to the invocation of the ceremony, which is, again, the religious aspect of ensuring that everything is going to be okay. So today, I'm delighted to sit or, I mean, stand here on this May 17th, where we'll be lowering the flag and actually raising the Virgin Islands flag in commemoration and recognition of the Virgin Islands Flag Day. I wanted to say, too, that I want to give Ana where Ana is due, that this is actually the legislation that was moved to ensure that we have the Virgin Islands Flag Day was the legislation by Senator Thomas at the time, as well as Senator Kurt Viale. Those are the two senators that really moved this legislation forward. And, you know, it's all part of the national pride and a sense of pride that we feel. And of course, it was passed by unanimously by all of the senators that sat at the legislature of the time. So I just wanted to make sure that we're recognizing Bobby Thomas, I feel Bobby Thomas for the bill, as well as Senator, former senators, Kurt Viale, for the work that they do in putting this legislation together. To provide additional remarks, we will have the Vice President

0:06:42

of the 35th Legislature, the Honorable Marvin Blyden. Thank you. Good afternoon. On behalf of Senate President Nobel E. Francis Jr., and the other members of the 35th Legislature, President, I see Senator Donna Fred Gregory, Senator Dwayne DeGraff, Senator Carla Joseph, Senator Kenneth Giddens, and all other senators. Good afternoon. I am honored to offer a few words as we celebrate and honor of Virgin Islands history and control. And above all, our people in commemorating on Virgin Islands Flag Day. This day was officially established in 2020 by Act number 8257, authored by former Senator Kurt Viale to commemorate the official adoption of the Virgin Islands Flag on May 17th, 1921. On this day 102 years ago, Admiral Sumner Kittel, then Naval Governor of the Virgin Islands, adopted a current Virgin Islands Flag by executive order. The flag had been designed by Naval Yeoman Joseph Sparks from the inspiration of the great seal of the United States, and it was embroidered by two local women, Sparks' wife, Grace Joseph Sparks, and her sister, Blanche Joseph Schasso. These names are important to our history in other ways as well.

0:08:08

Admiral Kittel, less than a year after the executive order, dissolved the legislative council in which was child Francis had been agitating for greater Virgin Islands self-rule, thus rule, thus setting off a major battle in a struggle for democracy and self-government in the Virgin Islands. On the other hand, Grace Joseph Sparks ended up becoming the mother of the late cultural icon, Corrine Lockhart, and the late Miss Blanche Joseph went on to become known as the Grand Lady of the Virgin Islands for her endeavors and accomplishments in many other areas of Virgin Islands life. So when we celebrate and commemorate Vriye Flag Day, we are not just remembering May 17, 1921. We are embracing the history and the currents that have shaped our community as we search for guidance in our present day struggle to shape a better future. Although the flag is the product of a colonial regime, it has become to be there in our hearts of our people, and one can literally see our chest busting up with pride when we see the V.I. flag blowing in the wind or being waved proudly by a Virgin Islander. Conversations on social media about whether we should change the V.I. flag are mostly met with loud and passionate expressions to leave the V.I. flag the way it is. Of course, the question of whether we change it or not is a separate discussion. The point is that the V.I. flag, just like our society, is a joint product of various ingredients ranging from the orders of colonial regimes to the combined influences of indigenous African and Creole culture and sweat. And just like the Joseph sisters, Blanche and Grace, weaved the various strands and colors of the cloth to make the Virgin Islands flag, so must we take the various strands and cultures and peoples of our society and interweave them together to make our harmonious community that we probably call home the U.S. Virgin Islands. And there is one more thing and I want to make it crystal clear. It makes no sense to be carrying on with a whole bunch

- 0:10:44 of noise about the flag and V.I. flag day if we don't show love and pride every day in a place that the flag represents. So let us take the energy and devote it to maintaining and preserving the beauty and the strength of our islands and our culture. And in moving our people forward so that our children can know lives of prosperity, purpose, and joy. The next time we have an opportunity to help a neighbor or join a neighbor clean up or to make a decision that impacts our people. Let us remember the pride and the love that we express on this day. And let us raise up, as Virgin Islanders, indeed, and as well in our name. And I must say that before I leave. If you from the V.I. Put them up, put them up, put them up, put them up, put your flag them up high. V.I. to the bone. Thank you so much. May God bless you and may God bless these beautiful Virgin Islands. Thank you.
- 0:11:49 And these Virgin Islands. Now we will have the raising of the flag completed by the Legislature Security Division. All hail the Virgin Islands, in airports of the sea, where we can fly, we call our sands, and pray with flares, our living land. All hail the Virgin Islands, The Virgin Islands of the Virgin Islands of the Virgin Islands of the Virgin Islands of the Virgin Islands of the Virgin Islands of the Virgin Islands.
- 0:12:26 Woe to the earth and the leaders forever. God bless our Virgin Highlands, only now we pray. Where all mankind have joined to stay, in friendly form of word and claim. God bless our Virgin Highlands.
- 0:12:56 Beautiful and tall, in the sunny sky. Hail, God, I will not know, welcome for one and all.

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.

- 3x **Senator Kurt Vialet**
heard in this transcript as: Kurt Viale
- 2x **Senator Carla Joseph**
- 2x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**
- 2x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**
heard in this transcript as: Kenneth Giddens
- 2x **Senator Novelle Francis**
heard in this transcript as: Novell E. Francis Jr.
- 1x **Senator Athneil 'Bobby' Thomas**
the surname alone also matches: Joseph Vincent Thomas; Agnel Bobby Thomas
heard in this transcript as: Thomas
- 1x **Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory**
heard in this transcript as: Donna Fred Gregory
- 1x **Senator Donna Frett-Gregory**
heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Frett-Gregory

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.

- Act 8357** Act 8357 · An Act providing an appropriation for the sum of \$10,000,000 from the Transportation Trust Fund as a contribution to the General Fund for the fiscal year October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021 ---0
- Act 8257** Act 8257 · December 19, 2019 · An Act amending title 1, chapter II of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new section 200k. establishing Virgin Islands Flag Day and for other related purposes ---0