



| Committee on Rules and Judiciary Part 1

Legislature USVI

March 9, 2023 · 2.1 hours · gov

Source recording	https://youtu.be/aaAZWP3_8GI
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 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. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. 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. We'll see you next time. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Oh, okay. I thought it was not sounding loud enough. Yes, this meeting scheduled for March 9,
- 0:18:17 2023 for the Committee on Rules and Judiciary has been called to order and I would like to say to my committee members non-committee members good morning at this time I will take a point of personal privilege to say good morning to the invited testifiers the listening and viewing audience the people of the Virgin Islands legislative staff working this meeting today firstly I would like to begin by expressing my deepest sympathy to the family, friends, colleagues of Judge Raymond L. Finch. Judge Finch served this community in the field of legal services for more than 50 years. The people of the Virgin Islands are forever grateful for his service, integrity, honor, and wisdom which were distinguishing marks of his admiral legal career. March is Nationals Women's Month. It is also Virgin Islands History Month. Today I recognize Leona Brady Watson in honor of her contributions as an activist, a Caruso singer, aka Queen of Caruso in the 50s, 60s. Mrs. Leona Brady was born on the island of St. Croix. Mrs. Watson spent many years learning about what was a dying art in the Virgin Islands, the art of Cariso from the elders, particularly the ones on the north side of the island and in the Frederic Stead area. She was able to attain and maintain her delicate
- 0:20:12 culture through their stories, soups, and music of the days gone by. Leona continued continues to be honored by various cultural organizations as a tradition bearer for her untiring contributions to the cultural growth of the Virgin Islands and the knowledge of the history of our beloved homeland some of Leona's famous work includes quoted in three published

books actress in the film, the story of Cariso, nationally acclaimed, performance in numerous stage shows on island and abroad, participated in the 24th annual Festival of American Folklife, the Virgin Islands, and program sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the Virgin Islands government. In 1990, Mrs. Watson was recognized by the Smithsonian Institute Office of Folklife Programs as a cultural tradition bearer of the Virgin Islands. She performed at the Virgin Islands Folklife Exhibit in Washington DC and won and was one of the main organizers of the first annual VI Folk Festival on St. Croix in 1991. In 2007, she was admitted to the Women's Hall of Fame at Government House Ceremony in Christianstead.

- 0:21:49 Leona B. Watson was also a highly respected herbologist who was asked to participate in cultural exchange between Africa, Senegal, China, and in Switzerland. Mrs. Leona B. Watson resided in a state grove place, St. Croix until her passing in 2016. The family and friends of Mrs. Leona Brady Watson, today I am honored to recognize her for National Women's Month and Virgin Islands History Month. Last week, I toured the JFL North, and this week I had the pleasure of attending ribbon-cutting ceremony of Wang F. Louis North. This is a huge progress for our health care system.
- 0:22:43 Congratulations to the Wang Louis leadership, the employees, the contractors, the Brian Roach administration, and most importantly the people of St. Croix for your advocacy on this project as it benefits all of us but while i anticipated the progress at our hospital i became aware of an unusual and of an issue in our territory that continues to worsen as it relates to the mobile healthcare services to our elderly i immediately instructed my staff to submit a bill to establish the Mobile Integrated Health Act, BR number 23-0441. As you know, a major responsibility of this committee is to vet nominees appointed by the governor to this territory's boards and commission. I commend every appointee for their willingness to serve and encourage those who are interested in serving to take the necessary steps to do so. Moreover, it is my pleasure to serve the people of this territory in the 35th Legislature and I look forward to leading the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and the Office of Code Revisor to efficiency, productivity, and advancement to better quality legislation.
- 0:24:17 Again, welcome to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary. Today's meeting has two blocks that includes one nominee and four bills. We are ready to proceed, Madam Clerk. Roll call, please. Angel L. Bolquez, Jr. Senator Bolquez, present. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins, Senator Gittins, absent. Senator Maurice C. James, Senator James, present.
- 0:24:56 Senator Franklin D. Johnson, Senator Johnson, present. Senator Carla J. Joseph, Senator Joseph, present. Senator Milton Potter? Senator Potter? Present. Madam Chair? I'm sorry. Senator Diane Capehart? Present. Senator Capehart? Present. Madam Chair we have six present one absent. Thank you Madam Clerk. At this time I will request that all testifiers and those who are present in the chambers to turn off all cell phones clerk are there any responses correspondence to be read into record from any committee member no madam chair I see the sergeant of arms have already seated our testifiers testifiers I would ask that you bring your mic close to you when you're speaking first identify yourself your name your title um so the stenographer would have everything correct are there any testimony to be distributed no madam chair madam clerk please read the agenda into record all members committee on rules and judiciary honorable milton e potter vice chairman the Honorable Angel E. L. Bulquez Jr., the Honorable Kenneth L. Gittins, the Honorable Maurice C. James, the Honorable Franklin D. Johnson, the Honorable Carla J. Joseph. From the Honorable Senator Diane T. Kapart, Chair, the Committee on Rules and Judiciary.
- 0:26:48 Regarding the Committee on Rules and Judiciary meeting, Thursday, March 9th, 2023. The Committee on Rules and Judiciary is scheduled to meet on Thursday, March 9th, 2023 at 9am in the Fritz E. Lowe's Legislative Conference Room located at 3022 Estate, Golden Rock, St. Croix, VI 00820 to receive testimony on the following. Block 1, Governor's nomination of Mr. Luther F. Rene, Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission.
- 0:27:21 Block 2, Bill No. 35-0006, an act honoring and commending former Senator George E. Goodwin for his many years of expansive contributions to the Virgin Islands community as a whole through his role in various areas of service to the territory as well as advocacy for social justice for underserved people in the Virgin Islands, to rename the cricket field located on Parcel H of Track 1, Estate Nazareth St. Thomas, Virgin Islands in his honor, and to award former Senator George E. Goodwin the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor and for other related purposes sponsored by Senator Carla J. Joseph, Senator Donna A. Fred Gregory, Senator Milton E. Potter and Senator Alma Francis Heiliger and co-sponsored by Senator Diane T. Capehart.
- 0:28:23 Bill number 35-0011, an act honoring and commending former Senator Horace A. Colwood, Post Thomas Lee for his dedication, service, and commitment to the people of the Virgin Islands and naming the North South Street immediately east of Windward Passage in his memory as sponsored by Senator Marvin A. Blyden, Senator Carla J. Joseph, Senator Donna A. Fred Gregory, and Senator Milton E. Potter and co-sponsored by Senator Diane T. Capehart. Bill number 35-0007, a resolution honoring and commending Mr. Boyd Boise Orlanzo Todman for his many contributions to the people and youth of the Virgin Islands. Sponsored by Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff, Angel L. Bolquez Jr., Donna A. Fred Gregory, and Milton E. Potter and co-sponsored by Senator Carla J. Joseph.

- 0:29:35 Bill number 35-0009, an act amending Title I, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 11, Section 171A, relating to the observance of national holidays and enacting the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act to declare June 19th a legal holiday in the Virgin Islands, sponsored by Senators Marvin A. Blyden, Milton E. Potter, and Alma-Francis Heiliger, and co-sponsored by Sen. Angel L. Bulquist, Jr., Ray Fonseca, and Novell E. Francis, Jr. Madam Chair, that ends the agenda. Thank you, Madam Chair.
- 0:30:19 At this time, I would request the testifiers to begin their testimony, beginning with Mr. Luther Rene, who is the nominee for the casino, the Virgin Islands Casino Commission. Please proceed. Thank you, Senator Capehart, and good morning to all Senators. Good morning, Honorable Senator Diane Capehart, Chairperson of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, Honorable Members of the Rules and Judiciary Committee, Senators Milton E. Aniel L. Bulkis, Jr., Kenneth L. Gittins, Maurice James, Franklin D. Johnson, Carla J. Joseph, other members of the 35th Legislature, family members and friends, individuals in the Senate chambers and those viewing via television or the internet or on the radio. My name is Luther Felix Rene, Governor Albert Bryan's nominee to serve as a member on the Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission. I want to begin my testimony by offering thanks and praises to Almighty God for the blessings of today and for affording me another opportunity to offer my services to the people of the Virgin Islands. I feel honored to have been nominated by the Honorable Governor to serve on the Casino Control Commission. I thank God
- 0:32:08 but also for the fine upbringing that I had in a rural village in the island of St. Lucia. I was nurtured and taught the values of decency and honesty, not only by my parents, but also by the entire village of Labrie, where it truly took a village to raise a child. library where I was born, this mantra has substance and real meaning and was practiced every day. Currently I am married to Cecil Renee and a proud father of four girls and a doting grandfather of nine. I am a graduate of the University of the Virgin Islands, St. Augustine, Trinidad. I hold a bachelor's degree in economics majoring in public finance and monetary economics. Additionally, I hold a master's of science degree in educational leadership from the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida. I graduated with distinction with a 3.88 out of a possible four. On the basis of such stellar performance I was granted a fellowship to continue a PhD degree from the same institution and although I started life got in the way and I did not complete the program. Today I appear before you the members of this August body to seek your support and approval of my nomination to serve on the casino control Commission as the governor has requested. I am here for you to judge and assess my qualifications to become, with your advice and consent, a member of the Virgin Islands Control Commission. In every position that I have held in the Virgin
- 0:34:08 Islands or elsewhere, I have acted in an upright manner. I believe my wide career experiences in the public and private sectors and my leadership roles in these institutions have provided me with the prerequisites and understanding necessary for the position that I have been nominated for. I would like to outline my professional and career experiences which will give you some further insight into my qualifications to serve as a member of the Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission. I have an extensive and rewarding career in which I have gained tremendous knowledge which has equipped me with the foundational skills to serve on this esteemed commission.
- 0:35:02 Before leaving my native St. Lucia, I served as the business manager of what is now called I also served as an economist for a banana corporation then called the Windward Islands Banana Growers Association Wind Band. My job was to trend economic indicators and advise the local government and the corporation on policy directions to take regarding the banana industry.
- 0:35:37 I left that job and migrated to St. Croix. My first job here was as a middle school teacher at the now defunct Good Hope School in Frederickstead. After a few years I was promoted to the director of the middle school where I managed the day-to-day operations of that division including but not limited to supervising and evaluating a staff of approximately 30, and overseeing a student body of a few hundred.
- 0:36:14 During that time, I moonlighted at the University of the Virgin Islands, UVI, first as the student records officer, and later as an adjunct professor of economics. I taught micro and macroeconomics to graduate and undergraduate students until the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. I have included in my consideration packages numerous testimonials from students who have attested to my professional manner while I carry out my tutoring duties at the university. In 1998, I became the full-time Director of Admissions and Academic Services at the University of the Virgin Islands. I had the awesome responsibility of handling student admissions as well as overseeing the commencement exercises for the graduating classes. Part of my responsibilities included the evaluation of foreign transcripts to determine admissions eligibility. That job also included the evaluation of students' academic records to determine whether they met all graduation requirements.
- 0:37:34 That task demonstrated my extraordinary attention to this detail, patience, and reliability. At that time, grade point averages at the university were calculated manually. That task was mine. The meticulous attention to detail to determine whether a student graduated or not required extreme focus attention. I left UVI when I won a seat in this August body, the Senate, and I served in the 25th legislature of the United States Virgin Islands, a position I served with dignity, pride

and a sense of purpose.

- 0:38:20 In the Legislature, I served as Chair of the Committee of Economic Development and Agriculture, Vice Chair of the Committee of Finance, and served on the Committees of Education and Health. After my term at the Legislature, I served as an economist attached to the Bureau of Economic Research in the Turnbull-Richard administration. Our focus at that time was to study the economy of St. Croix to decide on options to revitalize the economy of St. Croix, which was dying. I focused on economic data to make a case for the hosting of several events to ignite the economy, including hosting the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association annual meeting on the island of St. Croix.
- 0:39:15 As many will recall, that was also the era of trying very hard to get casino gambling as a pillar of the economic revitalization of St. Croix. In 2007, Governor DeYoung took office and chose me to serve as the Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, a position I served for his entire two terms in office. I served with distinction assisting the Commissioner Dr. Louis Peterson and also Mr. Errol Chichester was Deputy Commissioner in implementing several new initiatives.
- 0:39:57 We introduced requirements to produce a business plan to obtain government property for agriculture and innovation we labelled agriculture as a business. We also introduced several specialty crop programs and a pioneering program to allow farmers to accept food stamps, food stamp coupons from the public. In addition to these programs, I also run the day-to-day operations at the St. Croix office. I routinely assume the role of the department as the department's internal mediator to to successfully resolve disputes and misunderstandings among the agency's personnel and its clients. As Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture, I also served as the Vice President of Operations on the Virgin Islands Agriculture and Food Fair Board in charge of all operations.
- 0:41:00 Building the Agriculture and Food Fair requires hard work, dedication and a tremendous attention to detail, all of which I have successfully done for the last 15 years. Many of you will note that the just-concluded Agriculture and Food Fair a few weeks ago was a successful operation. The operations of the fair were my responsibility, which included determining the location of every exhibitor, sponsor, and government agency on the grounds to ensure they achieve their stated objectives.
- 0:41:42 Because of all of this hard work, I was very honored and humbled when the Board of Directors recognized this and named the food fairgrounds in 2016, the Lutheran Fairgrounds. In 2015, when my service at the Department of Agriculture was ended during the Governor Map Administration, I not only continued to serve as an adjunct professor of economics at UVI but I also contributed my teaching services at schools such as AZ Academy and St. Patrick School. Honorable Senators, I have served my community on several boards and commissions.
- 0:42:29 Most notably, I have served on the Public Services Commission for over 10 years, rising to the position of Vice Chairman. While on the PSC, I learned of the working of regulatory bodies. The PSC is not unlike the Casino Control Commission in its role as a regulatory body. While serving on the PSC, I learned a lot to prepare for this present position, of which I'm nominated. To include the need to balance the interests of the utility with the needs of the rate payers. Similarly, as a member of the Casino Control Commission, I will have to balance the economic interests of investors and the protection and welfare of the general public. In addition to the already mentioned positions, I also served on the School to Work Board run at a time by the Department of Labor and also served as a member of the Virgin Island's historical society. Madam Chair, I have received many meritorious awards in my many, many years of service to this community, but I would be remiss if I did not mention to you the three, in my opinion, that have given me the most pride.
- 0:43:56 Firstly, as I mentioned earlier, in 2016, the agriculture fairgrounds was named the Lutheran Fairgrounds. This honor is of particular importance because nothing is more gratifying than to be recognized by your own peers. Secondly, in 2017-2018, the graduating classes of the University of the Virgin Islands selected me to be the co-marshal and marshal, respectively, for those graduating classes.
- 0:44:36 That was a great honor, as that prestigious distinction is rarely bestowed upon adjunct professors. Thirdly, and lastly, in 2017, the students and faculty of AZ Academy voted me Teacher of the Year. This award meant a lot to me, as it meant that I had earned the respect and admiration by serving as a role model, not only for my students, but also for the staff, and always having the best interests of my students in mind. I mention these to not only add upon my recollection of a distinguished and esteemed career, but also to highlight that no matter where I have worked, I have done so with the highest sense of integrity, an attribute that a member of the Casino Control Commission must be equipped with to serve adequately.
- 0:45:40 Wherever I have worked, and in whatever capacity, I have demonstrated consistently a strong work ethic and a passion for the job, while exerting levels of leadership, maturity, and a commitment to excellence. I have been able to demonstrate an ability to address and explain complex economic and business principles. My strong knowledge of

economics, my demonstrated leadership skills, and my analytical ability make me suitable to serve on a deliberative body like the Casino Control Commission.

0:46:23 Honourable members of this committee, all other members of the 35th Legislature, I hope I have adequately provided you with my extensive education, training experience, and examples of my community involvement. Based on the following overview of the Casino Control Commission that I will now provide, It is my hope that each of you will find that I am eminently qualified to serve on the Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission. I am familiar with the workings of the Casino Control Commission, because when I served in the legislature, Judge Eileen Peterson invited me on many occasions to have discussions on the popular topic of the time, casino gambling, as a concept to revitalize the St. Croix economy, in the hopes that it would spur up the development of hotels.

0:47:41 And while it would increase revenue, it was essential that it had to be regulated. The Virgin Islands Control Commission was established by Title 32 Virgin Islands Code Chapter 29 as amended in November 1995 by Act No. 6069. The Commission is responsible for the regulations of casinos posterior to the aforementioned Act, and subsequently by Act 6419, the Internet Gaming and Gambling Act, Rossino's Pursuit to Virgin Islands Racing Industry Assistant Act of 2011, which is Act No. 7318, and the Casino for Establishments, Act No. 7702. The Commission is an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the Government of the Virgin Islands whose budget shall be approved annually by the legislature of the Virgin Islands. The Casino Control Commission consists of three commission members appointed by the governor with the advice and the consent of the legislature of the Virgin Islands and serve on a term of five years.

0:48:58 All members must be United States citizens and legal residents of the United States Virgin Islands. Two members are to be citizens and legal residents of the District of St. Croix, and one member must be from the District of St. Thomas St. John. Title 32, Chapter 21, Section 406D states that appointments to the Commission shall be made by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Legislature.

0:49:32 Prior to the nomination, the governor shall cause an investigation to be conducted by the attorney general into the nominee's background with particular regard to the nominee's financial stability, integrity and responsibility for his or her reputation of good character, honesty and integrity. I wanted to highlight this section for emphasis because I submit to you that I was subjected to this exhaustive investigation, and by virtue of me sitting here before you, I was able to meet that standard for the Governor to submit my nomination for your consideration. The Attorney General's Office did not find me wanting in terms of my reputation for good character, honesty and integrity. The Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission is mandated by law to develop and implement licensing and regulatory framework that permits and promotes the stability and continuity of gambling and the gaming industry in the United States of Virgin Islands, posturant to the Virgin Islands Casino and Resort Control Act of 1995, as amended, of Internet Gaming and Gambling pursuant to the Virgin Islands Internet Gaming and Internet Gambling Act, as amended, and of Racino pursuant to the Virgin Islands Horse Racing Industry Assistance Act of 2011 2016 as amended by assuring that a good character honesty and integrity of all licensed operators and employees are regulated and regulated businesses by protecting the gambling and gaming industry from the influence of gambling and gaming industry from the influence of criminal activity and fostering public confidence and trust in the activities of gambling and the giving industry the commissioning the commission is legally

0:51:50 required to issue and register licenses to applicable entities employees and service industries collect fees and associate associated with registration impose levels levies and penalties conduct investigations and other civil hearings to registration certification decisions on all licenses and matters affecting suspension revocation and renewal of all applications to administer rules and regulations regarding the manufacturing and sale of gaming devices ensure compliance of title 32 and related laws under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Conduct daily inspections within the gaming industry to verify the source of casino revenue, examine documentation and proper financial recording of revenues. Renew public compliance, renew public complaints, sorry, review public complaints on the conduct of gaming and and wagering operations, and conduct periodic review of gaming facilities.

0:53:14 A key component of effective regulation is the gaming regulators enforce gaming laws. A regulator that fails to enforce laws can effectively render them meaningless. The regulator will realize that it can violate the laws with impunity, and those with low ethics will definitely do so. In contrast, those with high business probity will be placed at a competitive disadvantage. Likewise, patrons may lose confidence in the integrity of the industry.

0:54:03 Therefore, it is absolutely essential that the enforcement arm of the commission be given the tools and the resources needed to carry out its mission, and the Commission renders it full support. The Commission is joined in its regulatory efforts by the Division of Gaming Enforcement, DGE, which is under the direction of the Office of the Attorney General. The DGE, which gets its mandate from Title 32, Section 428 of the Virgin Islands Code, is under the supervision of a director who is appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the legislature. The DGE is directly responsible

for the protecting the public's interests by maintaining a legitimate and viable industry through enforcement of the casino laws and regulation. Oversight of the DGE includes inspection, investigation, audits, and criminal and regulatory persecution. I would like now to focus on the discussion of my visions for the Casino Control Commission. When I was offered this opportunity to serve, among my many actions was to go to the little green book which Judge Eileen Peterson gifted to me when I served in the Legislature. I also visited the Commission's website to review the available information contained therein. I read the Commission's budget testimony and the related post-auditors analysis of fiscal year 2023 and also reviewed

0:55:58 A-01-39-18, which is the Inspector General's audit of the administrative functions of the Virgin Islands Control Commission. The audit covered the fiscal years 2013 through 2016. The report produced four major findings related to the area of internal controls, operating expenditures, travel expenses and professional services. The audit found that the Commission was not effectively utilizing its resources to carry out its administrative functions in accordance with the established rules and regulations, policies and procedures and best practices. Several recommendations were made in the audit report addressing the findings of the Inspector General. The Commission responded to the recommendations by resolution of August 23, 2018 and indicated that the recommendations were resolved. The restoration of trust, transparency, and public confidence is of paramount importance.

0:57:22 The continued restoration of trust and integrity of the Commission will be part of my mission. Additionally, I have familiarized myself with the updated definitions of slot machines and and Video Lottery Terminals, as were amended in Act 8577, Governor Bryan's legislation specifically related to Virgin Islands Lottery and the amended Clinton AFib's Race Track Development Agreement, which Ville oversees.

0:57:58 Senators, the world has become more complicated, volatile, ambiguous and uncertain. making the pace of change faster and the need for more effective responses. In practical terms, organizations must evolve or adapt in response to changing needs and circumstances. That means that the people, processes, systems, and internal environment must be consistently modernized to remain in tune with or adapt to changing times, so too must the Casino Control Commission.

0:58:49 That means that the systems and the skill sets of the people who operate at the Commission must be consistently enhanced and modernised. With that said, training for the members of the Casino Control Commission must be given top priority. That will be another part of my vision for the Commission. As I speak about the vision for the Commission, let me secure into what I have deemed as my short-term and long-term goals if I am selected to serve on the Commission.

0:59:28 One short term to acquire the necessary knowledge to understand the gaming industry from a regulatory standpoint. I would like also like to help ensure that the proper internal controls are in place and consistently adhered to in order to avoid the loss of public confidence. Three, advocate for the required staffing to carry out our mandate. As the work on responsibility of the Division of Gaming enforcement DGE critical and extensive, I will seek to strengthen the DGE so they can adequately perform their duties in a timely manner. Long term, along with other commissioners and staff, determine and develop the top priorities and long-term plans for the Commission. Our laws were promulgated over 20 years ago, so the current statutes and regulations need to be reviewed to make recommendations and, if need be, adjust to align with the current industry practices. Three, to work towards a comprehensive approach to the situation of problem gambling, as this situation damages families emotionally and financially.

1:00:58 It is instructive to note that the month of March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month. In conclusion, I want to reiterate to you, the members of this committee, that my vast experience in the private and public sectors have prepared me for the challenges of serving on the Casino Control Commission. My vast knowledge of economic issues further enhances my preparedness to serve. I believe that my career and experience, including my many years in management and and leadership positions have provided me with the insight and understanding to effectively play my role as a member of the Commission. I am confident that these experiences will enhance my ability to carry out my duties as a member of the Casino Control Commission and will allow me the opportunity to influence policies that promote a healthy gaming environment in St. Croix. My many years serving on the Public Services Commission will help me understand the working of a regulatory body and to balance the economic interest of an entity and the public interest of the people of the Virgin Islands. Should I be fortunate to be confirmed by this body, I commit to you and the people of the Virgin Islands that I will do anything within my God-given power to maintain that standard and live up to the highest ethical and professional values as a member of the Virgin Islands Control Commission.

1:02:53 I humbly ask that you consider the merits of my contribution to the Virgin Islands and and to allow me to serve, again, where I can contribute in a meaningful way to the Casino Control Commission and, by extension, the people of the United States Virgin Islands. In closing, I wish to express my thanks to the Honourable Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and the Honourable Lieutenant Governor Dejenzo Roach for the confidence they have shown in my ability and suitability to be a member of the Casino Control Commission, respectfully with your advice and consent. I look forward to meeting

and greeting and getting to know the staff of the Commission and to working with them to achieve the goals and objectives of the agency.

1:03:49 I also look forward to fostering a good working relationship with the Division of Gaming Enforcement and its directors and staff so that we will develop the necessary working culture to carry out the mandates of our respective duties and responsibilities. I must express my profound thanks and appreciation to many friends and well-wishers who wrote letters of recommendation on my behalf to the Governor. Many of them were from students I taught at UVI.

1:04:25 but one was also from a student I taught way back at Good Hope School. That was truly gratifying. I thank them for their unwavering support during this process, and I will forever be grateful for that. I would also like at this time to thank the Chairman of the Casino Control Commission, Mr. Pickering, who assisted me with answering many questions and also mr david oliver who or oliver david rather the dge who was very instrumental in having me understand certain basic things about his role as the dge finally i wish to thank you madam chair senator diane capehart and all the members of the rules and Judiciary for considering my nomination today. I trust that you will find me sufficiently qualified. I thank you in advance for your vote and now I will prepare, I'm prepared to respond to any questions or comments you may have about my testimony. Thank you. Thank you Mr. Loutarini, former senator. That testimony that you provided today was definitely informative found out some things about you I never knew. Thank you Madam Chair. So at this time I will entertain testimony from Mr. Chichester who's here to speak on your behalf also. Mr. Chichester can you please state your name for the record. My name is Errol Chichester. Greetings Senator Diane T. Capert, Chairperson Committee on Rules and Judiciary.

1:06:12 other senators present, staff, those viewing and listening via electronic media. I am Errol Chichester. I appear before the committee today on behalf of Mr. Luther Rene to express my strong support for his nomination to the Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission. I have known and worked with Mr. Rene for approximately 15 years. Eight of those years we serve as administrative colleagues at the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture.

1:06:42 During that time we have we had an excellent working relationship which focused on meeting the farming community's needs. While at the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture Mr. Rene displayed a strong sense of self, community, and integrity. He was articulate, considerate, and firm in his actions. His decisions was not made indiscriminately but based on the facts in every instance. I have known Mr. Rini as a fair-minded and impartial person who treated everyone equally regardless. After his employment with the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture we continue to work together as members of the Agriculture and Food Fair of the U.S. Virgin Islands Board of Directors. His His presence on the board which began while he was assistant commissioner until today is highly critical and it is an integral part in the planning and implementing the annual event.

1:07:46 He graciously and convincingly performed the task of Fair Vice President whose responsibilities include parking designations, boot layouts and space allocation to sponsors, government agencies non-profit and for-profit businesses he also served as director of the exhibit section one of the largest and most sought after sections mr rini used his professional experience problem solving skills organizational and administrative skills to execute these tasks for the past 15 years because of the dedication commitment and tenacity that have seen Mr. Rainey Display, I am sure that he will serve the Commission well. It is my opinion that Mr. Rainey has the qualities for the position. He is trustworthy and reliable. His strong work ethics will be a benefit to the organization. Should he be confirmed to serve, I have no doubt that he will approach his duties with enthusiasm and dedication. I strongly support his selection and confirmation to serve and I'm confident that he can be and will get that he can and will get a job done. That's the end of my presentation I with whatever questions that senators may have. Thank you Mr. Chichester. So at this time we will begin our line of questioning by my colleagues just to let my colleagues know that senator Carla Joseph you will go first he wasn't here first oh okay well my staff got that wrong I'm sorry I didn't make that observation but we could

1:09:40 correct that so senator Bocas you would go first and then senator Carla Joseph will go second okay you will be given five minutes each for your line of questioning if we need a second round I would then proceed to let you know how much time you would get for your second round but before I ask my colleagues to begin mr. Rene you provided such a detailed testimony I'm like what questions I'm gonna ask but um one thing I want to ask you mentioned that you know one of the Commission members what about the other Commission member do you know that person I don't know her personally I have I have not met her personally but I've spoken to her and heard about she had an interview that I listened to I think last week and but I don't know personally on a one-on-one okay so you mentioned that you know mr. Marvin Pickering so the other person is miss Carolyn Herman Purell do you think that you can work well with these individuals from my discussions with the chairman give me a little background as to the attorneys background and I don't see any reason why I shouldn't and I've listened to her on the radio and I think I will have absolutely no problem in adjusting and working with her okay good and just tell me why do you want to serve the commission i know that the governor recommends and

appoints so just tell me why

- 1:11:31 you would want to serve in this commission first to is just a continuation of my service to the virgin islands i listened to the chairman's testimony before you last year and i think the year before where he was pleading with the governor to give him a full complement on the Casino Control Commission so he could do his job adequately. So when the governor approached me, I said, but if there is a need, I am willing to step in. So I did some studies, and I accepted. Well, thank you for your willingness to serve.
- 1:12:19 But before I proceed the line of questioning, I see Mr. J. Watson, who is in our audience here today, and I want to say welcome. And it is an honor to honor your mother today for Women's History Month. So thank you for coming. I'll start with Senator Bolkis to begin your five minutes. Please proceed. Thank you, Madam Chair, and bonjour. Bonjour. Good morning. Good morning, Senator. to the listening and viewing audience. I will say I can see that your qualifications and experience do in fact prepare you for this position. And, you know, setting policy and maintaining and establishing regulations and making determinations of suitability for gaming clients and gaming employees and other individuals and entities and instrumentalities in the casino area along with issuing permits and licensures and conducting hearings, just to list a few. So I hope your back is ready. There's a lot of work to do in this area, right? A lot of work. A lot of work.
- 1:13:31 And I will say, I want to ask you, what are some of your thoughts in further developing and enhancing the board moving forward? This was a question that I posed, and the answer was three members can adequately do the job. I know it was five before, and it was changed, I don't remember the act right now, but it was changed from five to three. So I imagine in the minds of the senators present that three was adequate. If I'm selected, when I go in, determine the volume of work, I may have a different opinion, but as of now, I have three seems adequate to me.
- 1:14:23 Okay, very well. And how do you see technology playing a role in assisting the board moving forward? Absolutely. And as I mentioned in my testimony, things are changing so rapidly that we have to change accordingly so that we can respond in a more timely manner to what needs to be done. So technology is definitely a key component to enhance the work of the Commission. And I wanted to ask, as a board member, once you go through this process and are approved, how will you assure that salary and salary or benefit abuse or even you know in the past we've heard embezzlement and such things how are you going to assure that things of that nature do not repeat itself within the Commission within the Commission we all know the Inspector General's report. I read it. And in my estimation, what is needed is internal controls that no one person is responsible for finances. No one person can sign checks. No one person can do what should be a team effort. So in that sense is what internal controls do we put in place to make sure that those things never happen because as I mentioned earlier for these things to happen will reduce the confidence that people have in the casino control commission you spoke about trust and transparency and even a public a positive public perception and I think that that's relatively very very important in any department agency commission board or institution of this government those should be the leading the leading morals of values of any institution within this government so I'm very happy and elated to hear you mention things of these caliber in your presentation through your testimony I also want to know are you familiar with the the division of gaming enforcement and if so as a board member how do you
- 1:16:35 plan to strengthen involvement with them on a day-to-day basis not when an investigation comes up i mean strengthening that relationship from a day-to-day basis with the commission with the board i had an extensive discussion with mr oliver david and one of his concerns is the lack of staff if you look at the volume of what has to be done you have to if somebody applies you have to carry out an investigation and that takes time so one of One of the key things is staffing, definitely the staffing at the DGE has to be increased so that all the investigations necessary will be done in a timely manner.
- 1:17:21 I'll give you an example. He says they are allowed to give temporary permits, but the investigation may take longer than the time they have the temporary permit is allowed to exist so that somebody could be six months into but the investigation takes seven months. By that time, the person has done the job and gone. But if he had the necessary staffing, he would be able to do a more timely job with investigations.
- 1:17:54 That sounds like something that this institution would have to dive in, take a deep dive into and look at how we can further enhance their operations from a staff standpoint. Very much so. Mr. Rene, I will say that you provided a very extensive testimony here today. I don't have many questions. I look forward to voting in the affirmative when the time comes, and I appreciate your willingness to serve in this capacity. Thank you, Madam Chair, for the time.
- 1:18:25 Thank you, Senator Bolkis. Thank you, Senator Bolkis. I would like to ask Mr. Renning, do you believe that all gaming activities in the VI Lottery, VLTs, horse racing should be consolidated under the Commission? This is definitely something to be studied. Because the way it exists right now is the lottery and some of the gaming activities are under the lottery and slot machines and hotel gambling is under the Casino Control Commission. Right now at this point, Senator,

it sounds like a good idea so that all gaming will be under one umbrella body, but I would have to look more into the pros and cons before I can offer an effective answer to putting everything, because they are different, to put everything under one umbrella. So I would need to do a little more research on whether they all should be under one control. Thank you. Thank you.

1:19:49 Now, I'd like to acknowledge a non-committee member, Senator DeGraff on St. Thomas, and committee member, Senator Kenneth Gittins. Can you, Madam Clerk, mark Senator Gittins as present? Now, Senator Collar-Joseph, you may proceed with your five minutes. Thank you so kindly, Madam Chair, a pleasant good morning to colleagues, testifiers, the listening audience. Definitely I read with a great sense of zeal how well put together your testimony was the Honorable Luther Rene. Thank you. provided a lot of information. You delineated well your vision, as well as your background. Nonetheless, I do have some questions to ask you relative to your testimony, and I noted that you received, outside of Mr. Chester, several letters commending you for the work that you have done here specifically in St. Croix and so I really want to congratulate before I ask you my question the governor for selecting you and for more importantly for you agreeing to serve in this capacity because it's a very important board the casino control commission I have sat here as a member of the 34th Legislature Rules and Judiciary Committee, and we confirmed one other who you will be joining, and that would be Ms. Carolyn Herman Purcell.

1:21:44 She's an attorney by profession. So my question. You mentioned in your testimony, page three, that you had migrated to the Virgin Islands. I didn't get the year. That's what I needed to find out the year when you migrated to St. Croix. Because I know it's a long time. A long time ago.

1:22:13 Yeah, but see if you could remember because I do have a point. I could never forget that date. It was August 1979. August 19, 1979. That's a very good day. That's a day my sister celebrates her birthday on August 19, or she would have celebrated her birthday on August 19, 1979. And so you came here from the island nation of St. Lucia, and what was the catalyst that brought you here?

1:22:51 My wife at the time was, she had a brother here who had business, and the brother filed for her, and she said, well, let's travel to St. Croix and see what it's like. Reluctantly, I said yes. I have never regretted doing it since. and and that is my point you have knitted yourself and your family into the very fabric of our community you didn't just uh sow seeds or or see somebody else's seed and reaping it you actually planted seeds here and you in my estimation should be able to reap it we are definitely richer as a community for all that you have done i also wanted to ask what is the current enumeration for the casino control commission members how much are they paid i think they paid a hundred thousand a hundred thousand and do you know how often you meet as a board based on your conversations this is my conversations i think they meet as a board every quarter but more frequently if there are decisions to be taken in your okay every quarter in your conversations with the current chairman and i'm sure he's going to be there to guide you along have you had any discussions relative to any new companies or organizations interested in in having casinos in the island district of St. Croix?

1:24:50 He did indicate there were things in the pipeline, but he did not elaborate. And he didn't elaborate how much, how many? No, he didn't say either. Okay. Now, I noticed my previous colleague had asked you about the capacity of the Casino Control Commission to actually do its work, the staffing, because it's a major issue all around. So how do you plan to assist your other team members and also the good attorney, Oliver, with beefing up the capacity we have within the casino control commission so that you can effectively carry out the code and enforcement? Enforcement is a major issue in the Virgin Islands, not only casino control commission. I'll let you know that and I'm sure you're very much aware enforcement. We lack enforcement and we have a whole bunch of enforcement officers in this branch but we lack enforcement. Kindly indicate to us how you plan to beef that up so that we have the sufficient men and women staff to enforce what is regulated in this code for the Casino Control Commission. I am pleased to mention that since speaking to the chair I have seen an ad in the papers for legal counsel. That's a step in the right direction. In the budget there was also that position was vacant and I've since seen that it's being advertised to get its own legal counsel.

1:26:29 so that's a step in the right direction. Mr. David informed me that honestly he would need 100% increase in staffing. And did he indicate how much it would be? Dollar amount? No, he didn't indicate, but he's now at three and he mentioned to me to adequately do the job he would need six. So he needs three more? Three more. Okay, very good. Now, I'm thinking my time is going to be called right now, Madam Chair.

1:27:03 I will just wrap up with one question. You may proceed. Thank you kindly. I'm taking some of Senator Boca's time. So I also wanted to ask you, and this is my final question. It's very important. I understand from your testimony you were mentored by our great judge, Eileen Peterson. Now, who do you have? you're sitting here who do you have or are you planning to mentor someone because we have to have that torch she has to be passed along and it was passed to you who do you intend to mentor or who do you have as your mentee as i mentioned earlier i have a number of students who go

way back to good hope school who have never allowed me to pass by without seeking help or advice as a As a matter of fact, when I went into the Justice Department yesterday, I walked out and there was a young person calling me, Mr. Rene, Mr. Rene, what are you doing here? And I said, oh, I'm so glad.

1:28:11 And I taught her at Good Hope School in the seventh grade. So those people who I have taught before, I will definitely choose to mentor a few of them if I'm given the opportunity. And not only if I'm given, I will seek the opportunity to do so. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Thank you. I will be definitely voting in the favor of this nominee. Thank you kindly. Thank you, Senator Joseph. At this time, I'll entertain Senator Johnson for your five minutes.

1:28:45 Good morning. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good morning to my colleagues. Good morning to the testifier. Good morning to the listening and viewing audience. you gave us a lesson here today good morning um i've been blessed this is my second term and i was on the rules committee my first term and i'm on the rules again and i have not met anyone that come before the rules committee with such an in-depth testimony and preparation i must say kudos to you you not only just accepted the job but you dive in very early to understand what this job entail and and that means a lot it says to me that you have a lot of interest about the role you're about to take once passed by this committee and by the full body you have a lot of interest in a lot of areas and that that's that's important to me when i see a person come for nomination that they prepare themselves and understand the tasks of which they're going to be solving and position and i also say thank you for your willingness to solve it's not an easy job and you you you've been through this mill here before so with this mill you could just about go to any so i i say thank you for that and in your testimony you spoke about staffing and just now under questioning for my colleague you you reiterate that in your discussion they talk about the lacking of staff what what did anybody say the reason why is it funding what are they saying why they don't have sufficient staff i think it might be funding might be the big issue because mr david also told me almost every meeting he has he has asked for the increase in staffing but there's always a reluctance and i think it's due to funding i thought this is this is what i

1:30:40 i got out of the meeting with and and listening to you again testify it's it's sad to hear that folks are getting this temporary permit but the investigation process is taking so long and you know that that that doesn't work well especially if we want to be sincerely about regulating casino gambling and again I'm gonna actually partially a question that was asked but I'm going from the angle of the VLT and you've heard them one minute they call them VLT the next minute they call them um slot machine where do you think they really should go because they're not under the casino commission at this time by understanding there is a difference between the slot machines and the vlt's my understanding is the slot machines are independent operating units whereas the VLTs have a central server.

1:31:41 Mr. Rene, please speak into the mic, okay? That the VLTs have a central server that's controlled by the lottery office whereas the slot machines are themselves independent machines that operate as units on their own. But you would agree that they are gaming chances, are they? they have chances of game they are both gaming and chance games I anticipated that question and I'm going to approach it this way the casino regulations was one instituted for hotel development on St. Croix when the economy of St. Croix was in the down turn unless we want to change the legislation for vlt's that's that would be a decision for you're giving me my instructions one minute however we move away from hotel development as the impetus and revenue becomes the major thing then we can begin to reconsider vlt's also Because we're surely definitely losing a lot of revenues and VLTs.

1:33:07 I totally agree. And what are some of your personal goals if you're supposed to be nominated and serve on this commission? What are some of the goals that you look forward to see that you can achieve to even make the casino commission an even more stronger board? I think more importantly to me, as I said, after reading the audit, I think the key thing at this point for me going in is to make sure all internal controls to avoid misuse should be implemented. Personal goal for me is to assist in getting that done. Okay. Madam Chair, may I wrap up on this last question?

1:33:51 You may. In your testimony, and I said you dive deep and you spoke to Mr. Pickering, who's the chair, and you spoke a little bit about gambling habits and people with problems. Where do you see yourself falling into strength in that area where not enough assistance to those who become addicted to gambling? Because a lot of that has happened into our territory. How do you see yourself fitting into assisting that area? I'm so happy you brought up this question, because this is one of the things I spoke at length to with Mr. Pickering.

1:34:31 That there is, or I think it's called the Alliance for, Against Problem Gambling, or what's that effect. And I mentioned to you, and I'm going to answer you that way, the approach seems to be right now to approach problem gambling when it has become an issue I believe we should approach it when it's not yet an issue and one of the things I propose to him is to try to get to the young people before they get into gambling not from the avenue of don't gamble, but from the avenue of teaching young people financial planning, financial planning and budgeting.

- 1:35:30 Hopefully, if we approach it from that angle, young people will develop an attitude of saving, of working better to achieve your long-term goals and gradually move away from the one-time chance of gambling to win. So I believe if we instill in young people financial planning early, we might in some way contribute to avoiding problem gambling later. In our layman terms, an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the leniency.
- 1:36:08 and i wish you the best in your never thank you thank you senator johnson mr renee telling you our farmer senator you know what to do to provide a detailed summary testimony so we don't ask you 99 questions right thank you uh senator potter who is my vice chair you may proceed with your five minutes you thank you thank you very much madam chair morning colleagues good morning senator relate Renee mr. Chester good morning I must concur with my good friend and colleague from the West that in terms of preparation for you know these appointments we see it all we see them all the time I think you would fall in it I mean the top two or three percent you were very thorough you were prepared and you've obviously taken this appointment seriously and I have a great deal of respect for that you obviously have had a stellar career in academia I've learned a lot about you today for sure in the private sector you've worked in both branches of government to include serving as a senator in this body you've also served in the executive branch what would you What would you say, I know this might be a tough one, what would you say is the single greatest asset or attribute that you will bring to the casino commission if you were appointed to serve in that capacity?
- 1:37:45 Hard work, consistency, leadership. You asked for one, I gave you three, I'm sorry. That's good, that's good, that's good, I respect that. you haven't assumed your role as yet but is there anything just from the due diligence and a homework that you've done in preparation for this post is there anything that you see any low-hanging fruit that you may be able to immediately impact or to change or to influence you know in short order when you come on board immediately I would like to delve into the issue of problem gambling because I have seen some of the damages I just done not only financially we sat at the Commission's office 90% of the people who gamble are are local, using their pensions and social security checks.
- 1:38:51 I think this is disheartening. I would like to see whether we can at least begin to move away from that trend. And as I said earlier, we're not getting the kind of traffic into the gambling industry as we expected. And the people who are gambling are all local people. How do you address that? How do you, I know you mentioned financial counseling and the like, so what specifically can the casino commission do to address this, to have an impact in this area of problem gambling? As you, I'm sure you realize that part of the casino funds, I think it's actually call the casino fund, part of it goes towards dealing with casino gambling, and education. A lot of the funds, some of the funds go to education, so maybe we can begin there.
- 1:39:49 I know the problem gamblers that already exist, it might be difficult because it may be an issue that's too far gone, but there is, I would suspect, funding the Alliance for Problem Gamblers, maybe if we can give that more teeth. I understand right now it's defunct. Not defunct, but not operating as it should. Maybe we could liven that up immediately. In your view, and we spoke briefly, you mentioned briefly about the Inspector General's report, and you had an opportunity to look at that, and there was an indication that most of the findings have been resolved. Just to hear from you, from your experience and background, Why is it important, because internal controls was a big thing, the lack or lack thereof. Why is it important, why is it critical for an organization of this nature to have strong internal controls, in your opinion?
- 1:40:49 Because, Commissioner, if you don't, you're going to allow a few people to get away with funds that would have been better spent revitalizing the economy, and also doing better work for the community. If you don't do that, you're having a lopsided benefit and cost relationship. So we need to absolutely create the situation where no longer can that happen, because it's too critical to allow it to happen.
- 1:41:25 We're also the results of it that shouldn't be allowed to happen anymore. Awesome. I, you know, as Senator Capehart mentioned earlier, you've been very thorough in your presentation, so there are very few questions that I can ask you that you didn't cover in your presentation. I wish you the very best. At the appropriate time, I will vote in the affirmative for your confirmation to this very important commission. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Senator Potter.
- 1:41:53 I would like to acknowledge our Chief Legal Counsel, Attorney Carty, for your presence in St. Thomas. Thank you for your attendance. Colleagues, we have the availability if we need clarification on anything. At this time, Senator Maurice James, you may proceed with your five minutes. Good morning, Virgin Islands. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, everyone. Good morning.
- 1:42:24 I'm actually biased, okay? know you I know you and so all these papers here don't mean anything to me because I know the character of the man which at the end of the day is most important in serving the people of the Virgin Islands and you know I still decided to read everything anyway I'm an attorney and we love to read and one thing that struck me was of

course and it really segues on what my colleague ask you about mentorship because I had already noticed it when I saw the letter from Jed John Hope and I'm not going to call him out and what he said how we did on your first test but I wanted what made an impression on me was when he said that mr. Rene was one of the few black professional males that I knew and his mentorship helped me become a black male professional many years later and then I thought you know I said let me go back into your resume and just look at it again and you know what struck me mr. Renee is that you started out as a teacher and you rose to such high levels in our government and yet you are now teaching at St. Patrick's School. That's humility, that's character and that's what I think when I read Rudyard Kipling, if when he says walk with kings nor lose the common touch. I think about you and so I am biased in that regard. When you came before me I just said to you is there anything bad that against somebody will say that would dissuade me and of course you said hey I went through everything this this this and I said okay fine but you know there was one sentence two sentences in in your testimony that that caught my eye and it was when you said training for the

1:44:25 members of the casino control Commission must be given top priority so you're talking about the three of you or the entire Commission staff everybody because not just the three of us but entire commission staff because without them because if we don't train them things will also go haywire so we need to have people in place not only the commissioners but people in place who'd carry out the day-to-day activities to make sure things don't go astray okay and um another question that that caught my um just for me for my um education on page nine you said conduct daily inspections within the gaming industry to and the first um bullet you say verify the source of casino revenue what does that mean when as from my understanding goes when an investigation is being carried out the dge has to determine where the funds are coming from the funds for building the hotel the funds for establishing machines they have to find out where that money is coming from it's not any illegal source of funds so they have to carry that out for the building of the casino right and okay and going back to what we talked about um you you mentioned a little about was the purpose of why we brought casino the casino industry to st croix does the casino commission work with the and it was of course tourism because we wanted tourists to go into the casino and we know that's not the case now we know that mostly locals including me

1:46:14 go to the casino, right? And so what about the tourists? How do we get one minute? Well, let me ask this. Do you, do you see some sort of relationship with the, with the tourists, the Department of Tourism to get tourists to come to St. Roy so they can go to the casino? That was the basic premise, right? correctly that was the basic premise that if you have casino gambling you would have junkets they call it you have people coming in to gamble and I think your question also relates to a question I asked can the casino control Commission go out and solicit tourists to come to or solicit hotel building for instance and the answer was no we as a Commission we cannot do that because we You would have to regulate the same people we encourage to come and build hotels without be a conflict of interest. So we can't do that. But there are funds available in the Casino Revenue Fund to give to tourism to advertise our hotels, advertise casino gambling in the St. Croix. There are funds that goes towards that.

1:47:37 Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. You're welcome, Senator James. At this time, I'll entertain Senator Gittins, since I don't see Senator DeGraff on the floor. Senator Gittins, you may proceed with five minutes. Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning to all.

1:48:06 Good morning, Senator. I am sorry that our good stenographer is in my way, but no, I'm just messing. But welcome home. Thank you. How do you feel? Good. Good. You feel blessed as well? I feel very blessed. Great. I listened to your testimony, nothing short of what I expected. Thank you.

1:48:35 you have always impressed me thanks I've seen you I've known you professionally and personally and I have no doubt that you're the right person to fill one of of these positions thanks my colleagues stated out I really intended to just get up here say good morning to you congratulations and say return the time but then you know they'll really say I'm being biased but again I want to make it clear that I'm pleased to support your nomination here today to the Casino Control Commission as again I'm very familiar with your works however it's no secret whatsoever that I support the consolidation of the restructuring when it comes to regulating gambling here in the territory to include lottery horse racing and our casinos you responded to my good colleague from Frederick said there and my use award that the the governor had used and one of my colleagues you made me cringe there for a minute because of your response with regards to three minutes the VLTs somewhat I will have to say to you that I don't agree with your position today you know are you familiar

1:50:23 familiar with the recent court ruling, essentially deeming the video lottery terminals and traditional slot machines as identical gaming devices. So you are aware that Judge Gomez stated, and I quote, in some the machines utilized as VLTs and slot machines are both electronic machines that offer an opportunity to win a prize by playing a game of chance in exchange for money vlt's and slot machines function in the same manner are interchangeable and in many cases are in fact identical machines accordingly the court holds that the slot machines contemplated in the virgin islands act number

7952 and virgin islands act number 7953 are the functional equivalent of the vlt's contemplated in the vlt contract between the gvi and southland that was opined by judge gomez and he concluded that the united states constitution provides that no state shall pass any law impairing the obligation of contracts any part of that that you don't agree with i mean this is the standing of the courts okay i am aware of the judge's statement that vlt machines and slot machines are the same thing in fact that's a discussion I had with the DGE. However, I think he was instrumental in having the definition clarified, but his position, which I tend to go along with, is that there are different machines

1:52:23 in terms of the fact that one uses a common server while the other is a standalone machine. However, he was quick to note, with the further development of these machines, who knows? Let me know when I have one minute, please. the advancement in gambling and the introduction of technology that that situation might change so that said do you agree that the casino control commission should in fact regulate the use of all these machines which would include the vlt's time and this my position on that is the slot machines are only at hotels on St. Croix and the VLTs are in St. Thomas.

1:53:24 My good friend, I would like you to answer my question directly though. As I asked, do you agree that the Casino Commission, Casino Control Commission, should regulate all these machines? So, Senator, I would like to say that I would want to have more studies to see whether the Casino Control Commission is, at this time, equipped to regulate all the machines. And I humbly respect your response. Thank you.

1:54:00 Madam Chair, oh, Mr. Chairman, good thing I look up. I love his response just now. Don't allow people to tie you down like that. you know but i i truly respect your your response there now that was a response thank you not the long-winded one though you were going to before but mr chairman thank you for the latitude at the appropriate time i do intend to support uh mr renee's nomination uh to the casino control commission and i am looking forward for you and the team doing your research because i still have that piece of legislation to bring forward and i'm happy to continue hearing my colleagues talking about the consolidation and having one entity to regulate these so i'm counting on my colleague's support at the appropriate time for us to also pass this measure we've been talking about it too long it's time for action that i would like to investigate thank you thank you mr chairman Thank you very much, Senator Gittins, I'm seeing Senator Ray Fonseca, non-committee members.

1:55:18 Senator Fonseca, you are recognized for your five minutes. uh yes um pleasant uh good morning to all the listening audience um um i really don't have any uh questions i'm i'm in favor of uh this particular nomination and at the appropriate time i will be casting a favorable uh vote to support um the nomination thank you for your time mr chair thank you senator thank you senator um at this time if any of my colleagues uh would like to have any points of personal privilege inquiry senator joseph thank you so much madam chair for the leniency uh relative to the nomination of the honorable luther renee i want to say again i said it when you were over there thank you uh for your service especially on the virgin islands agriculture food fair board i remember vividly when i was the manager for the youth build program which was sponsored through the virgin islands housing authority you would make it your point to have an area where our young people and the people could see the house the miniature house our young people had built sometimes we would submit our applications a little tardy because and but you you really really were supportive and I say that that's the teacher in your spirit because you understand the importance of education and how it is the greatest equalizer for our people so I really want to thank you for always being objective always being strategic and more importantly humble as well as professional in the delivery of your service so I definitely like I said I will be voting in the affirmative thank you kindly madam chair thank you senator you're welcome senator Joseph colleagues is there anyone else that

1:57:54 would like to take a point of personal privilege inquiry if all conversations related to the nominee is completed I will entertain a motion motion motion made by a recognized senator Gittens for his motion thank you madam chair good morning to all again madam chair and colleagues I move that the nomination of the governor's nomination to appoint mr. Luther F Renee to the Virgin Islands casino control commission be voted upon favorably here in the rules and judiciary committee and be forwarded to the full body for further consideration I so move second probably move and second seconded wise properly moved by senator gittings and seconded by senator joseph madam clerk seconded by senator bulquez johnson and james mad and joseph and potter everybody you see what you get um madam clerk we'll call roll call on the motion senator angel l bolquez jr senator bolquez yay senator kenneth l gittins senator gittins yay senator maurice c james yes senator james yes yay senator franklin Wendy Johnson. Yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Carla J. Joseph. Yes. Senator Joseph, yay. Senator Milton Potter. Yes. Senator Potter, yay. Senator Diane T. Capehart.

1:59:56 Yes. Senator Capehart, yay. Madam Chair, we have seven yays. Thank you, Madam Clerk. While this motion has been moved and will be forwarded to the full body for further consideration, Congratulations, Mr. René, and we will take a-I'm a little rusty, trust me-thank you for your willingness to serve, and you are forwarded to the full body for further consideration. at this time we'll take a recess okay so um miss joseph i got this thank you i have this thank you thank you i know i haven't been in the legislature a while but i'm not a freshman either so um mr renee um i will give you this

opportunity to give any words to this committee Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you all senators on the Rules and Judiciary Committee.

2:01:11 I really thank you for the faith that you now place in me to serve one more time on this important commission, the Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission. I vouch that I will continue to serve the Virgin Islands in the best way with integrity and with a sense of purpose on that commission where I will be required to do certain activities that will enhance the Casino Control Commission and the casino industry in general.

2:01:54 I promise you that your support will not be in vain. So I thank you once again, and I appreciate your faith and confidence in me. Thank you. Thank you. I'll announce that the second part of this meeting shall start immediately after our break. So this meeting stands in recess. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll see you next time.

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.

10x **Senator Diane T. Capeheart**
heard in this transcript as: Capehart, Diane Capehart, Diane T. Capehart

9x **Senator Carla Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph
heard in this transcript as: Carla J. Joseph, Joseph

8x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**
heard in this transcript as: Gittins, Kenneth Gittins, Kenneth L. Gittins

8x **Senator Milton E. Potter**
heard in this transcript as: Milton Potter, Potter

5x **Senator Franklin D. Johnson**
heard in this transcript as: Johnson

5x **Senator Marise C. James**
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James, Maurice C. James, Maurice James

4x **Senator Angel L. Bolkis Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Bolkis

4x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**
heard in this transcript as: DeGraff, Dwayne M. DeGraff

4x **Senator George E. Goodwin**

3x **Senator Ray Fonseca**
heard in this transcript as: Fonseca

2x **Governor Albert Bryan Jr**

2x **Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger**
heard in this transcript as: Alma Francis Heiliger

2x **Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Boca's

2x **Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.**
heard in this transcript as: Angel L. Bolques Jr., Bolquez

2x **Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory**
heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Fred Gregory

2x **Senator Horace Callwood**
heard in this transcript as: Horace A. Callwood Sr.

2x **Senator Marvin Blyden**
heard in this transcript as: Marvin A. Blyden

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.

Bill 35-0006	Act 8702 · An Act honoring and commending former Senator George E. Goodwin for his many years of expansive contributions to the Virgin Islands community as a whole, through his roles in various areas of service to the Territory as well as advocacy for social justice for underserved people in the Virgin Islands; to rename the cricket grounds located on Parcel H of Tract 1, Estate Nazareth, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands in his honor; and to award former Senator George E. Goodwin the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor; and for other related purposes ---0
Bill 35-0011	Act 8706 · An Act honoring and commending former Senator Horace A. Callwood, Sr. posthumously for his dedication, service, and commitment to the people of the Virgin Islands and naming the north-south street immediately east of Windward Passage in his memory ---0
Bill 35-0007	Act 8703 · An Act honoring and commending Mr. Boyd ·Boyzie· Orlanzo Todman for his many contributions to the people and the youth of the Virgin Islands and to name the basketball court at the Oswald Harris Court ·The Boyd ·Boyzie· Orlanzo Todman Basketball Court·
Bill 35-0009	Act 8704 · April 14, 2023 · An Act amending title 1 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 11, section 171(a) relating to the observance of national holidays and enacting The Juneteenth National Independence Day Act to declare June 19 a legal holiday in the Virgin Islands ---0
Bill 28-0084	Act 7318 · An Act repealing Act No. 7169 (Bill No. 28-0084) and re-enacting title 32 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 21, title 29 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 3, title 32, chapter 13 and title 33, section 3044 with amendments, enacted by the Twenty-Ninth Legislature at its regular session on June 23, 2011, (a copy of which is attached hereto) and vetoed by the Governor on July 12, 2011, was duly enacted, by override, by the Twenty-Ninth Legislature at its regular session on October 27, 2011, pursuant to section 9(d) of the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands, 48 U.S.C. §1575 (d), notwithstanding the Governor's veto and has become law. Ronald E. Russell President W-Aa-H DATED: ATTEST: Sh Sammuell Sane
Act 6419	Act 6419 · (title not held)
Act 7318	Act 7318 · An Act repealing Act No. 7169 (Bill No. 28-0084) and re-enacting title 32 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 21, title 29 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 3, title 32, chapter 13 and title 33, section 3044 with amendments, enacted by the Twenty-Ninth Legislature at its regular session on June 23, 2011, (a copy of which is attached hereto) and vetoed by the Governor on July 12, 2011, was duly enacted, by override, by the Twenty-Ninth Legislature at its regular session on October 27, 2011, pursuant to section 9(d) of the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands, 48 U.S.C. §1575 (d), notwithstanding the Governor's veto and has become law. Ronald E. Russell President W-Aa-H DATED: ATTEST: Sh Sammuell Sane
Act 7702	Act 7702 · September 25, 2014 · An Act to amend Title 16, chapter 3, § 109(a) of the Virgin Islands Code by providing for the equitable distribution of marital real and personal property upon divorce ---0)
Act 8577	Act 8577 · April 7, 2022 · An Act amending the Virgin Islands Code, title 32, chapters 11 and 21, relating to video lottery at the horse racetrack in St. Thomas; amending title 29, chapter 3, relating to the zoning for video lottery at the horse racetrack in St. Thomas; and providing for the ratification of the Second Amended Agreement to the Video Lottery Services Agreement and the Development Agreement Regarding the Clinton E. Phipps Racetrack by and between the Government of the Virgin Islands and Southland Gaming of the Virgin Islands, Inc., and for other related purposes --0
Act 7952	Act 7952 · An Act amending title 32 Virgin Islands Code, chapters 11 and 21 relating to horse racing and the establishment of racinos in the Virgin Islands and amending title 29 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 3 relating to the zoning of racinos in the Virgin Islands
Act 7953	Act 7953 · An Act approving the Franchise Agreement between the Government of the Virgin Islands and VIGL Operations, LLC and the Lease and Sublease Agreements between the Government of the Virgin Islands and VIGL Operations, LLC
Act 8702	Act 8702 · An Act honoring and commending former Senator George E. Goodwin for his many years of expansive contributions to the Virgin Islands community as a whole, through his roles in various areas of service to the Territory as well as advocacy for social justice for underserved people in the Virgin Islands; to rename the cricket grounds located on Parcel H of Tract 1, Estate Nazareth, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands in his honor; and to award former Senator George E. Goodwin the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor; and for other related purposes ---0
Act 8706	Act 8706 · An Act honoring and commending former Senator Horace A. Callwood, Sr. posthumously for his dedication, service, and commitment to the people of the Virgin Islands and naming the north-south street immediately east of Windward Passage in his memory ---0
Act 8703	Act 8703 · An Act honoring and commending Mr. Boyd ·Boyzie· Orlanzo Todman for his many contributions to the people and the youth of the Virgin Islands and to name the basketball court at the Oswald Harris Court ·The Boyd ·Boyzie· Orlanzo Todman Basketball Court·

Act 8704

Act 8704 · April 14, 2023 · An Act amending title 1 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 11, section 171(a) relating to the observance of national holidays and enacting The Juneteenth National Independence Day Act to declare June 19 a legal holiday in the Virgin Islands ---0

Act 7169

Act 7169 · An Act amending title 32 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 21 relating to the establishment of racinos in the Virgin Islands a | eae

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Act 6069