

BILL NO. 36-0223

Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

January 12, 2026

A resolution honoring and commending the life, legacy, and service of former Warden Thomas Martin, posthumously, for his distinguished public service to the people of the Virgin Islands, his honorable military service as a Montford Point Marine during World War II, and his posthumous receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal

PROPOSED BY: Senators Clifford A. Joseph, Sr., Marise C. James,
Milton E. Potter, Novelle E. Francis, Jr. and Carla J. Joseph

1 **WHEREAS**, Thomas Martin was born on January 22, 1916, in Reading, England, to the
2 late Annie Martin of Hastings, England, and Stephen Martin of Jamaica, and was one of nine
3 children;

4 **WHEREAS**, after completing his formal education at the age of fourteen at Stanley
5 Street School, Thomas Martin left home and joined the fairgrounds, where he developed a
6 strong skill and passion for boxing;

7 **WHEREAS**, Thomas Martin began his professional boxing career at the age of sixteen
8 and rose to become the Light Heavyweight Champion of the British Isles, later ranking among
9 the top ten heavyweight boxers in the world;

10 **WHEREAS**, due to the color bar in England, Thomas Martin was prohibited from
11 competing for the heavyweight title, and he courageously challenged this racial discrimination

1 by taking his case to Parliament, laying important groundwork for reforms that occurred after
2 his boxing career had concluded;

3 **WHEREAS**, Thomas Martin's boxing career took him across the globe, including
4 Australia, British Guiana, India, parts of Africa, and Hollywood, California, establishing him
5 as an internationally recognized athlete;

6 **WHEREAS**, during World War II, Thomas Martin returned home to serve his country
7 by joining the Royal Air Force and later the Merchant Navy, during which time his ship was
8 torpedoed, resulting in injuries that left him temporarily blind;

9 **WHEREAS**, after recovering in Canada, Thomas Martin continued his commitment to
10 public service by joining the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;

11 **WHEREAS**, on December 16, 1943, at the age of twenty-seven, Thomas Martin enlisted
12 in the United States Marine Corps and became one of the first Black Marines trained at
13 Montford Point Camp in North Carolina;

14 **WHEREAS**, the Montford Point Marines were the first Black Marines in the United
15 States since 1776, trained under harsh and segregated conditions, and played a critical role in
16 the eventual integration of the United States Armed Forces;

17 **WHEREAS**, after successfully completing basic training, Thomas Martin was assigned
18 to Camp Recreation, where a recurrence of a prior eye injury required medical treatment and
19 ultimately resulted in his honorable medical discharge from the Marine Corps;

20 **WHEREAS**, in 2012, the Montford Point Marines were collectively awarded the
21 Congressional Gold Medal by President Barack Obama in recognition of their historic and
22 honorable military service during World War II;

1 **WHEREAS**, the Congressional Gold Medal will be posthumously bestowed upon
2 former Warden Thomas Martin, a Montford Point Marine, in recognition of his faithful and
3 honorable military service during World War II;

4 **WHEREAS**, the National Montford Point Marine Association has undertaken the
5 mission of locating surviving Montford Point Marines or their descendants to ensure that this
6 distinguished honor is properly bestowed;

7 **WHEREAS**, the Martin family relocated to the Virgin Islands in 1950, and in 1974,
8 Thomas Martin was appointed Warden of the Richmond Penitentiary on St. Croix;

9 **WHEREAS**, during his tenure as warden, Thomas Martin was a staunch believer in fair
10 and humane discipline, never carrying a firearm or a club, and earning the respect of both
11 inmates and staff;

12 **WHEREAS**, Warden Martin and his wife, Norma Martin, who served as Assistant
13 Director of Personnel, raised their daughters, Diana, Phyllis, Margaret, and Blanche, on St.
14 Croix, firmly embedding their family in the Virgin Islands community;

15 **WHEREAS**, Warden Martin frequently escorted inmates to church services on Sundays,
16 personally participated in blood bank drives alongside inmate volunteers, and provided for his
17 men when local vendors were unable to do so, demonstrating leadership rooted in dignity and
18 compassion;

19 **WHEREAS**, under his leadership, inmates were encouraged to improve themselves
20 morally, physically, mentally, and vocationally, resulting in the establishment of training
21 programs and workshops including tailoring, shoemaking, barbering, boat building and repair,
22 furniture making, fishing net production, ceramics, farming, fishing, concrete block
23 construction, and an inmate-operated art gallery and commissary;

1 **WHEREAS**, inmate musicians trained under Warden Martin’s administration performed
2 Sunday concerts in public parks as part of a steel band program, reflecting his commitment to
3 rehabilitation, productivity, and community engagement;

4 **WHEREAS**, throughout his life, Thomas Martin confronted and overcame numerous
5 battles, as a professional boxer, an advocate against racial discrimination, a World War II
6 serviceman, and a correctional leader, consistently standing for justice, equality, and service;

7 **WHEREAS**, although he traveled extensively throughout the world, Thomas Martin
8 chose St. Croix as his home and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the people of the Virgin
9 Islands;

10 **WHEREAS**, the 11th Legislature of the Virgin Islands adopted Resolution No. 807 (Bill
11 No. 6960), honoring and commending Thomas Martin, Retired, for his distinguished and
12 dedicated public service to the people of the Virgin Islands as Warden of the Richmond
13 Penitentiary on the island of St. Croix;

14 **WHEREAS**, following his retirement, Thomas Martin spent his later years gardening
15 and focusing on family, before ultimately succumbing to cancer and passing away on St. Croix
16 in 1987; and

17 **WHEREAS**, the life, legacy, and service of former Warden Thomas Martin continue to
18 serve as a powerful example of honor, resilience, leadership, and devotion to public service in
19 the Virgin Islands; Now, Therefore,

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

21 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin
22 Islands, honors and commends the life, legacy, and service of former Warden Thomas Martin,
23 posthumously, in recognition of his honorable military service as a Montford Point Marine
24 during World War II and his distinguished public service to the people of the Virgin Islands,

and acknowledges that he will be posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of that service.

SECTION 2. In recognition of his lifetime of service and posthumous receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal, the President of the Legislature shall present a copy of this resolution to the family of former Warden Thomas Martin at an appropriate ceremony.

BILL SUMMARY

This resolution honors and commends the life, legacy, and service of former Warden Thomas Martin, posthumously, for his distinguished public service to the people of the Virgin Islands and his honorable military service as a Montford Point Marine during World War II; to recognize his leadership as Warden of the Richmond Penitentiary on St. Croix and his commitment to justice, rehabilitation, and humane discipline; and to acknowledge his posthumous award of the Congressional Gold Medal.

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