



10-11-24 | The Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, and Parks

Legislature USVI

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- 0:00:00 Let's get started. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Let's get started. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'll see you next time. Let's get started. Thank you. Thank you. I'll see you next time. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. I'll see you next time. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Let's get started. We'll see you next time. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. 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 be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- 0:25:00 Thank you. We'll be right back. [2 such phrases repeated 13 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:31:30 We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll see you next time. [3 such phrases repeated 35 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:49:00 The Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports and Parks is hereby called to order. Welcome to the people of the Virgin Islands and those listening and viewing from abroad. I am Senator Angel Boulkes Jr., the chairman of this committee. The members of this committee include Marvin Blyden, vice chairman, Samuel Carriong, Novell E. Francis Jr., Alma Francis Heiliger, Franklin D. Johnson, and Milton E. Potter. we move forward I would like to make a few statements as today we're having a discussion surrounding our culture and first I wanted first and foremost I wanted to send some prayers out for the people who are affected by the hurricane that has done some damage in the state of Florida and I'm hoping all of the families and friends of loved ones up there are safe, we know how damaging a hurricane can be here in the Virgin Islands as we have had to experience our own set of hurricanes so our heart and love goes out to those people, we're hoping that they're safe. As we are in the month of October, we want to take some time to recognize some of the important observances, holidays or any celebrations that we have here in the Virgin Islands and One of the key

holidays, well, it's not really a holiday but an observance, is the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Day. First and foremost, I want to highlight that the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Day has been celebrated for decades here in the Virgin Islands, and it's celebrated usually around the second Monday of October, and this holiday is a testament to the deep bonds between the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. We have our Puerto Rican brothers and sisters from Vieques, Culebra and all of those neighboring islands and this celebration really underscores our history and our culture and the enduring friendship between our people. It is a time for us to honor the contributions that Puerto Ricans have come to here to the Virgin Islands and contributed to our cultural exchange and also to the infrastructure and the development of the Virgin Islands. So it's a very important friendship. In addition to that we also want to recognize Breast Cancer Awareness Month in the month of October. It's an opportunity for us to dialogue about this battling disease that affects predominantly women but men can also have breast cancer as well but mostly it's found in women and we want to be able to have early detection for women. If you're a woman and need to go to the doctor please look for early detection but it's an opportunity for us to discuss and look at how we can try to solve that issue in addition October is domestic violence awareness month um any type

0:52:18 of violence whether it's towards a woman a child or a man is absolutely not incorrigible um so but in this specific case domestic violence month is in the month of October um also World Mental Health Day was yesterday October 10th and this is the day that we remind each other about the importance of mental health in our society and we have to address those challenges that affect our people. And before we move on I would like Madame Clerk to please take the roll call. Senator Marvin A. Blyden. Senator Blyden absent. Senator Novelli Francis. Senator Francis present. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger. Senator Francis Heiliger absent. Senator Samuel Carrion. Senator Carrion present.

0:53:27 Senator Milton E. Potter. Senator Potter present. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Senator Johnson, absent. Senator Angel L. Bocas, Jr., present. Senator Bocas, Jr., present. Mr. Chair, we have four present and three absent. Thank you, Madame Clerk. Madame Clerk, is there any correspondence to be read on the record? No, Mr. Chair. Madame Clerk, I would like you to please acknowledge the presence of Senator Franklin Johnson who has just arrived and mark him as present and Madame Clerk can you now tell us the roll call present and absent yes we have five present and three absent by present three absent yes okay sorry apologies two absent oh okay good okay thank you so much Madame Clerk Madame Clerk can you please proceed with reading the agenda on the record the committee and culture youth aging sports and parks has scheduled a hearing for Friday October 11th 2024 at 930 a.m. at the Fritz E. Lowe's legislative hall on St. Croix to receive testimony and updates regarding the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee block one during this hearing the committee will be hosting special presentations to commemorate the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico Friendship Day. These presentations will showcase the significance of the friendship between the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. In addition to the special presentations, the committee will receive a comprehensive overview of the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee. This overview will encompass the committee's activities, achievements, challenges or obstacles encountered and a specific needs it has identified the hearing aims to provide a platform for a thorough understanding of the committee's role in fostering and maintaining this friendship invited testifiers the Honorable Jose Corcino Acevedo mayor of the island of Vieques Puerto Rico the The Honorable Luis Torres, Chairman, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico Friendship Committee. The Honorable Vera Falou, former President, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico Friendship Committee, former Commissioner, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, former Deputy Commissioner, Department of Human Services, Joseph Olmeda, former President, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico friendship committee Mr. Chair this concludes the reading of the agenda okay thank you Madame Clerk

0:56:22 and that's the honorable Joseph Almeida my apologies you know you sorry you are honorable Mr. Almeida yes very good thank you so much uh before we move forward um I would like to outline some housekeeping rules um I would like to ask the testifiers um during the deliberation to consistently identify themselves each time by placing your name and title on the record so that we can have our in-house stenographers they'll be accounting the meeting today so please be sure to do so and we will have Miss Anna Castillo who will be helping to translate this morning with the mayor so so please if you your phones put them on mute or vibrate and let's begin so before we start with the testimonies I would like to have a mic check for everyone beginning with our current president Mr. Luis Torres microphone check please put your name and title on the record Luis Torres president of the VIPR committee thank you Jose Corcino, Alcalde de la Isla Municipio de Vieques.

0:57:44 Vera M. Falou, de Puerto Rico y Santa Cruz. Josef Olmeda, de Santa Cruz. Okay, okay, great. And today we have a good audience. I would ask media to just pan out to the audience. We have members of a delegation that have come here from Puerto Rico to, along with some other dignitaries sense of members of the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee. So I just want to say good morning to each and every one of them and thank you for being here with us today.

- 0:58:16 El senador le da las gracias por estar aquí hoy y bienvenidos. Okay, so we're gonna start with testimonies beginning, we're gonna end up going with testimonies from the current president and then the former presidents and then ending with the testimony with of the mayor uh beginning with president Luis Torres thank you uh good morning everybody senate president honorable senators uh thank you thank you for allowing me this opportunity i do have my uh my treasurer it's on its way too okay yeah okay so i'll go ahead and start okay good morning good morning everyone thank you Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in honor of the 60th anniversary of the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee. This milestone not only represents a significant achievement of our committee, but also underscores the enduring bond between the people of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Since its inception, the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee has worked tirelessly to foster goodwill, cultural exchange, and unity between our two communities. What began as a humble initiative six decades ago has grown into a cherished tradition that continues to shape our shared identity.
- 0:59:50 It is a celebration of the past, a recognition of the present, and an opportunity to shape a bright future together. As we reflect on the past 60 years, we honor the pioneers of this committee, whose vision and dedication established a foundation for cultural collaboration. Their work enabled Virgin Islanders and Puerto Ricans to build deep ties that have transcended generations through events, educational programs, and outreach initiatives. We have celebrated the heritage and contributions of both communities, acknowledging the rich history that connect us. Today, the committee remains a vibrant force, bringing together thousands of residents and visitors through annual celebrations such as the VIPR Village. These events foster a sense of unity, pride, and cultural awareness, promoting mutual understanding. We continue to honor our Puerto Rican brothers who have made meaningful contributions to the Virgin Islands.
- 1:01:04 Reminding us of the ongoing impact that collaboration between our communities has had. As we look ahead, the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee 60 Anniversary serves as a pivotal moment to invest in the future. We aim to expand our efforts to engage younger generations and create more opportunities for cultural education and economic cooperation. With your support, we will ensure the legacy of friendship between the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico continues to thrive through decades to come. As we commemorate this significant milestone, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to this legislative body for the additional funding allocated to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee.
- 1:02:05 Thank you, dearly, thank you. Thanks to your support, we have been able to expand our efforts, including the opening of the VIPR Village yesterday, which will remain open until Monday. in collaboration with the Department of Tourism. We are working to attract cruise ship visitors to experience our rich culture and heritage, further strengthening our community bonds and promoting cultural exchange. Looking ahead, I humbly request that this legislative body consider allocating additional funding to the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee to support our ongoing efforts. This funding will be vital as we plan for future celebrations in the years to come. Which we envision as landmark events that will highlight the strength of our cultural bonds, and ensure that this shared friendship continues to thrive for generations. In closing, it is an honor to serve as the president of this committee and to be part of a mission that unites two resilient and proud communities. Thank you for your continuous support, and I look forward to working with you to ensure the ongoing success of the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee. To provide transparency, we have included a preliminary worksheet outlining our current expenses, and I will be providing a final detailed worksheet once the village is closed and all expenses are accounted for. i look forward to seeing you at the vipr village thank you thank you president luis torres next we will have uh honorable joseph olmeda for his testimony former president of the virgin islands puerto rico friendship committee thank you
- 1:04:05 warmest greeting to the honorable members of the Virgin Island legislature distinguished guests and to the listening and viewing audience the year 2024 marks the 60 anniversary of the local Legislature approved of the bill that was approved on February 20, 1964 by Governor Pawlowski. This law, as we all know, changed the name of the traditional Discovery Day to the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Day. It was highly deserved recognition of the long-standing ties of friendship and and brotherhood uniting our two communities as well as an acknowledgement of the significant contribution Puerto Ricans have made to these islands. Each year the governor authorized the creation of a committee to organize events that promote knowledge and pride in the culture, history, life and contribution of Puerto Rican's. Initially, this was celebrated with an annual luncheon at Vieques and Santa Cruz restaurant in Calcajum. However, with arrival of our dear governor Juan Francisco Luis and under the guidance of our former First Lady, Mrs. Luz Maria Guadalupe Luis, the luncheon was moved to government house the house of the people a perfect venue for such an
- 1:06:00 important event she transformed the luncheon into a war gala reception over the 60 year the gala has evolved in a weekend of activities and events that showcase the splendor of Puerto Rican culture bringing together entire families and community. Festivities have included parades, sport exchanges, queen shows, performance by local and renowned Puerto

Rican bands, school presentation, the Friendship Village, and much more. All become landmarks of the celebration. Later, addition theatrical presentation by Puerto Rican and local talents at the Island Center for the Performing Arts. Movie classic and a documentary preview by a local filmmaker along with guide workshops, festival, gospel night, food fairs, a student poster contest. The event also added arroz con pollo, contestant fiesta en el batey or family fun day and such more that it cannot all be captured here. The recognition award given to individuals at government house involved, they include awards for groups, pioneer families, community, social profit, group plays, outstanding student persons with disability, nonprofit organization, and missed outstanding marriage. This year past presidents are being recognized for being rebuttal in reaching this important landmark. A longtime dream for many was realized in the 2008 with the

1:07:52 opening of the Hispanic College collection area in the Florence Williams Library following year's efforts. Today this dream continuing tribe and the committee works to enhance it for the benefit of children and adults alike. For almost 20 years, until its operation, this committee collaborated with the local Avis News to produce a Hispanic Heritage Month supplement that highlights not only Hispanic contributions but, most important, Puerto Rican history and influence on the Virgin Islands. The committee also has worked with the Virgin Islands Lottery Insurance that their October tickets honor Puerto Rican contributions. In the San Thomas and John district, under the excellent leadership of Mrs. Carmen Lidia Majero Dennis, BI Puerto Rico celebrations have become a hallmark of the cultural calendars. Events include cultural exchange, debates, forums, symposiums, workshops, art exhibits, music, dance clinic, and food fair, all with a focus on education, history, and culture.

1:09:14 Sixty years ago, this may have seemed like a dream, but thanks to the hard work of past and present presidents and their active and enthusiastic committee, VIPR weekend is now an international event that attracts tourists from around the world. our vision for the future. What began as a modest celebration 60 years ago has grown exponentially, but the work is far from finished. Our island, our home to many Hispanics and Puerto Ricans continue to represent a powerful force in shaping the Virgin Islands, whether in education, profession, politics, sports, religious or business. Puerto Rican has made and continue to make an incredible mark in every aspect of island life. The contribution was present and past should be elaborated, not just during the commemorative weekend, but through the year. We envision a future where the Virgin Island's Puerto Rico friendship is further embedded in our identity. One way to achieve it, this is dedicated action, is our visitor center that highlights the unique bond between our two communities. These areas can tell a story of our shared history, culture and contribution so that every tourist and resident alike can understand the profound connection between these islands and Puerto Rico. This should not only be promoting understanding, but also deepen the same pride among our people. Additionally, it's vital for the history of Latinos

1:11:15 in the Virgin Islands, particularly contribution of Puerto Ricans, because a more prominent part of our education system and promotional material. Latinos in the Virgin Islands should have greater representation in history, books, brochures, politics, and other forms of cultural promotion. This presentation will ensure that future generations, both locally and abroad, are aware of the integral role Puerto Ricans and other Latinos have played in shaping the rich, diverse, cultural escaping of the Virgin Islands.

1:11:55 We must continue to cultivate the bonds of friendship, unity, and brotherhood between our community, ensuring that Puerto Rican and Hispanics remain an integral and celebrated part of island life. By doing so, we will further enhance the cultural tapestry of this island, ensuring that remain as always as an American paradigm, which I call home for the last 54 years. God bless the U.S. Virgin Islands and my beautiful island, the Santa Cruz. All right. Thank you so much for your testimony. Next we have the Honorable Veda Faru for her testimony. Buenos dias. Buenos dias. Good day. Honorable Angel Volquez, Honorable Blyden, other Honorable Senators present, distinguished citizens present, people of the Virgin Islands, and someday sometime the people of Puerto Rico might be able to see this presentation. I am Vera Magdalena Falua Allende, a proud Boricua that have made the beautiful island of Ai Ai my home for over 45 years and remain in love with it. I am going to repeat that the law was passed in 1964, but I need to tell you all that the law was appropriate, timely, and still needed. The particular celebration holds a very significant spot in my heart and brings me great joy to be an integral part of it since 1974. I came here in 1973. Don't count my age. As a born Puerto Rican who spend the majority of my professional and civic life in the U.S. Virgin Islands

1:13:58 and St. Croix in particular, I am honored to be invited to share my reflections on the holiday I am particularly honored to be here this morning in this building that I had never visited before to see all the senators that are my friends for over 20 30 years so thank you for inviting me staff staff that have been my co-workers in other areas of my life I I am proud to see them still producing and contributing to the Virgin Islands. It is a celebration of commitment and service, and I am going to stress the word commitment and the word service. You don't need to follow what I wrote because I always deviate. Commitment is something that comes from the heart, and that is something that you senators, leaders, you people of the future need to instill in our young people. It is something that is sadly lacking in our children. Commitment to the

- 1:16:08 betterment of these Virgin Islands. It is not taught in schools, it is taught at home. We remember our elders that told us that if you don't serve, you don't have any business living. You live to serve. Being a servant of the people is the greatest achievement any human being can have. You can pick anything, anything you want, but serve your community. Only then and only that way the Virgin Islands can go into the future. Service and commitment. And I'm going to tell you that there's a lot of business people in this community that have made it possible for the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico friendship to survive. I am glad that Mr. Torres, which is the present president for 2024, have requested an enhancement of the appropriations of this legislature. However, the businesses of this community have something called the Community Reinvestment Act, and we do not invoke that act enough. They, too, have a responsibility to contribute to anything that we do in this community. When I was the president, anytime I call, the question was, what do you want now? Because they know that I was a beggar. But you have to beg because you enjoy the fruits of the labor for the people of the Virgin Islands, and you're making money. So you need to contribute to the committees, to the nonprofits. Remember that. Our ancestors migrated centuries ago from mainly the eastern coast of Puerto Rico, Vieques, Fajardo, Ceiba, Naguabo, but also from the big island of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands is so similar. We have Puerto Rico, Vieques y Culebra, and we have St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John.
- 1:17:19 We are three little islands in the Caribbean because we are Caribbean people. And you also have to remember that, that we are Caribbean people. Eventually, we became part of America, but our bonds of friendship began when we were Caribbean people. The Maroons that were mentioned last night, and I always mention the Maroons because I come from San Tulsa, Puerto Rico. The Maroons left from St. Croix, jumped into the sea, abandoning a horrible life of enslavement, And went to San Mateo de Cangrejos to be free because the Catholic Church offered them freedom in exchange of becoming Catholics. And they populated San Mateo de Cangrejos.
- 1:18:15 And there's still a place in San Mateo de Cangrejos, San Tulsa, that a lot of people of Hispanic and Virgin Islands descent live there. There's a long list of Virgin Islanders that went to Puerto Rico to study. To study in the Inter-American University, Catholic University, La Milagrosa, San Justo, the University of Puerto Rico. To marry, there's a lot of families and freaks that in particular, right, Senator Johnson, And you look at the family and it's a papa and a Crucian or a mama and a Crucian. To join the armed forces, because when people were joining the armed forces, they had to go to Buchanan. So the DD-214 says from the Virgin Islands, but enlisted in Puerto Rico.
- 1:19:16 And they went also to share the culture, and that's how I came in here. My father knew somebody, Mr. Luthor Benjamin from St. Thomas, that was an engineer. My father was a land surveyor, and he traveled all the islands and invited me to come here. And I came, and I fell in love with St. Croix, with St. Thomas, and St. John. That migration from Puerto Rico to the Virgin Islands was also very significant to the people that were here at that time. But like Mr. Olmeda said, very aptly so, it is still very significant. Daily we see households of mixed parentage. Sometimes the lines are so blurred that strangers cannot determine who is who or from where. The languages have meshed. We speak half Crucian, half Puerto Rican. The food has been enhanced with the various condiments added.
- 1:20:21 I love a Kalaloo and I love a red pea soup. Dancers are very similar, Bambula, Bomba, with Dransquadrill as well as salsa. Marriages, our children, our third and fourth generations. When I came here to this beautiful eye, I fell in love with the people, the culture, and all its ramifications, and I'm still here. You cannot really get rid of me.
- 1:20:52 Cultivating friendship is a daily activity. We all need to incorporate activities all the time, and I'm glad Mr. Torres and Mr. Olmeda have made reference to that. Friendship is a daily activity. The delegate to Congress said it last night, friendship is something to be nurtured. Don't remember us in October for VI Puerto Rico friendship. Remember us when you're passing legislation. When you're speaking about curriculum in your schools. When you're talking about sports and recreations. When you're speaking about health for our seniors. When you write in documents that people that come to the government offices don't have anybody in the offices to translate for them, don't remember us only in October. We live here. We are part of the fabric of the Virgin Islands. As I lived my life here in the Virgin Islands, I really and truly endeavored to live friendship every day. don't know how I'm feeling this morning. You really don't know. The people of the Virgin Islands have been really and truly nice to me and to my children and to my family and I want that feeling that I have for other people to also enjoy because it's something that was born out of being a Christian or being an honorable person because everybody's not honorable but when you have honor you acknowledge the difference and you respect the differences of people that's what being honorable really means that you respect other people's differences I am concerned about some changes that have occurred in the fabric of this
- 1:22:54 Society. But I am also concerned about the survival of this committee. Mr. Torres alluded to it, so did Mr. Olmeda. But I don't think that I need to reiterate what they said because I think you understand where we coming from. Because every four years you remember to speak in Spanish. Every four years when you have the food sales, you remember to make sure you put a recompoyo there and to eat lechon. And this is that year. So next year, remember us too. Okay? I believe

that the committee should remember that the name of the committee is Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico. I am concerned about the composition of the committee. I mentioned last night somebody that was so instrumental in my life in here, and I'm going to call his name again because I need to call his name again. His name is Lawrence Bashan, a man from the West, a man from Palm Bush, okay? And he was always, he took his place now, Almera took his place now, and he's my sidekick, but Mr. Bashan was my sidekick. You need to include Virgin Islanders in the committee. It's a must. Me asking you, me telling you, from St. Thomas and from St.

1:24:37 John because that's what the legislation says. You need to include them all the time because we are guests in this land and we need to acknowledge that we are coming in here as guests. It bothers me tremendously. When you honor people you also have to remember that the Virgin Islanders are contributing too because they live here. This is the home. Okay? All the activities that Mr. Olmeda mentioned, all the activities that Mr. Torres mentioned, I am proud of all of them and I'm extremely proud of the Hispanic collection at the Florence Williams Public Library in Christianstown because it was hard to get those books. They came from the University of Puerto Rico Social Services Department. Two doctors and I'm so sorry I don't remember the names of those two ladies, but they were kind enough to pack boxes and boxes of those books.

1:25:46 Bring them to St. Croix and Mrs. Mirza Lampe and Domitila Vargas undertook the effort of cataloging all those books and putting them in that library. not to gather mold, but to be read and to be used in the curriculum of the children of the Virgin Islands. So I don't know who could do that, but please go and check that they are there and that they are used as the curriculum, in the curriculum, and if you need more, Ms. Lampe and Ms. Saldana know where to go. Each president have added or deleted activities as the times go by. But that, me, Vera Fallou, I am very proud of that library, and I'm sorry that we are not using it.

1:26:43 Everybody mentioned Mrs. Louise, and I'm going to repeat it. The night that Governor Cyril Emanuel King died and she became First Lady upon the assumption of Juan Francisco Louise to be governor. She's the one who decided that this committee was not going to have a luncheon in Government House or a luncheon in St. Croix. She decided that this committee should be extended and expanded to reach the people of the Virgin Islands. And I was fortunate enough to have been their friend till the day my governor passed and And up to this day, to Mrs. Luzlui, and she named me the president that year.

1:27:31 Mr. Miguel Duchesne from Vieques was the previous president. Miguel Duchesne also formed Alma Pavia in this St. Croix. And then we started from then, we added people, we invited people. We used to go to Vieques every July as Vieques ausentes, and the mayor invited us again, so I guess we are going to go back again.

1:28:04 I am asking you, please, to also document things. When I still work here, I'm taking too much time, time in Becal, right? Time in Cal yet? I had the honor and the privilege and the distinct service opportunity to be the director and have a great home of the age. And one of the things that I'm so sad that I didn't do was take documentation of what the elders were talking about. You still have that opportunity because now you're at technological age. You could take a tape recorder, you could take a video recorder, and record the experiences of those elders in those homes for the agent. From how to make pound seasoning, to how to cut that, how to cook, how to do everything and document it.

1:29:02 Because they are passing, and then we go to the funeral, and we don't know anything about it, and the children don't know anything about it. So if I say something to this committee is I wish you well. I want it to expand. I want to be invited for the 70th, if I am around. But I would like the legislature of the Virgin Islands, in your wisdom, to always remember this committee to make sure that the appropriations are sufficient, that they are expanded. expand the breadth and width of the committee to everyday activities. God bless and I love the Virgin Islands.

1:29:56 Thank you. I wasn't sure if you were finished. That's why I passed for a while. Treat me like that. You had me captivated you know and I appreciate your the history that you embodied in your in your testament and even for the soft opening of the village last night you were able to go from the inception of this all the way to today you know historically all of the occurrences that took place and I I'm happy that you're here with us today because you're we're able to account for it whether it's our stenographers or the video and media to help with this part of what is considered to be our Virgin Islands history the opportunity to serve that I was afforded by the people of the Virgin Islands in all the things that I was allowed to do it could have never been possible but in the Virgin Islands I thank you thank you thank you and And next we have our Honorable Jose Corsino Acevedo, the Mayor of the Island of Vieques.

1:31:13 We're going to start off with him reading his testimony in Spanish and then our translator Miss Ana Castillo will read it in English for our listening and viewing audience. Okay, please proceed. particularly in the area of health, tourism and economic development. It is a pleasure to share with you that it is in a process of transformation and one of our main priorities is the construction of a modern hospital that will help significantly improve the access to health services for our residents and also for the inhabitants of the Islas Virgenes that visit our island.

- 1:32:22 Este hospital no solo proporcionará atención médica de calidad, sino que también impulsará el turismo de salud y fomentará un intercambio de conocimientos entre profesionales de ambas regiones, contribuyendo al bienestar de nuestras comunidades. El pasado año, durante mi visita a St. Croix, tuvimos la oportunidad de dialogar sobre varios temas de interés común. Entre ellos, se destacó la necesidad de restablecer una conexión aérea directa de nuestras islas para facilitar el tránsito de residentes y turistas, así como para estimular la economía local. Hoy, con gran satisfacción, les informo que hemos logrado reactivar los pueblos directos entre Vieques y St. Croix, un paso que consideramos fundamental para reunir a nuestros pueblos, promover el intercambio cultural y facilitar la visita de familiares que residen en ambas islas. Este logro no había sido posible sin el apoyo de líderes visionarios como el senador Lángel jr y samuel carrión hay quienes agradecemos por su visita vieques y por su constante colaboración nuestra relación va más allá de la proximidad geográfica compartimos un legado cultural y social que merece ser preservado y enriquecido estamos seguros de que a través de esfuerzos conjunto podemos seguir construyendo un futuro próspero para nuestras comunidades, fortaleciendo el turismo y explorando nuevas oportunidades en sectores como el comercio, la educación y la preservación de nuestros recursos naturales. Puerto Rico Friendship está construyendo puentes históricos presentes y futuros en la relación entre Puerto Rico e Islas Vírgenes. Invitamos a todos los legisladores y a todos los ciudadanos de
- 1:34:34 St. Croix a visitar a Vieques y ser parte de este renacimiento. Juntos seguiremos atendiendo puentes de colaboración y amistad que nos permitan afrontar con éxito los retos que compartimos como Islas Hermanas del Caribe. Gracias por su tiempo y por su compromiso con el progreso de nuestros pueblos. Muchas gracias a todos. Thank you Alcalde and now we'll go to the translation for our stenographer and for the listening and viewing audience clerk madam clerk can you please proceed with the translation message from Honorable Jose a Corsino a severo mayor of the municipality of Vieques building historic bridges, the present and future relations between Vieques and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Honorable legislature of St. Croix and all present, on behalf of the municipal administration of Vieques, we extend our deepest gratitude for the opportunity to address you during this important legislative session. We reaffirm our commitment to continue strengthening the historic ties and collaboration between the Islands of Vieques and the Virgin Islands, particularly in the areas of health, tourism and economic development. We are pleased to share that Vieques is undergoing a transformation, and one of our main priorities is the construction of a modern hospital that will significantly improve access to healthcare services for our residents, as well as for the people of the Virgin Islands who visit our island. This hospital will not only provide quality medical care, but also promote health, tourism, and foster an exchange of knowledge between professionals from both regions contributing to the well-being of our communities. Last year, during my visit to St. Croix, we had the opportunity to discuss several topics of mutual interest. them the need to reestablish direct air connections between our islands stood out to facilitate the movement of our residents and tourists as well to stimulate the local economy today i'm pleased to inform you that we have successfully reactivated direct flights between vieques and saint croix a step we consider essential to unite our people, promote cultural exchange, and facilitate visits from family members residing on both islands. This achievement would not have been possible without the support of visionary leaders like Senator Ángel L. Bolques Jr. and Samuel Carrion, to whom we extend our gratitude for their visit to Vieques and their ongoing collaboration. Our relationship extends beyond geographical proximity. We share a cultural and social legacy that deserves to be preserved and enriched. We are confident that through joint efforts, we can continue building a prosperous future for our communities by strengthening tourism and exploring new opportunities in sectors such as trade, education, and the preservation of our natural resources. We invite the legislature legislators and all citizens of St. Croix to visit Vieques and be part of this renewal. Together we will continue building bridges of collaboration and friendship that will allow us to successfully face the challenges we share as sister islands of the Caribbean. Thank you for your time
- 1:38:36 and your commitment to the progress of our people. Thank you, Madam Clerk. And now that was the translation of what the alcalde, the mayor of the island of Vieques read on the record. Mr. President, VIPR committee, there's a additional testimony that you wanted to read into the record yes miss Anna Foster she's the treasurer for the VIP our committee okay good morning honorable senators my name is Anna Foster and I am the treasurer of the VIP our committee I am NOT of Puerto Rican descent or Virgin Islands descent that That was not my choice, that was my mom's choice. I have lived in both islands and it is during that time that I've developed a deep love for both islands.
- 1:39:32 I've called St. Croix my home for the last 31 years. All my children were raised here. They all attended public school and graduated with honors from public school. I've also had the pleasure of living in Yalco, Puerto Rico. And it was then when I lived in Yalco that I developed a deep love for its culture and its people. I call myself Boricua de Corazon, but I'm a Crucian by decision. It has been an honor for me to have served in the VIPR committee for the last six years.
- 1:40:12 First, under Mr. Joel Mehta, followed by Ms. Maria Colon, and now under Mr. Luis Torres. During these six years, I've served as a treasurer, and I have strived to do my best job as much as possible with the funds that we've received. I am grateful for the additional funds that you provided for our 60th anniversary celebration. Today, I present you with a

preliminary worksheet of the expenses that we have had up to date. A final worksheet will be presented to you once the VIPR Village closes and all expenses have been accounted for. Again, I am very honoured to serve in the VIPR Committee and I look forward to seeing all of you at the Village. Thank you.

- 1:41:07 Thank you so much, Ms. Anna Foster, Treasurer of the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee. And we do have a copy of your budget breakdown. And thank you for providing us with that. I believe this may be the first time that we've ever received a budget breakdown from your committee. So we really appreciate that. Just letting our colleagues know, you know, what in fact is being done with the funds. So we appreciate that and look forward to that being something that happens on a yearly basis moving forward I think it's relatively important so that in the eventuality that you do come seeking for additional funds which obviously is the case right now you know we need to have that information in black and white so colleagues you all should have gotten a copy of that budget for VIP our committee if not please let me know I'll make sure that my chief of staff sends it to you or it's on the server as well Now, before we go into our line of questioning, I wanted to start off by asking the alcalde.
- 1:42:13 Quería preguntarte algo, alcalde, ¿cómo está? Bien, gracias a Dios. Gracias a Dios, qué bueno. Un placer para tenerte aquí con nosotros. It's a pleasure to have you here with us. Y yo quería preguntarte algo, I wanted to ask you a question. You said in your testimony you wanted to strengthen the bonds and have a stronger relationship with the Virgin Islands when it comes to the economy and tourism. Y yo quería saber, I wanted to know, como tu, how do you say, envision? Okay, how do you see that? How do you see that growing between the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico and Vieques for that fact?
- 1:43:22 And this is Mayor Acevedo, first time I got here and shared time with you. It was a pleasure to see what was the Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico Friendship Celebration.
- 1:43:59 From that moment, and as mayor of the Vieques Municipality, I understand the opportunities between both islands. Of making collaborative agreements in reference to education, culture, and health. It's something that unites us. Being that we have a lot of families. living here on St. Croix. And we also have a lot of St. Croix residents that live in Vieques.
- 1:45:02 We should unite. And they are opportunities. And all of this has been growing Through Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship that has given us the opportunity to see more, a more overview. I'm sure that good years are coming to keep strengthening this union. There's a new hospital being constructed. So there's a bid today, a \$17 million bid, to recruit doctors, polices, and teachers.
- 1:46:12 to build and for to address doctors, people who would work on, so talent could potentially come from here as well. the idea and lodging and that's the idea okay very well so colleagues we're gonna go into a point point of information senator Johnson thank thank you very Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Buenos dias. How many beds?
- 1:47:02 Alrededor de 15 camas. Y la otra? No, no tiene cama. El hotel. Ah, el hotel. Va tener 37 cuartos. Okay. Son siete, siete cabañas de 37 cuartos con piscina y todas las comodidades. Wow, okay, gracias. You're going. So, Madam Clerk, you have to translate for the listener of your audience. Senator Volquez.
- 1:47:30 Senator Volquez. No, you started speaking in Spanish, so, and he was responding. Yeah, but, um. That's friendship for you. That's so funny. Acknowledgement. Okay, let's. Yeah. So, Vera Falou, you're recognized? Good morning again. I had the privilege of seeing the building of this hospital. I go to VXS quite frequently while I'm living in Puerto Rico now. And one of the things that I wanted to say and put onto you regarding the strengthening of these bonds is that the president of the legislature of Puerto Rico should receive a copy of this law that is here in the Virgin Islands, number one.
- 1:48:15 And then you write also proposal attached to the sending of that bill. because I have found really, truly, that in Puerto Rico they don't know that we celebrate this long weekend here with such exuberance. When I was coming out this time, I met a lot of people in the airport and they were asking me what they're coming in here to do. And I was so gratified to see a couple of them last night in the village because I explained to them that we have been celebrating this thing, this friendship, this camaraderie for so long. And they said they did not know. There's a lot of people in the Virgin Islands that see the Puerto Rico television channels.
- 1:49:00 You can also extend your information. But back to the hospital, I remember when I was chairman of the board of the hospital of St. Croix and Mr. Almeida was a hospital administrator, that we do have collaborative efforts and packed with hospitals in Puerto Rico when we need to transfer people. You all know that. And Vieques is nearest to us than Santuza, Puerto Rico, or than other hospitals in Miami. So when the mayor gets a little more money and expands the hospital from 15 beds to more beds, but it's on the works, we can also do those kinds of agreements that when we need to transfer a patient instead of transferring them to the metropolitan area, we can do that with the people of Vieques.
- 1:49:53 And thank you for putting that on the record because it's a historical fact that Virgin Islanders travel to Puerto Rico quite frequently for healthcare. So, you know, the opening of this new hospital, especially being that while I was in Vieques for

with the invitation of the mayor, I was able to see the facility, not inside, from outside and it's a huge hospital so you know we can definitely talk about how we can create opportunities whether it's for access for health care for our people or if they need talent to work there we know that talent is scarce here in the virgin island virgin islands right now but for those who may want to maybe work between both hospitals and you know collaborate we we can definitely look at that so we're going to go into a round of um five minutes and we're going to begin with uh senator milton e potter then senator novelle e francis jr then senator samuel caddy then senator franklin d johnson and then senator marvin a blight in which is the vice chair and please i apologize senator blyden i apologize i did not recognize you when you came because of the The testimonies being read, Madam Clerk, please recognize the presence of Vice Chair, Vice President of the 30th, Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands, Senator Marvin A. Blyden. Thank you for being here with us, sir.

- 1:51:19 Senator Potter, you're recognized for your five minutes. Muchas gracias, Mr. Chair. Buenos dias, colleagues, buenos dias to our testifiers, special buenos dias to our visitors who graced us from the great commonwealth of Puerto Rico, as well as the municipality of Vieques. Thank you very much. Unfortunately, that's as far as me Espanol goes. My biggest regret in life is that I didn't pay close attention in Spanish class. I really regret not learning Spanish, honestly.
- 1:51:53 Puerto Rico VIA Friendship Day is that time that we celebrate the deep bonds of culture and resilience and shared history that unite our islands it reminds us that in the face of challenges our connection is a beacon of hope and solidarity our connection is a beacon of hope and solidarity as my friend Commissioner Vera Falou said, Puerto Ricans are a part of the very fabric of the Virgin Islands community, the very essence of who we are.
- 1:53:31 I'm really sad that my colleague and friends, my colleagues and friends, Senator Bolquez and Senator Carrion didn't invite me when they visited Vieques. I won't take it personal, Senator Johnson and I will take you up on your offer, Mayor Acevedo. We will be visiting in 2025, in 2025. But I have just a couple questions to ask. How can we encourage the younger generation to appreciate and participate in the celebrations in the celebrations of Puerto Rico Virgin Islands Friendship Day?
- 1:54:36 Anybody? a la nueva generación para que se unan a esta celebración entre Puerto Rico y las Islas Vírgenes. Buenos días, yo entiendo que debe existir más promoción. There should be more promotion. Y también poder lo que es Puerto Rico Friendship, expandirlo también para que Puerto Rico sepa de qué se trata esto. Muchas veces en Puerto Rico no saben lo que es Puerto Rico Friendship And expand Puerto Rico friendship where Puerto Rico is aware of the celebration because it hasn't expanded to Puerto Rico. The most important thing, the government has to get involved in this activity. More funds. One minute.
- 1:55:37 more popular artists that people know. And do cultural exchanges between both islands. Bring tourists, artisans, and historians. So there's a day, a couple hours in the day. So we can highlight the connection between both islands and its history.
- 1:56:20 Awesome, thank you very much. I think your responses are very, very much on point. Thank you. Please proceed, Ms. Fallu. Many years ago, the Department of Tourism of the Virgin Islands had boats of tourism in Puerto Rico, and they exchanged brochures, posters, information. So that is one, reestablishing those boats throughout Puerto Rico because to encourage the people of Puerto Rico to more to come to the Virgin Islands. That's number one. Number two, the curriculum of the Virgin Islands need to be revised and the Department of Education has a curriculum division and one of the revisions could be for the young people like Senator Potter was saying to encourage them to read and to know and to cherish this friendship.
- 1:57:22 As part of VI history? Correct. Very well. Thank you for placing that on the record. Senator, your time was called, but if you do have a quick wrap-up, that's fine. I just want to once again just thank you very much for making this a priority. We look forward to strengthening the ties between the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico in the years to come. Thank you very much. Thank you Senator Potter and thank you Madam Clerk.
- 1:58:02 Before we go to Senator Novelli Francis Jr., the President of the Legislature, there was a comment that was made by Ms. Falou and at the time the President wasn't in the room, it indicated that there was not enough knowledge surrounding this celebration by Puerto Ricans and that what she suggested that what should be done is that a copy of the legislation should be sent to the president of the Puerto Rico legislature by likely our president so the president is in the room so I don't know if you heard that mr. president but that was said and if you want to drill down on that, Ms. Fallou is here. We're going to now recognize you, Mr.
- 1:58:45 President, for your five minutes. I apologize. Point of information, Senator Samuel Cadyong. Thank you very much, Mr. Scheer. I just wanted for the record, just echoing the sentiments of Ms. Falu, the act itself, Act 1075 in Section 2, clearly stipulates that the governor shall transmit copies of this act and proclamation to the governor of Puerto Rico and the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. So it's something that it's within

our code, I'm not sure if it's been followed or done, that by not less than 30 days before the date that has been designated, which is Columbus Day, the proclamation shall be done by the governor and a copy of it shall be shared with, like I said, the governor and the Senate president, the speaker of the House of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

1:59:49 Just wanted to put that on the record. And thank you for placing that on the record, Senator Cariño, because at the end of the day this event is cultural exchange. And we could spark more tourism. Yep, say it in Spanish for the Alcalde. Shortened version. We're on. Quería decir, uniendome a las palabras, Señora Falú, que acta, acta de ley número 1075, en la sección 2, claramente estipula que el gobernador debe transmitir copia de esta ley al gobernador de puerto rico y al presidente del senado de la cámara de puerto rico informándole anualmente de la proclamación del día de la amistad entre isla virgen y puerto rico así que eso está estipulado dentro de nuestra ley no estoy seguro si se está siguiendo pero está establecido que debe ser transmitida copia de esta proclama y también del acta de la ley tanto al gobernador as the President of the Camera. Thank you. Thank you, Senator. Nova Lee Francis Jr., President, you're recognized for your time.

2:00:58 Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and good morning to you, and good morning to the people of the Virgin Islands. Thank you for being here today, and certainly we welcome you here, Mayor, once again to the Virgin Islands. It's a pleasure to have you here. First of all, I really want to give reverence to our former legislators that had the wisdom to enjoin us way before I was born. Well, not way, but before I was born to actually enter into this proclamation and recognize the Hispanic Heritage Month, and really now we're celebrating 60th anniversary could could you repeat that in a smaller block senator Francis I'm sorry I'm sorry okay I want to give reverence to a former legislators and also to the governor Paiwanski at the time that allowed for this proclamation and now we're able to enjoy 60th anniversary so we're recognizing and celebrating the Hispanic Heritage Month where we have an opportunity to We recognize the contribution and relationship of the people of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

2:02:55 Of course we share in culture, food, and people. I have had the opportunity to live and work around individual, Hispanic individuals, for many years. In the community that I grew up in, I was...

2:03:27 I was in the middle of... of families such as... Robles, Cotos, Christian, Marrero, and Figueroa's. My first job was in a corner store next door called Don Juan Grocery Store. Back in those days, we actually weighed the flour before we sold it, cut the box cheese, slice the ham, and salami, wrap it in wax paper, and sold it to our customers. At the time we had a book, a black and white book, where we actually fill in the name of the individuals and trusted them with their purchases. And you come and pay whenever you get money. So, we live in good times and again, we were able to enjoy, again, living around Hispanic.

2:05:00 I have my children actually have Hispanic backgrounds as well. You know, so again, this history is rich and enjoined right now. So thank you for being here today, and I just wanted to ask the mayor, if he would like to be able to get an office in St. Croix, because he seemed to love coming to St. Croix.

2:05:43 the love and the care that people show here he really appreciates thank you thank thank you again for being here thank you to all um the let me talk about mr Mr. Almeida, Ms. Falou, Torres, these are all individuals that have been around for many, many years. I remember when Ms. Falou first came to St. Croix as the dietician at the hospital, Mr. Almeida also worked at the hospital for many years and had been around. So these are individuals I've known, myself and Torres were police officers together. So again, you know, these are no strangers to me, and certainly they have my support each and every year that we're able to do this. And thank you for keeping the rich history alive here in the Virgin Islands. Thank you, Mr. President, for your commentary and question. And you were kind of showing your age a little bit there with the cutting the back's cheese. But they're not trusting money now, the young people saying, give me my money.

2:07:03 That's what they're saying now. But we're going to go to Senator Carrion. You're recognized for your time. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Clearly, this is a very joyous occasion. And you could tell by how we're feeling energy in this room of course i'm filled filled with pride because it's part of my my descendant my family um there's a few things i i just wanted to point out and and then a few questions i wanted to ask also but but first of all because i've made a discovery recently and i've been sharing that discovery. That also fills me with even more pride. Manolín, I think everyone knows him out of Vieques, which was Mr. Manuel Silva Casanova. He posted something on social media. He had the opportunity to interview Mr. Richard Schrader. We everybody knows Mr. Schrader, right? The author of many books, a storyteller, narrator, a historian, and one of his book in the Callaloo. In that interview he he shared Mr. Schrader shared that the connections of Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico especially Vieques go way back and he shared that in 1876 some Danes went over to Vieques in a small boat seeking people to work in the area of agriculture and and there were four gentlemen that agree to come back to st croix and work with him and those four gentlemen were canuto trinidad alejo monel domingo santiago and juan carrion with them they had two women that also traveled with them and they came over to st croix in 1876 that's that's about two years before the fire burn and of course they came here they were here for a

bit um they didn't like the conditions that the workers were being treated. They were promised some things and the promises weren't fulfilled.

2:09:17 They weren't really compensated the way how they expected from the labor. They weren't happy with the treatment they were seeing, those that were of African descent. And after a while they decided to return back to Vieques, but one stayed behind along with one of the ladies that stayed here. And it is said that that person participated in the fire burn and was here as a witness when it happened. So it's interesting to see how our connections really run deep in the Virgin Islands. And then I discovered that Juan Carrion was my great-grandfather, who was one of those four that came in 1876 to St. Croix.

2:10:04 So it's interesting how we go way back. And of course, we know the greater immigration came around the 1920s. So that was an interesting fact to be able to share for the records how we're so connected. And like Ms. Falou mentioned, the Maroons that left here seeking that freedom and went over to Vieques, went over, I'm sorry, to Puerto Rico, San Mateo de Cangrejo, the area of San Dulce. And there they built and established that free community. the first city within the Western Hemisphere established by African people in the free society. And you still find those families there. So we're very well connected over the years, and I'm glad to see that VIA Puerto Rico Friendship Committee is still moving forward and keeping the tradition alive of our culture and sharing that fellowship and strengthening those bonds. So I want to commend the president, Mr. Luis Torre, the whole committee, some committee members that are here, and also they've been honoring in this 60th anniversary all the former presidents that over the years have continued the church burning and have passed the church from one president to another. And we are here today celebrating that because the wisdom of the then governor and those in the Senate building that pushed legislation forward and they have continued keeping the tradition alive. So I just want to express my gratitude to each one of them as we continue this celebration. But one of the questions that I have quickly, because I know there's always some challenges, and I know we're here now, of course, in a celebratory spirit, but what can we do to expand, enhance, and make the committee better?

2:12:04 I know I've moved legislation, and I'm still in the initial stage. I've started doing some research, and I have began having conversations with stakeholders on how we can improve the IPR Friendship Committee activities. And of course, I will be meeting with all the live-in presidents to get their feedback. But one of the things that I've been envisioning as I'm doing this research that I would like to see, I would like the committee to have a little bit more independence and autonomy. Why? Because we know sometimes in the political process, they're appointed by the then-serving governor. And it depends on who the governor is and the political affiliation. All those things can affect, sometimes negatively and sometimes positively, the appropriations, the activities, or the work that is being carried out. So I would like to see maybe a board, and I want your feedback regard to this. to this. What is your take on it? But one of the things I would really like to see is a museum where we could have archives and history of the contribution of the Puerto Ricans over the years because when time pass, we tend to forget. So I want to ensure that we have a type of museum where we could see who were those first families, their contributions, existence, all that information that we could continue have in our archives so what can we improve and what's your take on this area thank you very much mr chair and you could on the cheers time thank you senator for a question um well one of the things that we could improve um is of course more funding uh you guys have the uh

2:13:50 initial report that we now give. This year, we have expanded in cable channel. As you guys can see, we did a commercial, and through VIA, one of our major sponsors, they help us put it out there, so I think this year we did a little bit better when it came to that, the marketing part, there's room for improvement. We want to expand the commercial to be able to do it in Puerto Rico as well.

2:14:25 So we can let people in Puerto Rico, Vieques, know what we're doing. That isn't one of the plans, but as you know, a lot of times, a lot of that takes money, right? And as much as different businesses work with us, they still have their expense, but they still have stuff that they have to cover. So there's so much that they can work with us. But also, what the mayor of Vieques stated, that bringing more recognized bans also helps put it out there.

2:15:01 But in light of that, bringing more recognized bans means bringing more, it costs more. For example, a more recognized ban will charge you 40,000, 50,000, and that's just the initial charge. we're not talking about their airline tickets, the accommodations that go along with it, sometimes they don't want to stay in a particular, they will want to stay in a particular place, they want this particular water, they want this particular drink, I mean, and the list goes on that we have to, and sometimes we'll say, well, no, we can't accommodate that or, you know.

2:15:34 But the committee is changing to be able to, It's changing to be able to market ourselves more outside of the Virgin Islands, like I'd say. Senator Volquez. Please proceed. I am totally against the board. Put that in the record. The committee should remain independent. That's my opinion. I never had problems with money. Never. Not for VI Puerto Rico Friendship, not for Crucian Christmas Festival.

- 2:16:14 I'm going to go back to the community. There are businesses and vendors and everybody in this community making money out of the people of the Virgin Islands. The community needs to endeavor to touch bases with the community. Again, I'm going to repeat it. Anytime I call anybody that I needed money, at that time was Hess, Banco Popular, it was not called Vaya, it was called Vitelco, Little Mops and Pops, they never said they didn't have any money for festival or for VIP Puerto Rico friendship. And the money was plenty money. If I remember correctly, and I'm sure you have the report still, for the 50th anniversary for Crucian Christmas Festival, we spent over a million dollars not from the government coffers but from the people in the community. The committee needs to expand to more people independently of who the governor is. The governor names the committee, but it does not preclude the committee itself to expand to other areas like to bring whoever they want without concern to personalities and expand to other people in the community teachers need to be an integral part of the committee because teachers are going to carry the message forward to the children social workers because this is a cultural event and you need to be expanded through the office of the president of the VI Puerto Rico Friendship. One thing that I had and I was blessed that the island administrator was always a helpful hand, always. The
- 2:18:08 First Lady of the Virgin Islands was always the honorary chairperson of this committee and they sat down in the meetings and they assisted in moving the government apparatus when we had any problem and I'm going to bring to attention of the people and I'm sorry you could take me out of here last night when I went to agriculture I see that the rights were not riding because some kind of problem Coney Island was an integral part but Coney Island paid the committee for the privilege of coming to us and making money out of us and once Once you make the contract with whoever Coney Island is or was or whatever, then you have to get involved with the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs because the engineer had to check the rides prior to our children riding the rides because it needed to be safe. WAPA helped us. Public Works helped us.
- 2:19:17 some people in this audience that work with me from 74 and they know how we work we work like a oil machine from here to st. Thomas to st. John and everybody was involved thank you thank you for your information before we go to senator Johnson I know that we have been presented a budget I had a quick question concerning I didn't see insurance on the budget I know usually when you have events there's also a cost for insurance is that something that's covered through the department or senator no when we asked about that we were told that because we're under the office of the governor at the office of governor was gonna cover us okay very well okay that's good that's good i know it's challenging with budgets um and um being that this is the 60th is a bit different but the cost of living um and the cost for the goods and and taxes and so forth from the mainland when things are brought in have all played their part in how uh things are working here in this society uh senator johnson you're not recognized for your time. Good morning, good morning and thank you very much.
- 2:21:09 So my translator, you're going to help me from here on down. He's going to speak in English now because he has a lot to say. And I'm listening to Ms. Falou's testimony, and it brings me to wonder. In your testimony, Ms. Falu, you said that the committee needs to be made up of virgin islanders and people of Puerto Rican descent.
- 2:21:49 And I'm going to take it that based on your statement, that the committee today now is not of that. And for it to grow and work, it must be EIPR friendship, meaning people People from the Virgin Islands and people from Puerto Rico or people with Hispanic descent.
- 2:22:40 So my question to Mr. Torres, the president, how many Virgin Islanders at Hispanic descent on your committee well we are about 12 13 members and I believe we have about six about six we have of course Miss Anna Foster she's Mexican we have people from Santo Domingo as well in the committee actually that did the stage decorated stage I'm talking in your your main board your main board of well you people that you governor would appoint not it is the only person is sorry please please place your name Louis Torres our VIP our president the only the only person that the governor appoints is the president And then we elect the treasurer and the secretary and so forth.
- 2:23:49 Those are the people I am interested in, your main cabinet. Well, I'm going to answer your question, Senator, because this is something that is not an odd question that people ask. Everybody's asking that, but I'm going to answer you. The fact is that this is a volunteer committee. nobody gets paid okay and we go on the radio we go on Facebook we go social media we ask for help okay we ask for help and I accept I don't I don't want you to get straight away from my question no no I'm saying because time is of essence all right no I know I don't say but if if I don't have people from seclusions come into the committee and say I want to help I want actually help then I don't have I have to I have to have time's sake for time's sake you don't have any yes yes we have about six six people are no no in your main board your main main board treasurer secretary president vice president no we don't have a vice president our vice president had had resigned last year and then in this budget breakdown and I I was a part of governor map administration and we we expended some money here but in this budget breakdown you guys have to pay for the refreshment and events at government house no no no

this year we got last year we had we had no no stick with me stick with me here no no no I know we had we had 12,000 well that one day you know what we can explain better my treasure yes I need to understand this because I see here on this budget where there's rental for

2:25:35 governor reception refreshment station government reception two thousand eight hundred one thousand eight hundred did you guys pay for the event that took place in government house yes I mean that's an advantage to you the government house supposed to pay for that out of the government house budget I understand, Senator. This year, apparently the government, we did have a meeting, and the government was very short on funds, and they did ask us to pay for the reception, and \$12,000 was allocated for that reception. Please place your name on the record.

2:26:13 I'm sorry, Anna Foster, treasurer for the VIPR committee. I'm going to leave it alone for now, but I want to wrap up with saying a few things to the mayor of Puerto Rico. someone needs some translation. I want to say to the mayor, when I grew up as a little boy, all the stores in Frederickstead town was owned by people of Hispanic descent, primarily from Vieques. And I can remember a couple of the names. One of the biggest grocery stores in Fredericksad at that time was Obando Grocery Store.

2:27:07 The other one was Agapito Grocery Store. The other one was Miguel Meat Market. And as you spread throughout the tongue, one of our top bakeries was the Camacho Bakery. And up to today, one of the Camachos still have his sandwich and deli shop operating in the sunny area. So the relationship between the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, especially the island of St. Croix, is strong. Very strong. And I thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule and coming here to celebrate VIPR friendship.

2:28:12 We have some work to be done. We have to make sure that our young children Hispanic and Virgin Islands descent understand this relationship, this family bondage that we have. Because without us doing that with them what we have here today will disappear.

2:28:42 This needs to go beyond us. I wish to see you on the grounds in the parade and whatever event that you take part and I wish for all of us to have a wonderful time for VIPR friendship God bless the Virgin Islands God bless Puerto Rico and be a kiss Thank you You're surprising me today, Senator, you're surprising me, but I didn't know you know that much Spanish. Yes, very good. Definitely our colleagues, you know, everybody has a little Spanish in them. You know, we have a strong relationship with Puerto Rico. And for that fact, many other islands down the Caribbean chain because the Virgin Islands is a melting pot. But when we look back at our history we see that the migration of people from Puerto Rico Vieques Culebra were the ones who started that trend in a sense of people migrating here to help with what would be considered building out our society so it's a very important part of our history next we go to Senator Marvin Blyden you're now recognized for your time thank you so much Mr. Chair good morning to my colleagues, listening, viewing audiences, staff, central staff, and buenos Buenos Dias, Señor Acevedo, Buenos Dias, Señora Felu, Buenos Dias, Buenos Dias, Me, Me, Me, Al, No, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Mr. Almeida,

2:30:38 And I must say, and you can repeat, I must say, very insightful testimonies. But I want to go to the testimony from Ms. Farah Falou. I believe that she spoke to some points that I want to have a conversation about. She spoke to service and commitment, which comes from the heart, and she was speaking to the betterment of the Virgin Islands that actually embraces the culture and what comes out of it.

2:31:49 And I can concur with you in what you said. From the time I became a senator, I have always had someone in my office that's bilingual to include Puppemento and French in order to reach out and work with those individuals because they are part of our community. So, Mrs. Falunos, English. For the audience. For the audience. Okay, well, you're going to have to break it up in a little black for me, please. That was kind of long.

2:32:18 Very well. So, let me ask you, in respect, you said you were concerned, you had some concerns in respect to the deep bonds and the friendship that united our people in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, to include the Caribbean territories, because you are right, we are all one. In respect to your concerns, what concerns you the most, though?

2:32:51 Good morning again. Thank you for the opportunity. First of all, let me tell you something, Senator Blaney. I do know the staff in your office because they were always instrumental in helping me in my endeavors, and I thank you today. You're welcome. my concerns stem from the changes in the culture because we are changing too fast and for me i'm an elder now i'm a very old lady and i am concerned that we are adopting mores and cultures and societal activities that are not conducive one minute the betterment of our children I'm sorry for that, I know it's progress, some people call it progress, I don't because it is disintegrating the fabric that made us the people that we are.

2:33:48 I am a black Puerto Rican and I respect that and I honor it because that's what my ancestors instill in me. And we were not like this. We had respect, we had honor, we cherish our culture. And this is one of the vehicles that need to be utilized to maintain it and to prosper these cultures. Senator Borges asked a question and you're asking it again, but I believe that

the curriculum of the people of the Virgin Islands, the curriculum in the schools need to be revised to include who we are. The other day, we just celebrated contract day, and I was seeing such outlandish statements.

2:34:43 People were confusing fire bond with contract day, with emancipation, and I was hysterical. That tells me that the curriculum is not either being followed or not even taught. And that is only an example and you all saw it. So you're basically saying we need to step up the educational component. Step up? Yeah, step up in a large way. I'm gonna answer you now. More than step up.

2:35:18 Speak your mind. More than step up. Very well. Well, again, I wanna thank all of you for being here today. I look forward to the activities tonight, this evening, and I must say when it comes to the activities and I see the passion and the pride in all of you. I see the passion and the pride and I hope moving forward in respect to pride, I also would like to see more pride when it comes to VI pride and the way we represent ourselves the way we keep our island in terms of clean and it's always good to have our guests here and celebrate with them but the way we treat each other and honestly improve in areas like our young men when it comes to the crime and other activities but at the end of the day though we're all one and I look forward to um celebrating with you guys thank you so much mr chair for the time and thank you for your responses thank you vice president blighton for your line of questions and I believe that wraps up yeah someone's online saint thomas okay I apologize oh senator I apologize I didn't realize you were there um I'd like to recognize the presence of senator alma francis heilegger uh please list her as present and I'd like to recognize her for her time senator I apologize about that please proceed it's okay I'm I'm the lone one here today but I'm here good day to the people of the territory good day to my colleagues good

2:37:11 day to the testifiers it's a beautiful thing when we have an opportunity to really get together and celebrate virgin islands puerto rico friendship day and it's not only about friendship but it's a long history of relations and building a territory together that we stand here today continuously celebrating virgin islands puerto rico friendship day and what I really want to tap into because you know as we continue to do this it has to be done for a reason and when I heard um I think it was miss falu talking about making sure that we adjust our curriculum to really put this and the information of virgin islands puerto rico friendship a part of our curriculum I think things like that is very important as it relates to our virgin islands history and how we came to be you know each of us come from different lineages um you know my spanish connection comes from a great-grandfather that came from portugal so we have we're all connected in some shape or form but at the end of the day today what I want to know is could any of you share with me from just from memory of doing this for so long what are some of the great significant things that you saw over the years that really helped to build Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico friendship and what do you think we could continue to do specifically to foster and develop it and not really forget this as part of our culture Let's begin with the past Presidents, then move to the current President, starting with

2:39:09 Mr. Olmeda. Yes, one thing that I was going to mention and the Honorable Senator was talking about is that Senator Johnson mentioned and Mr. Torrey mentioned about people working on the committee. It's so hard to get people to get involved in the committee. I've been president three times and it's very hard. So we're looking for volunteers, volunteers and while I was president I tried to get involved, people from Spanish, Christians, whatever. I can't, I can't find it. So, anybody, while I was president, is welcome to work with me, no matter if it is from Santo Domingo, from Mexico, from Uruguay, Ecuador. As long as they work, they are welcome in my committee.

2:40:10 Thank you, and former President Fallu. Good morning again. I am going to address what Senator Francis Alma-Heiliger said. Yes. I'm repeating that the curriculum is one way of enhancing the celebrations. We need to again reestablish the tourism little departments or booths that they were called. One minute. tourism in the airports of Puerto Rico to encourage the people to travel to the Virgin Islands, to St. Thomas, to St. John. We need to expand this committee to have a subcommittee like I had with Ms. Carmen Dennis in the island of St. Thomas, because after all it's Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico. Some people from the island of St. John joined with Ms. Carmen Dennis in St. Thomas and they used to hold, and I appreciated that, a lot of forums, educational forums, and they invited professors from the University of Puerto Rico and professors from the University of the Virgin Island to speak as to the history of the migration of black people throughout the Caribbean. Those were things. There are people here in St. Croix that I can name, like Stanley and Stanley Jacobs.

2:41:38 calling Stanley to play quadril, but people forget that Stanley's from Vieques. He's from Vieques. He has somebody, a cultural ambassador in here that I cherish all the time. His name is Bradley Ellington Christian. He has people here. He has Gervé Larson, a historian, a great architect. We have people in here, Angel Chico Morales, which is the immediate past president of the Olympic Committee of the Virgin Islands and carry our people to Paris just the other day. Those are Puerto Ricans and they cherish the heritage being Crucian and Puerto Rican. Those people need to be tapped in, maybe mandated, to come part of this committee to carry forward what we need to do in these Virgin Islands, and I'm going to

stop here.

- 2 : 42 : 37 Okay, thank you. Can I wrap up, Mr. Chair? Yes, please proceed. Thank you. I'm very happy that this information was shared because it kind of segued into a lot of the things. My next line of question, I just want to ask one question. It had to do with what do you see as potential economic cooperation between Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands? Because it's one thing for us to have a celebration every year, but between our history and economics, I think those aspects are also important. And when she touched on the part about tourism and having boots in Puerto Rico and elsewhere, specifically to really promote the Virgin Islands, that's something I would really like to question. Why are we no longer doing that because you have a population of millions of people in Puerto Rico as well as a lot of times sometimes Puerto Rico is a hub where people travel through so you know why are we not looking at it from an economic standpoint and growing whether both our economies for travel back and forth um just as looking as a wave tourism enhancement or just really connecting the Virgin Islands in Puerto Rico together so that's something I think as a government we really need to look into to see why we are no longer doing stuff like that and I want to thank her for sharing the names of those people that are here in our territory that do have this heritage that could help tap in and really work on figuring out how we can get more people to volunteer. I think, you know, we are in an age of digital technology. I think we have to maybe find other mediums to reach out to the public and share different things as to the culture, as to why it should be something exciting for people to want to participate in. So I thank everyone for coming. And, you know, I hope it's going to be a great weekend. Thank you very much.
- 2 : 44 : 43 Thank you, Senator, and I'll let the current president close out with his response and move forward. Well, Louis Torres, VIPR president. Senator, you just hit the nail on the head right there. You just said digital. Everything is digital right now. You know, I know something is very hard for us to understand that times are changing. What was done back then doesn't work now because times are changing. People are changing. I mean, it's how things are moving. So now, on Monday, we have a cruise ship coming from Puerto Rico.
- 2 : 45 : 21 So we involved the Department of Tourism. So they already start advertising. They reach out to the cruise ship company, and they're already advertising it in the cruise to come to be able to bring the passengers to our VIPR village on Monday from between 11 to 3. So what we accomplished with that, now we're going to have a conversation with the Department of Tourism to start promoting come next year these events and make it to a bigger scale. But like I said, everything now is social media, internet.
- 2 : 45 : 55 I mean, it is what we're moving on. So we are creating, we kind of forced that conversation again with the Department of Tourism. So I'm happy to say that to this body that come Monday, that's what's going to happen. And we're continuing, and just to piggyback on what Ms. Almeida said, I mean, we're open to anybody to come and assist. We have people from different backgrounds coming in to support, whether they're vendors or coming in committee to support us. And they are supporting the VIPR friendship that we have. They understand what this celebration is or what this event is about. And that's why they're coming and they're supporting us. And like I've said many, many times to you guys individually, radio, I am not going to turn away nobody that's going to come to help because everybody comes to this committee and they just want to sit down and talk and throw out a whole bunch of ideas.
- 2 : 47 : 00 But when it comes time to put it in play, nobody is there, okay? And I don't play that. I make sure that you give an idea, okay, well, you know what? Make it in play. And then that's when they turn around, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Okay? So I'm going to say one time, if we had an alien that came down and they want to volunteer in my committee, I would accept them. I am not turning nobody away. So we need to please move away from this.
- 2 : 47 : 32 Times are changing. Times are changing. Everybody's coming along to celebrate this, the VI Puerto Rico Friendship. Everybody's coming together to help us celebrate this. So we need to move away from this and embrace the changes that are happening right now. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President of the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico Friendship Committee. I admire your passion. And again, you know, we've had a good discussion surrounding this. And this is a potential revenue generator for this specific time frame of the year. If it's done right and I'm happy to hear that you've been working with the Department of Tourism and you should work they should be working very very closely with you in a sense of being able to attract passengers whether it's right there from Puerto Rico the Alcalde is here with us today you know we have flights that have opened up the Alcalde has worked very hard with the with the airline companies to try to open up flights between Vieques and Puerto Rico, to hence ease the issues with people traveling from St. Croix to Vieques. I had the opportunity to take that flight. It was very smooth. I had an easy 20 minutes, 40 minutes to Puerto Rico, 20 minutes to Vieques. I was there in an hour. So, you know, we definitely can look at how we can try to integrate attracting Gekinses, aki, here, and then hence in return Virgin Islanders to go to Vieques as well and also help with their economy to you know because they have their patronalis which is similar to how we do our VIPR and it's a historic time for people to get together much like our carnivals and and get together and enjoy the cultural heritage of food and music

so there's a point of information by Senator Franklin Johnson thank you very much

2:49:24 Mr. Chair my point of information is to Mr. Torres besides that communication you have with tourism have they invested any money into you guys any kind of donation or contribution right it's in kind for your advertisement what other assistance have you gotten from tourism department I let my treasurer answer Anna Foster Anna Foster treasurer of the VIP are senator this has been a very hard year as you know for everybody everybody's suffering and unfortunately no we have not received any funding. They are working with us with the promotion and coming up Monday with the cruise ship passengers. We're hoping that that's a success. Again, it has been a very hard year for everybody this year. And you did reach out to them for donation, for assistance with a ban or anything?

2:50:17 We actually did at the very beginning of the year, the letters. This year what we did, We took the letter to them, to talk to them in person, we just didn't send the letter. But unfortunately, the response you can see in red, who had donated any money to us. Thank you very much. Thank you, Senator Johnson. President Torres? If I may, besides the normal sheet with a balance, right, I'm going to also include all the people, because I know Ms. Fallou mentioned about they have a law that these businesses have to contribute. I'm going to include, I'm going to make you a list of everybody that we have contacted, in the EDC, all the businesses. I mean, my committee, we have reached out to everybody, senators, okay? And we, it'll go in person, call, email, and it's always, it goes in deaf ears or some support. So what I'm gonna add is a list of everybody so you guys can see, so when they want EDC benefits or whatever, you guys can see if they're contributing or not to the team because, no, I mean, you know, I'm gonna be transparent.

2:51:39 I'm gonna say I'm gonna be transparent I mean you know it you know you have to be fair you know you have to be fair and and you know you cannot say oh you're supporting a VIP or commedia you're supporting this or the organization or what we stand for whatever man and then you know and don't don't do anything so I'm gonna add that and and give it to you guys and whoever acts hey here's the list here's the people who's been support out we call everybody this person provided on this this person then it okay thank you so much colleagues we've had a good robust conversation surrounding the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico friendship day and before I let our testifiers close out I wanted to recognize and if media can help me out there are a set of people on the back wall closest to you media. I want you to put the camera on them. We have a delegation here from the Dominican Republic that are here for stand please and I'm gonna start off with Colonel Angel Jimenez, Colonel Maria Estevez, Major Hector Martes and Flavio Guevara okay yes and they are visiting from the Dominican Republic and Mr. Jimenez lives here but of course he's always been very very instrumental in supporting relationships with the Virgin Islands and the Dominican Republic so that's another relationship that the Virgin Islands has and he's been instrumental in assisting with a lot of endeavors surrounding the Bomberos which is the fire department. They're all part of the fire department of San Pedro de Macoris and they are here visiting to partake in the VI Puerto Rico friendship. We can as well so I want to welcome them and as you can see we're attracting people from different corners of the Caribbean if not the world. I want you to continue Mr President Torres to continue your work. I know it's hard, I know sometimes it's difficult but continue that work and try to build those relationships so that we can see the Virgin Islands Puerto Rico friendship weekend turn into what it was truly envisioned to be. To be a revenue generator, to bring people not just that but just to bring our people together for our cultural heritage so that we can partake in our culture, our food, our music and um you know just be happy you know and that's what really the essence of it is so i want to thank each of each and every one of you for being here today and we're going to do closing

2:54:34 remarks um and i'm going to start with past president olmeda then we're going to go to past president falu then current president torres and then ending with the mayor of vieques um corsino okay closing remarks you have um 30 seconds 12. thank you muchas gracias for inviting me it was a pleasure and i hope that in the near future we'll be able to get the bi perico where you said a big big celebration thank you It has been an honor and a privilege to be allowed to serve the people of the Virgin Islands. Thank you. Wow.

2:55:29 Mr. President Torres. Thank you, Senators, for having us here. I pray to you guys to really consider our funding for coming next year and continue to support this committee. And of course, I'm very personal friends so a lot of you guys, if you guys have any questions, please call me, do not hesitate. I mean, anything, this committee is open. We are not hiding nothing from you guys, okay? Thank you. Thank you so much.

2:56:06 Before we go to Mayor Corsino, I'd like to acknowledge the presence of Senator Diane Capot, who is here with us. Good to see you here with us. Senator, I'll give you, if you would like to make a remark, or I definitely would love you to do so. Please proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity. I had to come downstairs to even give some remarks, to say happy VI Puerto Rican Friendship Weekend. This is special for me because I have dos abuelas Poterequenia from Bayamon, Puerto Rico. And my mother's mother, because of Virgin Islanders going to the Dominican Republic, my grandmother was born in San Pedro de Macariz. And I don't talk about my heritage of my abuelas, but this is where I'm from. My parents, my grandparents are from, and I've had that influence of Spanish cooking, just the love of family, and I

am happy to be able to celebrate with you all because this brings a unique celebration to the Virgin Islands. So thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity, and I look forward to the celebration this weekend. Thank you.

2:57:32 And thank you for making the time to come down and make that remark, definitely. Thank you, Senator. And now to Alcalde Colcino. Thanks for the opportunity. And the invitation. And thanks to the VIPR committee.

2:58:01 that have allowed us, this union, the culture, the tradition, may it not be lost. Thank you. And I just wanted to make a few remarks but I believe Senator Carrion has a point of information. Thank you most a point of personal privilege that I also would like to point out other organizations that have also been working along to keep the tradition alive for example the Eddie Ortiz Three Kings tradition that have been keeping the tradition with Three Kings Alive, and we know that's how the parade started, Three Kings Parade. And, you know, so those other organizations have been also helping. And of course, shout out also to Mr. Papi Love, Jose Martinez, who established the first Hispanic radio station here on St. Croix that has been allowing us to strengthen the bond within the community, providing information to the community. So it's beautiful to see how we've continued to involve and expand and leave a footprint here in the territory.

2:59:23 Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, you have to translate, don't you? You're not going to get away so easy. vivos aquí en las Islas Vilas, especialmente en Santa Cruz, que así también comenzaron nuestras paradas, la Parada de los Tres Reyes y también el señor José Martínez Papilov con la primera estación hispana él estuvo en Vieques de Fajardo, viequense también de corazón y se trasladó hacia acá y ha abierto los pasos de comunicación y fortalecido los lazos dentro de nuestra comedia hispana con su emisora radial Latino 91.9 91.9 FM así que es bonito resaltar cómo continuamos expandiéndonos y dejando nuestra huella aquí en el territorio. Gracias.

3:00:24 Thank you, Senator. And as we close off, you know, it's been six decades of this relationship and hopefully six more. And on top of that, even more. And it's a very important part of our history, like we've all been hearing here today. And this year, it's an honor to have the Alcalde here with us again and hopefully we'll invite more dignitaries and vice versa. Dignitaries from the Virgin Islands can hence visit Yekis. I already know two colleagues that are going to be going next year so definitely I already know that we have our dignitaries going to come to visit you Alcalde and you took care of us so I'm very sure they're going to be very comfortable. However even though we've had a good discussion we do see that there are some challenges that the committee is experiencing and of course the rising cost of the cost of living are not assisting you in those endeavors I know that perhaps in the past raising funds with companies was a bit more easier but as society is currently in this in this state you know so companies are not really giving monies as how they used to so we've got to find more innovative ways of generating uh uh monies for the for the committee perhaps selling of paraphernalia maybe stickers bumper stickers um t-shirts things of that nature pins um so you know just think about that ways to try to generate um some some income for the committee but for most part i want to go ahead and close out and i want to thank my colleagues uh for being here with me today and And of course, every one of my colleagues spoke Spanish today, okay? Yeah, yeah, yeah.

3:02:10 Y'all remember that, every single one, okay? So, I want to thank them for doing that, and also our non-committee members, except, oh, Diane Capehart, I don't think you spoke Spanish, come on, give me, give me something, I'll go. Diane Capehart. Thank you to the media division, thank you to the staff, our sergeant of our our media division staff to the listening and viewing audience for being here with us today and um thank you to my staff for dealing with me and the committee on culture youth Asian sports and sports and parks is hereby adjointed We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. You

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.

9x **Senator Franklin D. Johnson**
heard in this transcript as: Franklin Johnson, Johnson

6x **Senator Milton E. Potter**
heard in this transcript as: Potter

6x **Senator Samuel Carrion**
heard in this transcript as: Carrion

5x **Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.**

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

5x

Senator Marvin Blyden

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

4x

Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger

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

4x

Senator Novelle Francis

heard in this transcript as: Francis, Novelli Francis, Novelli Francis Jr

3x

Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr

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

2x

Senator Angel L. Borges Jr

heard in this transcript as: Borges

2x

Senator Angel L. Bulkes Jr

heard in this transcript as: Angel Boulkes Jr

2x

Senator Samuel Caryong

heard in this transcript as: Samuel Cadyong

Bills and acts referred to

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

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Act 1075