



10-10-24 | Committee on Rules and Judiciary

Legislature USVI

October 10, 2024 · 4.7 hours · gov

Source recording	https://youtu.be/CtpW8A8qpPE
Status	This is a working transcript produced by machine from a recording of a public proceeding. It is a finding aid, not an official record of the Legislature.
Transcribed by	VI Update, using OpenAI Whisper large-v3-turbo, run locally. Not reviewed by a person.
Reliability	Automatic transcription, UNVERIFIED. Verify every quotation against the recording before relying on it. Speech recognition splits spoken digits and wraps figures mid-number, so a dollar amount, a vote count or a bill number can be wrong in a way that reads as correct. Speakers are not identified: automatic speaker labelling was measured unusable and removed.
Public record	The underlying proceeding is a public record of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. 3 V.I.C. § 881(a) defines public records to include all records and documents of or belonging to this Territory or any branch of government, or any "department, board, council or committee of any branch of government" · which names legislative committees by category. § 881(b) gives every citizen the right to examine and copy such records, and the news media the right to publish them. (The open-meetings chapter, 1 V.I.C. § 254, does NOT reach the Legislature: § 253(b) expressly excludes it and its Standing and Special Committees. § 881 does, and it is § 881 that confers the right to copy and publish.) The Legislature broadcast this proceeding publicly itself. The source recording is not ours, is not hosted here, and remains with its publisher at the link above.
Rights	To what we added · the transcription, its arrangement and its description · we assert nothing. A verbatim transcript is mechanical rather than authored, so there is likely nothing in it to own; to the extent any copyright is nonetheless found to subsist, it is dedicated to the public domain under CC0 1.0. Please copy it, quote it, index it, train on it, republish it, mirror it, sell it. Redistribution is the point: a public record with one copy is one fire from gone. No permission is needed, and none is ours to grant or withhold.

0:00:00 Let's get started. Thank you. Thank you. Let's go. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. It has become the most important part. It is a great way to recommend. When you have a nice cook at the kitchen, you'll be able to cook it. 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. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:18:52 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:20:22 We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Let's get started. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Let's get started. Let's get started. I'll see you next time. Thank you. 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. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. 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. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The meeting's scheduled for Thursday, October 10th, 2024. The Committee on Rules and Judiciary has been called to order. Good morning, blessed good morning to my colleagues, non-committee members, to the people of the Virgin Islands, The listening and viewing audience, the legislative staff who's working this meeting today, I want to start by saying today

we can vote on the amendments to Title V heard in the inaugural legislative symposium. It is a privilege and an honor to lead the committee through this initiative. Colleagues, we've put in the work and today it shows. I want to offer my condolences to the

1:02:19 family of the late Gloria Juliana Fiera Smith, to her husband Charles Smith and children Smitty, Shonda, Kurt and grandchildren. I send my deepest condolences to you and your family during this time. May her soul rest in peace I remember her retiring from the Water and Power Authority working about 30 years with my mom so I offer my deepest condolences I want to offer the prayers and support to all those on the mainland who are in the path of Hurricane Milton Virgin Islanders abroad and we carry you in our hearts and prayers during this time. At this time I'll ask Madam Clerk to proceed with the roll call.

1:03:21 Senator Angel L. Borges Jr. Present. Senator Borges Jr. Present. Senator Diane T. Capehart Present. Senator Capehart Present. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins. Senator Gittins absent. Senator Maurice C. James. Here. Senator James present. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Here. Senator Johnson present. Senator Carla J. Joseph. Present. Senator Joseph present. Senator Milton E. Potter.

1:03:55 Here. Senator Potter present. Madam Chair, you have six present, one absent. Thank you, Madam Clerk. Are there any correspondence to be read from any committee members? No. No, Madam Chair. Are there should be no correspondence from any testifiers? Colleagues, today we have three blocks. Do we have any correspondence to be read by testifiers no okay good madam clerk if you can proceed with reading of the agenda no you want to make the motion motion make the motion Okay, you read the agenda and then she would proceed.

1:05:04 Do you read the revised agenda and then, Senator, proceed. The Committee on Rules and Judiciary has scheduled a meeting for today, Thursday, October 10th, 2024 in the Fritz Elowes legislative conference room to consider the following nomination to consider the following bills and legislative symposium omnibus bills black one bill number three five dash zero three zero zero an act approving a lease agreement between a government of the Virgin Islands acting through its commissioner of the department of property and procurement and advanced power llc for three portions of parcel 1a estate provoney numbers one and two Frenchman's bay quarter st thomas virgin islands two portions of parcel number one A-8, Estate Bovone, numbers 1 and 2, Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, a portion of parcel number 1A-7, Estate Bovone, numbers 1 and 2, Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, a portion of parcel number 1-21, Estate Bovone, numbers one and two, Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, two portions of remainder of Parcel 1-19, Estate Bovone, numbers one and two, Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, and a portion of Parcel number 1-18, Estate Bovone, numbers one and two, Frenchmen's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas Virgin Islands for the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining wind turbine generators, offices, metering, maintenance sheds, access roads, utility substations as part of a microgrid on St. Thomas and other related purposes. Sponsored by Novell E. Francis Jr. and Sponsored by Senators Novel E. Francis Jr. and Angel L. Borges Jr. by request of the Governor.

1:07:48 Bill No. 35-0320, an act approving the lease agreement between the government of the Virgin Islands, acting through the Commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement and Advanced Power LLC, For two portions of parcels number 1 and remainder 39-A and 49 Estate, Cassava Garden, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, six portions of remainder, matriculate 38, Estate Pearl, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, two portions of remainder, matriculate 51 and 43 Queen's Quarter, St. Croix Virgin Islands. Two portions of remainder parcel number one, Estate Barren Spot, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix Virgin Islands. Two portions of parcel number 11, Estate Pearl, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix Virgin Islands. And six portions of plot number two, Estate Hamburg, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix Virgin Islands for the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining wind turbine generators, maintenance shed, access roads, utility substations as part of a microgrid and for other related purposes on St. Croix. Sponsored by Senator Novell E. Francis Jr. by request of the governor. Bill number 35-0374 an act approving the conveyance of parcel number 201 submarine base number 6 Southside Quarter St. Thomas Virgin Islands from the government of the Virgin Islands to the Virgin Islands public broadcasting system sponsored by Senator Novell E. Francis Jr. and Senator Marvin A. Blyton by request of the governor. Bill number 35-0383, an act approving a lease agreement between the government of the Virgin

1:10:00 Islands and St. Croix Science Teachers Association, Inc., for parcel number 10-P, VI Co-op Land King Quarter St. Croix Virgin Islands sponsored by Novell E. Francis Jr. by request of the Governor. Bill No. 35-0384 and act approving Amendment No. 1 to the lease agreement between the Government of the Virgin Islands and the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority to amend the premises by replacing the parcel of land described as a portion of parcel number 10 10 b vi corp land king quarter st croix virgin islands with parcel number 10 m vi corp land king quarter st croix virgin islands sponsored by senator novell e francis jr by request of the governor block two bill number three five dash zero zero three one and act amending title five virgin islands code subtitle three part one by adding a new chapter three oh one a

creating the child victims and child witnesses rights act and repealing chapter 301 sub chapter four section 3-5-10 sponsored by Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr. Bill number 35-0283 and act amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code part 3 chapter 34 the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act sponsored by Senators Donna A. Fred Gregory and Javon E. James senior bill number three five that's zero two eight nine and act amending title twenty-seven of the Virgin Islands code by raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21 years of age sponsored by Senator Senator Ray Fonseca. Block 3. Bill number 35-0285 and act honoring and commending Brian Benny Demos Boulay for his outstanding achievements in the music and entertainment industries and for his contributions to the Virgin Islands community awarding him the official key to the Virgin Islands and appropriating \$10,000 annually to the Demos Foundation, sponsored by Senators Ray Fonseca and Angel L. Borges Jr., co-sponsored by Senator Samuel Carrion, Bill No. 35-0286, and act honoring

[illegible]

1:37:30 The Committee of Rules and Judiciary is out of recess. First I'd like to acknowledge a non-committee member who is always at meetings, whether he's a committee member or a non-committee member, Novell Francis, welcome. committee member Senator Gittins. Can you mark Senator Gittins as present? Kenneth Gittins, the majority leader. And Senator Fonseca on the island of St.

1:38:10 Thomas, noncommittee member. Also I think Senator Milton Potter was marked present so thank you colleagues um at this time who speaks to bill number 35-0300 please proceed senator francis uh thank you very much madam chair good morning to you and good morning to my colleagues and of course good morning to the people of the virgin islands madam chair one question do you want me to present all of the measures or just um simply uh 300 at at this time you want me to present all of the talking points for all of the measures in this block yes yes thank you all right um so bill number 35-03-00 is an act approving a lease agreement between the government of the virginals acting through its commissioner of department of property procurement and advanced power llc for three portions of parcel number one estate bovoni number one and two frenchman's bay quarters and thomas virginals two portions of parcel number one 1A-8 Estate Bov... number 1 and 2 Frenchmen's Bay quarters st. Thomas, Virgin Islands, a portion of parcel number 1A-7 Estate Bov... number 1 & 2 Frenchmen's Bay quarters st. Thomas, Virgin Islands, a portion of parcel number 1-21 Estate Bovinku ese number 1 & 2 Frenchmen's Bay quarters st. Thomas, Virgin Islands, and two portions of remainder of parcel 1-19 Estate Bovoneese number 1 and 2 Frenchman's Base in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands and a portion of Parcel No. 1-18 Estate Bovoni No. 1 and 2 Frenchman's Base in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands for the purpose of constructing, operating and maintaining wind turbine generators, offices, metering, maintaining sheds, access roads, utility substations as part of a microgrid on St. Thomas and other related purposes. Bill number 35.0320 is an act approving the lease agreement between the government and the Virgin Islands acting through the Commission of the Department of Property and Procurement and Advanced Power LLC for two portions of parcels number one and remainder 39A-A and 49 Estate Cassava Gardens, Queen's Squatter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, six portions of remainder matriculate, 38 Estate Pearl, Queen's Squatter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, two portions of remainder matriculate 51 and 43 as Queen's quarter St. Croix versions two portions of remainder numbers one estate Byron's spot Queen's quarter St. Croix versions two portions of parcel number 11 estate Pearl Queen's quarter St. Croix versions and six portions of number two estate Humbug Queen's quarter St. Croix versions for the purpose of microgrid wind turbine, generators, offices, metering, maintenance shed, access road, utility substations as part of a microgrid on St. Croix and for other related purposes. And this is in

continuation of a project that's being worked on to provide alternative and renewable energies towards the Water and Power Authority's electrical improvement. Bill number 35.0374 is an act approving the conveyance of parcel number 201 submarine base number six outside quarters in Thomas Virgin Islands for the government to the Virgin Islands to the Virgin Islands broadcasting system this bill is being offered at the request of the governor the conveyance of this property to the

1:41:49 Virgin Islands public broadcasting system would support its current and future growth next measure is bill number 35.0383 is an act approving the lease agreement between the government to the Virgin Islands and St. Croix science teachers association inc for parcel number 10p vi core land king squatter st quarry versions this bill again came down from the office of the governor and this is a lease property is used for marine agricultural and science education and enables hands-on experience in crop production and we have we heard from uh the proponent that will be receiving this initiative and again we We have over 200 students that's part of this ongoing after school program. Bill number 35.0384 is an act approving and amendment number one to the lease agreement between the Government of the Virgin Islands and Waste Management Authority to amend the premises by replacing the parcel land described in a portion of parcel number 10B via Core Land, King Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands with parcel number 10M via Core Land, King quarter St. Croix Virgin Islands and this amendment is to lease property allows the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority to move forward and he plans to establish additional convenience centers as it pertains to beautification and litter on the island of St. Croix and this will be significant in how the territory manages its waste. I ask for my colleague's support on these five measures are before us and I'm not a member of this committee but again we need these lease agreements so that the government of the Virgin Islands could proceed on these various projects and initiatives. Thank you very much Madam Chair for the time. Thank you Senator Francis.

1:43:34 Colleagues, we will proceed with five minutes for these leases in block one. Four minutes? Okay, I can do four minutes. I will start with the order of how You will have your four minutes starting with Senator Carla Joseph first, Senator Bulquez, Senator Franklin Johnson, Senator Ray Fonseca, Senator Milton Potter, Senator Maurice James, and Senator Gittins. Joseph Bulquez, Johnson Fonseca, Milton Potter, Maryse James, Senator Gittin, seven.

1:44:30 Senator Carla Joseph, you may proceed with four minutes. Thank you. Thank you so kindly, Madam Chair. A pleasant good day to you and my colleagues as well as the viewing and listening public. I rise in support of all of the measures, the five measures in this block, In particular, I had the opportunity to sit in the Committee on Budget Appropriations and Finance this past Monday, where it was vetted, and these measures were vetted, and I have also signed on as a sponsor on each of these measures. But I want to speak about a couple of the measures, several of the measures. Bail number 35-0384, this is for the Waste Management and Vi Corp land and I really want to commend them on trying their very best to put in place those required new, well it's not required, but put in place those convenience centers so we have a more slightly place where we dump our trash. Also high kudos and commendation to Bill Number 4, Bill Number 35-0383, which is for the St. Croix Science Teachers Association, Incorporated. These teachers, they are doing such a major accomplishment and thing for our young people with STEM and STEAM, and so we want to make sure that our young people are well prepared to enter the world of the sciences. Science and math is critical. We look at our numeracy levels in our schools and it's not where it's supposed to be. So they are augmenting and supporting what is being done in our school. So I really want to commend Ms. Cromwell and her team of science and math teachers here in the St. Croy District for doing this. Also I want to really commend the Virgin Islands Public Broadcasting System, WTJX, because they are really working to rehabilitate, renovate, and rebuild their damaged facility in St. Thomas. So they needed to get this property conveyed to them so that they could do that work that is required. Right now they are renting and so once they have completed this work they will no longer be expending the money for rent and will actually be moving into their own building again brand new. So I really want to commend them. And then we have bill number 35.0300 and 35.0320. I saved those two for the last because those are critical items that we need in the Virgin Islands to produce renewable energy which will be the wind farms in both island districts so we can see some cost savings and efficiency and have redundancy in our electrical system. There are a bit of challenges with the rezoning, the zoning for these items, but I think it could still move forward. I do have a bill request to change the zoning for R1, which is residential, to P, to public. So I'm hoping that by the time of session we will have those amendments and they will be properly vetted and discussed so my colleagues and I could move this forward because they are getting external funding. External funding to put these wind farm and for us to be able to generate power efficiently in the Virgin Islands. Cost-efficient and we want that. The cost of fossil fuel is having a direct adverse effect on our environments. That's why we're getting all of these storms. Okay and then we We have to look at the cost because it also affects how much we pay. When we have to pay an extra amount of money to bring this fossil fuel in, when there's a hurricane in a different district, it rises the cost up. Thankfully the government of the Virgin Islands and the leadership at WAPA hasn't asked for a rate increase. And so we give thanks for that. But these would also help us manage the cost of producing electricity in an environmentally friendly way. So I

am in full support of all of these measures and I have signed on. Thank you so kindly, Madam Chair, for the time.

- 1:49:25 Thank you, Senator Carla Joseph. At this time, Senator Bolkis, you may proceed with your four minutes. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Good morning, Madam Chair. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning to the listening and viewing audience. And I rise in support of all of the measures here in block number one, starting with bill number 35.0300. This bill supports the construction of a wind turbine generator and microgrid promoting sustainable energy and energy independence for St. Thomas. And bill number 35-0320 also does the same for the Island District of St. Croix. It is important to outline that green energy is the wave of the future. The fossil fuel issues that we see here with our generation of energy in the Virgin Islands needs to be augmented with green energy so that we're able to have clean energy production and to help assist with what is considered to be critical mass energy pulling from the generators, forcing them to work at high capacities over long periods of time. So by augmenting these generators with renewable energies, we're able to mediate some of that energy production so that the generators can work at a normal pace rather than pulling at a critical energy issue. So moving forward, I support that measure. As for bill number 35.0374, the Virgin Islands public broadcasting system, you know, the public broadcasting system provides public media and education by granting a lot of the cultural and educational and public affairs programming that have enriched the lives of many Virgin Islands, and we want to continue to support them in their endeavors as for bill number three five that's zero three eight three the association for crop production uh this sustains uh sustainable agriculture in st croix by approving this lease we're helping the st croix science teachers association to help cultivate crops for food production and enhance food security and promoting our agricultural education and provide economic opportunities for our residents and our students as for bill number three five that's zero three
- 1:51:46 4, the Amendment to the Waste Management Lease Agreement. This bill ensures better waste management infrastructure by amending the lease for the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority and allowing them to develop solid waste management sites to strengthen the territory's waste disposal system and reduce environmental hazards and promote our public health. You know, being that we're here in the Virgin Islands, it's important that we take pride in our islands because we have some of the most beautiful islands in the Caribbean, and that is how we attract our tourists here to come and partake in all that we offer to them, whether it's our beautiful beaches, our culture, our music, our food. So we want to be able to make sure that we keep our islands clean, so please do not litter for those who are listening out there, or if you see somebody throwing trash around the place, please encourage them to pick it up. Madam Chair, thank you so much for the time.
- 1:52:36 I'm looking forward to supporting all these bills at the appropriate time. Thank you Senator Boquez. Senator Franklin Johnson, you have four minutes. Good morning, thank you very much Madam Chair, good morning to my colleagues, good morning to the people of the Virgin Islands and as my other colleagues allude, at the appropriate time I definitely will be supporting all of these measures. It is important that we do look at ways to conserve energies. When you look at how many businesses are closing because of WAPA. If we don't find a way to conserve energy and make it a lot easier and cheaper for our business, business people, especially residents, will definitely be in a big problem. So at the appropriate time, bill number 350300 and bill number 350320 is very, very key measures for us to make sure that we pass and not just pass, make sure that it works and operates to the cost of bringing down that high energy cost to everyone. Bill number 35034374, the podcasting system.
- 1:53:40 It's important that we make sure that all our culture, event, and activity be here to our people, and not just to us, but to whoever come around and visit the territory. So at the appropriate time, I'll be supporting that measure. Bill number 350383, it's important for after school program. Many times our young children are idle, nothing to do, but not only just after school program, but the agriculture. It's important that they understand that this is a way of living, a way that they too can do business and survive. And it's important that we make sure we start producing. Just a couple weeks ago we talked about the shipping industry going on strike. If we don't start doing this, teaching our children about this agriculture and agriculture, we will be in problem. because one day those ships might not be able to come to our shore. When you talk about importing some 90% of your product, your food, it's very difficult to continue surviving like that and continue anticipating that these ships are going to be sailing every day. So we for sure have to make sure that we do these programs, that our children understand, get the knowledge about planting, growing, and what it is like to feed your own self.
- 1:54:56 And then the last one, Bill number 350384, we have one convenience center already on the island of St. Croix. And any time you pass by that site, it's a beautiful site. It's not like how the rest of the dump site them you would call them because that's what they are when you look at it. So it's important that we make these convenience center what they should be, especially those that are in approximately, approximate of neighborhoods. People live close to these, especially the one in Concadia, the one in Mumbiju is by a school. And you don't want to sit aside at these centers at this

time. So it's important that we take this opportunity and turn all of them into something like what we have up in the Catrin Rest area there, where it's pretty much a clean operation. And once we start doing that, we can then start talking about doing a lot of reusable waste, turning a lot of that waste into use plastic metal start separating soul separation where we can sometime send back some of that stuff and make some money versus piling out of that material up on the dump site so at the appropriate time I definitely be supporting these measures madam chair thank you very much thank you senator Johnson for your your comments because I totally agree with you we have to change our mindset and how we deal with our waste and these convenience centers are great they work and people actually go to these sites and they they listen to the individuals telling you oh don't put that there put it over here so it's a process and we just need more of them Senator Fonseca, you may proceed on the island of St. Thomas with four minutes. Yes, thank you so kindly Madam Chair and a pleasant good morning to my colleagues. We give thanks and praises to the Most High and we continue to pray

1:57:12 for all of those family, friends, and all of the community in Florida where recently last night Hurricane Milton passed there, so we continue to pray. I have two sons up there. They're pretty okay. Madam Chair, I don't have a vote in this committee, but I wanted to discuss all the bills because I do support them when they come to this session. And I wanted to start with Bill No. 35-0300, an act approving a lease agreement between the government of the Virgin Islands and advanced power.

1:57:55 You see, what we're doing here, right, is we're now going to provide clean wind energy. Over there on the Bovoni site, that's right over there, right past the Clinton-Phibs race track, right where the Waste Management Authority has their central treatment plant. they're going to be producing 16.6 megawatts of power, clean energy, renewable energy on St. Thomas. That's about 25% of the energy needs on St. Thomas. One plant, and you know it was vetted in the finance committee, which I am a member of, and they are going to maintain several wind turbines. I think it's going to be about 10 of them. And, you know, they're going to have their offices, substations, and a microgrid system. But they are going to be investing \$160 million. See money. They're going to be investing \$160 million into our community. and they're not asking the VA government to get into any finance deal or to assist them. You see, this company has done their research. So this is new funds, new construction development funds coming into the territory. And that windmill site out there is not going to have any noise, pollution.

1:59:37 they are going to sell WAPA energy for 11 cents per kilowatt hour. Can you imagine that? Right now, WAPA is producing energy at 54 cents per kilowatt hour. Now, they're only charging us 43 cents because the government subsidizing WAPA that additional 14 cents. But imagine this. they are going to sell WAPA 11 cents. So hopefully when this thing finish, WAPA know they got to be reducing our bills because like we received testimony, one of the leading causes of business failing in this community is WAPA, the high cost and the poor service. So, you know, that's great green energy. We definitely are, you know, in support of that. And they're doing the same thing on St. Croix. You know, they're going to be doing the same thing on St. Croix.

2:00:41 Bill number 35-0374. This is a lease to the public broadcasting system. Right now, they're located down subways. They're up on a hill. Hey, Peace Hill, they call it. It's a long, winding road. but it's a good because you know the public broadcast system provides good programming to a lot of our residents that don't have the full cable time you know so it's very good and it's good to see that this coming to fruition so thank you very much madam chair for the time thank you senator Fonseca on the island of st. Thomas for your comments even though you're not in this committee thank you for attending. Senator Milton Potter, Vice Chair of the Committee on Rules of Judiciary, you may proceed with four minutes. Thank you so very much Madam Chair. Good morning colleagues. A special good morning to the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Madam Chair, I am in support of all of the initiatives in block number one here this morning. And these initiatives were all fully and properly vetted in the Committee on Finance.

2:02:04 Bill number 35-0300 as well as 35-0320 really reflects an opportunity for us, people of the Virgin Islands, to realize a reduction in what we pay for water and power ultimately ultimately ultimately the solution to us having more reliable affordable power is going to stand or rest in the area of renewables I think that the water and power authority ultimately must develop a renewables division where they develop a level of expertise in-house i think that is something that we ought to prioritize but this um initiative really uh is proposing the construction and operation and maintenance of a wind turbine generators um uh in the district of st thomas st john as well as st croix as colleague prior to uh my testimony indicated we're talking about uh potentially selling uh power at a rate of 11 cents per kilowatt hour which is a tremendous difference from what we are currently um paying for power in the district so i it is a no-brainer that we need to move forward with developing renewables and utilizing clean green renewables that will be much more cost effective for us as a people of course bill number 35-0374 the public broadcasting system um conveyance of of property we all know that um public broadcasting system wtjx has been doing a tremendous job of providing our territory with enrichment activities

and educational programming many of us grew up with it and our children grew up with it so this opportunity to expand the you know programming of WTJX through the acquisition of this property is really a no-brainer for me also. Of course bill number 35-0383 the act appropriating the lease agreement between the government of the Virgin Islands and the St. Croix Teachers Association also reflects an opportunity for our young people to become engaged and educated as to the possibilities of agriculture and agricultural production in the U.S. Virgin Islands. We import upwards of 97-98% of our foods. That is not sustainable. It is affecting our health. We need to understand the possibilities of producing quality uh wholesome uh uh products fruits and vegetables fresh fruits and vegetables uh here in our territory uh it is what you eat you are what you eat and that is the story so if we grow healthy fulfilling um produce i i think it will translate to a healthier uh virgin islands so we're definitely supportive of that we want to plant a seed in the mind of our young people as to the possibilities of agricultural production in the united states virgin islands bill number 35-0384 i think the plans for the convenience centers in the virgin islands will

2:06:04 be transformative uh for the territory you may conclude to have a clean hygienic way of disposing of our waste thank you very much uh madam chair the appropriate time i plan to vote in the affirmative for all of the bills in this block thank you senator potter senator maurice james you may proceed with four minutes thank you madam chair good morning virgin islands good Good morning colleagues, good morning everyone. I also support all the bills in this block. I'll start by saying that I've always been a big supporter of public broadcasting system, haven't been on it myself, and seeing how effective it has been in promoting culture and history in the Virgin Islands. I also support the St. Croix Science Teachers Association in terms of just promoting agriculture in the Virgin Islands and having a focus on it for us and for our children with respect to Waste Management Authority, we have the obligation to assist them and make them more efficient and effective in the Virgin Islands.

2:07:42 I left advanced power leases last because as Virgin Islanders, we all know that we've been plagued by the four A's which is availability, accessibility, availability, and well let me start again. Availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability. Because while the rest of the world is moving towards clean energy, we have been slow in that movement and have been really reliant on one source of energy. So it's great that we're seeing a clean energy transition being accelerated by the power purchase agreements that WAPA is entering into. We can't be locked into expensive fossil fuel. We have to move away from it. For example, if you look at the island nation of Barbados, their intent is to actually be zero dependent on fossil fuel and move completely to become a green energy nation. So we need to solve our energy problems and promote sustainable economic development in the Virgin Islands, and so I am fully in support of any diversification of energy sources in the Virgin Islands, and these two lease agreements that we are entering into with Advanced Power LLC moves us in the right direction.

2:09:36 And one of the things that we need to understand is that the companies are selling to WAPA at a certain price. WAPA then, and everybody knows, businesses buy something at one price, they sell at another price. So don't assume that because it's being sold to WAPA for a particular price, that means that we are also going to get it at that price. Obviously what's going to happen is it's going to reduce the cost of electricity for WAPA, the production of electricity, and so it should in turn mean that the consumers ultimately will benefit from these power purchase agreements that WAPA will be and have entered into with these companies. So that's a big move for us, and I think that being plagued recently in the last year, even now, with what has been happening with WAPA, that we're moving in the right direction, and we have to recognize that and applaud companies that enter into the Virgin Islands, private companies that enter into what I have always been advocating private public-private agreements that benefit the public sector and ultimately the consumers of the Virgin Islands so I rise in support of all the bills in this block and thank you madam chair Thank You Senator Maurice James at this time Um, Senator Gittins, you may proceed with your four minutes.

2:11:17 Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning to all. I, too, support the lease agreements that's before us here today. These partnerships are vital for our economic growth and the efficient use of our resources here in the territory. And frankly speaking, anything that will support alternative energy and to assist the Water and Power Authority in lowering the cost to rate pairs, I am in full support. And on that note, I just want the people of Bugbee Hole and Spring Garden, Spring Garden area to just continue to hold strain. We're doing everything humanly possible to assist you in the restoration of your power. We just got good word last evening that the contracts were signed by the Water and Power Authority and work will begin shortly. However, as we continue to pass measures such as these, I want to urge us all, and especially the executive branch of government to consider a critical next step to start actually retrofitting our government-owned properties. You know, by investing in our own upgrades, we can definitely reduce operating costs and set an example. I just want to say let's commit to a comprehensive plan to retrofit what's ours and stop continuing to just entering into rentals, rentals when we have good government property around here that we can actually retrofit and put to good use for the people of the Virgin Islands. At the appropriate time, Madam Chair and colleagues, I'm ready to support the measures before us in this block. Thank you.

2:13:19 Thank you. Sorry. Thank you, Senator Gittins. this time and I'm clerk you can put my time colleagues I am in support of all of these leases that's before us as we all know they went through the committee of jurisdiction which was committee of whole and they were totally vetted so I would just say on bill number 35-03-00 you know this is exciting for me for people at St. Thomas because this is going to improve reliability and reduce the fossil fuel emission, the total dependence on fossil fuel, like I like to call it the dinosaur fuel. Bill number 35-0320 in support of also this initiative for the island of St. Croix. You know, it's important that we start looking at other sources of alternative energy. This is going to be the ease on our citizens of the Valjean Islands. Bill number 350374, I'm in support of that. this is a broadcasting system the VA broadcast system has been here in our in the Virgin Islands for many years and anything that we can assist through this body I'm in full support 350383 I commend these teachers retired teachers Miss Gibbs and Miss White for your continued fight for the teachers and the students to make sure that they have other places to have hands-on learning whatever it is that they can do in the science field so I'm in support of that and lastly the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority to amend the premises by replacing the parcel I just have to say that the Waste Management authority I am in support of you know the landfill relocation I'm in support of waste energy I have a bill actually for waste energy because all of these things we have to think how we gonna get rid of our waste how we manage our ways what are we doing are we going to spend money shipping it out or we going can we use it to recreate and add to our you know the system that would be able to contribute to waste to energy so in that in that breath I would say I am in support of all of these measures in block one and I at this time colleagues we can entertain a motion for bill number 35-030 oh I'm sorry you know we started late and I'm guess I'm trying to make up for that no no senator I yield

2:16:38 to you and please proceed thank you very much madam chair just real quickly I know that you want to continue to move along to at least catch up on some time time. I just want to thank my colleagues for the support of these measures. Again, it's very important that we continue to support these various lease agreements. It adds to economic development in some instances. But these in particular, especially the one with Advanced Power LLC, is really geared towards the elimination or minimization of the fossil fuel and hydrocarbon in our community. And more importantly, it adds to renewable and alternative energy which hopefully will transcend into the reduction of costs of running wapa and i think it's important that we continue to support those initiative um you know both in the st croix and the st thomas district i want to say that you know while these wind turbines is being established within the area of estate pearl is that we have to continue to utilize and explore the opportunities where the ocean point farmer hovenza site could be utilized to support some of these initiatives while we endeavor to build this new plant over in the south shore with the 600 million dollars has been made available by that we have the opportunity to support that with natural resources through sun and wind and i think that we need to continue to capitalize on that of course the convenience centers throughout the islands is important to support waste management and beautification of our islands and you know we too as a community has to be mindful that it takes each and every one of us to do our part to make sure that we continue to clean up our islands we spent uh saturday down in the frederickstead area and the amount of trash uh that we um picked up you know just on the king street and um the market area is is unbelievable you know how we're doing that um but as a community we really have to you know become better stewards of our um environment and make sure that we put the trash where they need to be but as a government we need to be provide the resources locations and environment for individuals to be able to dump and dispose of their trash in a timely fashion of course i fully support the young individuals and i commend um miss rosa white cromwell as well as miss gibbs in being able to impart their science abilities the agriculture programs the bird watching and all those other initiatives that they're undertaking with our young people is phenomenal and um you know we as a legislative body also provided some funding through our miscellaneous disbursement to support that initiative so you know we will continue to do that um at the end of the day colleagues i think that we have done our part to move these leases forward and then we just have to exhort our oversight to make sure that the executive branch is carrying these things out in

2:19:35 a timely fashion uh thank you very much for your support and his measure thank you very much madam chair for the time thank you senator francis um i have a motto from dpnr is keep it clean it's our own so virgin islanders you know let's keep our natural resources clean and do your part so colleagues at this time i will entertain a motion for bill number 35-03-00 motion madam chair motion senator bulquez thank you madam chair madam chair i move bill number three five dash zero three zero zero an act approving a lease agreement between the government of the virgin islands acting through the commissioner of the department of property and procurement and advanced power llc for three portions of parcel one dash a estate bovoni numbers one and and two Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Two portions of Parcel Number 1A-8 Estate Bovoni Numbers 1 and 2 Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. A portion of Parcel Number 1A-7 Estate Bovoni Numbers 1 and 2 Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. A portion of parcel number 1-21, Estate Bovone numbers 1 and 2, Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Two portions of remainder of parcel 1-19, Estate Bovone numbers 1 and 2, Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin

Islands. and a portion of Parcel No. 1-18, Estate Bovone No. 1 and 2, Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

- 2 : 21 : 31 For the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining wind turbine generators, offices, metering, maintaining sheds, access roads, utility substations, as part of a microgrid on St. Thomas and other related purposes be favorably voted upon in this committee and forwarded to the full body for further action and consideration I so move. Motion properly made by Senator Angel Bocas and seconded by Senator Kenneth Gittins and Senator Carla Joseph and Senator Maurice James. Madam Clerk may I have roll call on bill number 35-03-00.
- 2 : 22 : 16 Senator Angel L. Borges, Jr. Senator Borges, Jr., yay. Senator Diane T. Capehart. Yes. Senator Capehart, yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins, yes. Senator Gittins, yay. Senator Maurice C. James, yes. Senator James, yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson, yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Carla J. Joseph? Yes. Senator Joseph Yeh? Senator Milton E. Potter? Yes. Senator Potter Yeh. Madam Chair, you have seven yeas. Thank you, Madam Clerk. Bill number 35-0300, an act approving a lease agreement between the government of the Virgin Islands, acting through its commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement Advance Power LLC for three portions of Parcel 1A Estate Bovone numbers 1 and 2 Frenchman's Bay Quarter St. Thomas Virgin Islands, two portions of parcel number 1A8 Estate Bovone numbers 1 and 2 Frenchman's Bay Quarter St. Thomas Virgin Island a portion of parcel number 1A7 Estate Bovone number 1 and 2 Frenchman's Bay quarter St. Thomas Virgin Islands a portion of parcel number 1-21 Estate Bovone number 1 and 2 Frenchman's Bay quarter St. Thomas Virgin Islands two portions of remainder of Parcel 1-19, Estate Bovone, Numbers 1 and 2, Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, and a portion of Parcel 1-18, Estate Bovone, Numbers 1 and 2, Frenchman's Bay Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, for the purpose of constructing, operating, maintaining wind turbines, generators, offices, metering, maintenance sheds, access roads, utility substation as part of a microgrid on St. Thomas and other related purposes has been voted upon favorably by the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and will be reported out to the full body for further consideration. Motion, Senator Bulquez. Thank you, Madam Chair.
- 2 : 24 : 52 Madam Chair, I move bill number 35-0320, an act approving the lease agreement between the government of the Virgin Islands, acting through the Commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement and Advance Power LLC, for two portions of parcel number one and remainder 39-A and 49 Estate Cassava Garden, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, Six portions of remainder matriculate, 38 Estate Pearl, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Two portions of remainder matriculate, 51 and 43 Queen's Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Two portions of remainder parcel number one, Estate Barren Spot, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. two portions of parcel number 11 estate pearl queen's quarter st croix virgin islands and six portions of plot number two estate hamburg queen's quarter st croix virgin islands for the purpose of constructing operating and maintaining wind turbine generators maintaining sheds access roads utility substations as part of a microgrid and for other related purposes on st croix be favorably voted upon in this committee and forwarded out to the full body for further action and consideration. I so move. Motion properly made by Senator Borges and seconded by Senator Gittin, Senator Maryse James and Senator Carla Joseph. May I have roll call on bill number 35-0320. Senator Angel L. Borges Jr. Senator Borges Jr. Yes. Senator Diane T. K. Part. Yes. Senator K. Part.
- 2 : 26 : 41 yea. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins? Senator Gittins, yea. Senator Maurice C. James? Senator James, yea. Senator Franklin D. Johnson? Senator Johnson, yea. Senator Carla J. Joseph? Senator Joseph, yea. Senator Milton E. Potter? Yes. Senator Potter, yea. Madam Chair, you have seven yays. Thank you, Madam Clerk. Bill No. 35-0320, an act approving the lease agreement between the Government of the Virgin Islands, acting through the Commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement and Advanced Power LLC for two portions of Partials No. 1 and Remainder 39A and 49 Estate Cassava Garden, Queen's Quodr, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Six portions of remainder, Matriculate, No. 38, Estate Pearl. Queen's Quodr, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Two portions of remainder, Matriculate, 51, 43, Queen's Quodr, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Two portions of remainder, Parcel No. 1, Estate Baron Spot. Queen's Quodr, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. two portions of Parcel No. 11 Estate Pearl, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix Virgin Islands, and six portions of Plot No. 2 Estate Humbug, Queen's Quarter, St. Croix Virgin Islands, for the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining wind turbine generators, maintenance sheds, access road, utility substation as part of a microgrid, and for other related purposes on st croix has been voted upon favorably by the committee on rules and judiciary and will be reported out to the full body for further consideration
- 2 : 28 : 39 motion senator bolquez thank you madam chair madam chair i move bill number three five dash zero three seven four an act approving the conveyance of parcel number two zero one sub Marine Base Number 6, South Side Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, from the Government of the Virgin Islands to the Virgin Islands Public Broadcasting System to be favorably voted upon in this committee and forwarded to the full body for more, for further action and consideration. I so move. Motion properly made by Senator Beauquez, seconded by Senator Gittins, Senator Carla Joseph Senator Maurice James and Senator Johnson may I have roll call and bill number 35.0374 Senator Angel L. Borges Jr. Senator

you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. . The Committee of Rules and Judiciary is out of recess. Colleagues, we are now in block two. We are ready to speak about bill number 35.0031, who speaks to that bill?

3:13:38 Senator Bolquez, you may proceed. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, thank you, and I speak to Bill number 35-0031. This bill creates essential protections for child victims and witnesses of crimes in the judicial process, ensuring that they're treated with the utmost care and dignity by creating a framework of safeguarding our children's mental health and emotional health during trials and discourse. This bill enhances the rights of vulnerable populations and promotes justice. It reflects the territory's commitment to protecting our children and improving the legal system and aligning with national standards and best practices surrounding child victims and their witnesses' rights in the event that they witnessed a crime. This was heard in the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety.

3:14:49 We were provided with numerous updates in the sense of potential amendments by the Department of Human Services, the Department of Justice. They were all in favor of the bill, just stating on the record that they were in favor of the bill as long as the recommended amendments would be provided to the bill so that the bill would become a bit more comprehensive and align with what pre-existing sections of the code had determined or defined a certain number of things that we had in the bill prior. Happy to report that I do have those amendments with me here today. I want to thank the Legal Counsel Division for their hard work in getting this to us today in the form of amendment number 35-1018, which I plan to bring forward during the time when we vote on the bill, and it has been circulated to all members, so you can please review that. I would appreciate it, and I'm looking forward to getting this measure across the finish line, and I thank each and everyone who supported the bill in the Committee on Homeland Security, Public Safety, and Justice, and looking for your support here today in this committee, the Committee of Rules and Judiciary, to move this bill forward. Thank you so much for the time, Madam Chair.

3:16:09 Thank you, Senator Borges. Who speaks to Bill number 35-0283? You may Proceed. Senator James. Thank you, Madam Chair. This bill, number 35-0283, sponsored by Senators Donna A. Fred Gregory and J. Van E. James Sr. It's an act that's amended Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part 3, Chapter 34, the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act. What this measure does really is it cleans up About any typos, inconsistencies, ads, clarification that was needed to the cannabis use law, it's pretty straightforward. The Office of Cannabis Regulations had previously shared their concern about the adult use cannabis law and so the sponsors have incorporated the concerns to the greatest extent possible and have incorporated it into Bill Number 35-0283, none of the changes, well I should say this, none of the changes alters the intent of the legislation that was adopted by the 34th legislature. So the sponsors are asking for the support of this committee on Bill Number 35-0283.

3:17:43 you Madam Chair. Thank you Senator Maurice James. Now we go to bill number 35-0289 who speaks to this bill? Senator Fonseca and St. Thomas you may proceed. Thank you Madam Chair and good day colleagues. today i present bill number 350289 an act amending title 27 virgin alice code by raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21 years of age research and national data are clear Nearly 95% of adult smokers begin smoking before the age of 21. The period between 18 and 21 years is critical because it is when many young people transition from experimental smoking to regular daily use. While less than half of adult smokers become daily users before the age of 18, a staggering four out of five smokers become regular users before they turn 21. Tobacco is linked to several forms of cancer due to the harmful chemicals they introduce into the body. Smoking alone is responsible for 85 to 90 percent of lung cancer cases and contributes to cancers in various parts of the body, including the mouth, throat, pancreas, bladder. Smokers are 15 to 30 times more likely to develop lung cancer than non-smokers. By raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products to 21, we have an opportunity to reduce early exposure to tobacco and prevent long-term nicotine addiction among our youth. The evidence is compelling. Smoking cessation drastically reduces the risk of cancer, with lung cancer risks decreasing by half 10 years after quitting. I urge my colleagues to

3:20:07 support this legislation as it will have a profound impact on the health and wellness of our young people and our broader community. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Senator Fonseca. Colleagues, we can have a three-minute discussion on these three bills in this block, starting with Senator Carla Joseph. Three minutes. Thank you. Thank you so kindly Madam Chair.

3:20:43 Colleagues, we are discussing these three items which are critical in this block and first bill number 35.0031 regarding the Child Victims and Child Witness Rights Act. I did speak to the sponsor regarding how the bill initially was written and I'm glad to hear that he has collaborated with the Department of Justice to really clean it up and to make it more palatable for them to be able to prosecute persons who are alleged perpetrators of sexual crime. That is a very important aspect. Also bill number 35 that's 0283 which cleans up the Virgin Islands Cannabis Act and finally 9 which now raises a legal age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21 years of age. We do have alcohol though that can be purchased at

18 years of age so that may be something we want to look at going forward as well. But I am in full support. I may not be in attendance when we are voting on these measures, but I will be able to review them when they come, if they successfully pass out of this committee. I have a scheduled flight to return back to St. Thomas, and so I really would like to be able to further vet the amendment specifically to bill number 35.0031 uh thank you so much for the time madam chair thank you uh senator franklin johnson you may proceed with no he he gonna go last

3 : 22 : 46 three minutes thank thank you very much madam chair i i support all three measures in this Black I'm really appreciative of bill number 350289 you know we have to start looking at our children seeing the things and that they are doing and start understanding that sometimes with these measures that we have here our laws are allowing our young people to engage in drinking at a younger age and many place and smoking in comparison to many states though some business people might think it's the appropriate thing when you start to think about the cause of smoking cancer different stuff like that and the health care insurance everything that's going up we have to start doing everything that we can to make sure that we are protect our children in this act bill number 3502 a3 and act amending title 19 of original codes which is the cannabis act we've been working on this cannabis act for some time and we definitely need to if we're going to be serious about it and have a skin in the game we have to do things very aggressively make sure that it's done properly more than anything else and definitely will support that and bill number thirty five zero zero three one and act amending title five virgin islands code subtitle three by adding a new chapter which creating the child witness rights I'm working in a district I can see where a lot of these measure needs to be definitely adapted a lot of these measure that we're putting now in the VA code will be in correlation with what happens on the national base and What we need to do to protect these children from the victim when the time come for it to come and testify So at the appropriate time I will vote in on all three measures madam chair. Thank you very much. Thank you senator Johnson Senator Marisha James Well Thank you. Go ahead. Proceed. I'm next. Thank you, Madam Chair. Very straightforward. I agree with the measures in this block, number two, and I support them all. That's it. Thank you. Thank you. So I'll go to Senator Potter.

3 : 25 : 06 Three minutes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, support them all. Bill number 35-0031 not amending Title V of the Virgin Islands Code to create the Child Victims and Child Witness Rights Act. I definitely believe that this type of legislation or this particular legislation is needed. It's essential for ensuring that our children are treated with a level of dignity and respect within the legal system and that their voices are heard and that the perpetrators of these heinous crimes are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. We need victims to feel comfortable coming forward when these crimes are perpetrated upon them. We need their voices to be heard and they need to receive the support in order to properly heal after going through these types of treacherous crimes. So I'm definitely supportive of that initiative. The second cannabis technical amendments, I support the cleanup language that was requested by the cannabis board and we need to finally once and for all get this adult use cannabis off the ground to have it implemented fully in our territory so that the potential revenues that we talked about realizing can actually be actualized the final issue the tobacco bill I support the sponsor of this bill we were talking just briefly about a time some time back where you actually had smoking on airplanes so you could be in seat number 10 and which is non-smoking and seat number 11 could be a smoking section of course you're smelling the fumes you know when you're there in an enclosed area so once you are educated and you understand the wisdom of you know making certain changes you know once you know better you do better we need to raise the age I don't see anything that's redeeming anything that is positive about smoking tobacco so raising the age from 18 to 21 I think it's a prudent that's a responsible thing to do it puts us in line with most of the states on the contiguous United States so at the appropriate time madam chair I plan to vote a formative affirmatively for all all of the bills in this block. Thank you very much. Thank you, Senator, for your time. I guess I'm up to speak next. Regarding Bill 35-0031,

3 : 28 : 27 seeks to better protect minors who are victims or witnesses to a crime came through the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety. We had an opportunity to speak with testifiers who supported the measure. This is truly an important and necessary piece of legislation to further protect our children. Of course, the government can do more to protect our children, and this bill represents that significant step in the right direction.

3 : 29 : 00 However, I want to caution or rather encourage my colleagues that in the future as we generate these pieces of legislation, especially when a measure directly affects an agency and we We expect an agency, department or branch of government to take responsibility in certain measures. We need to ensure that they are a part of the discussion. In this case, the courts, the Virgin Islands court system, or judicial system rather, has particular rule and I realized that we didn't have an input from them but it shouldn't hold up the measure today but I'm just saying that in the future let's be reminded to do that regarding bill number 35 there's 0283 the cannabis measure. I am going to stand firm that I have not supported any of these cannabis measures ever since the first piece of legislation that we decriminalized marijuana ever since that decriminalization this government have not fulfilled any of the mandates none whatsoever even with the decriminalization people are seeing smoking openly in the streets as if If marijuana is now full blown legal, there is no,

what you call it, nothing happening in this industry. And I don't see where this Cannabis Act will actually bring enough or generate enough revenues to address the enforcement portion of this.

3:31:19 With regards to Bill 35-0289, I support the territory coming into compliance with the federal law regarding the tobacco use by raising the legal age from purchasing tobacco products from 18 to 21. It is my hope that the DLCA will in fact be able to adequately enforce this measure. Additionally, besides the addressing of the purchasing, I would also like to see the education peace in warning young people about the tobacco use.

3:32:08 At this time, the Committee will take a three-minute recess as we have now concluded all debate time. The Committee on Rules will take a three-minute recess. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. the committee of rules and judiciary is out of recess at this time I will just

3:34:12 say that I've been I've been in the committee meetings and heard these bills vetted so I am prepared to vote when the rule call is being called I may not support certain legislation but I understand the intent so at this time bill number 35-0031 do I hear a motion motion Senator Bolquez thank you madam Madam Chair, Madam Chair, I move Amendment No. 35-1018, an amendment to Bill No. 35-0031.

3:35:02 Bill No. 35-0031, Section 1, is amended in the following instances. a in internal section three five one two one on page two subsection b strike all the language after 18 and insert years motion senator johnson motion madam chair i move to waive the reading of amendment number 351018 amendment to bill number 350031 i so move i'm hearing no objection so ordered properly moved by senator johnson seconded by senator maurice james hearing no objection so ordered motion motion senator bulk is thank you madam chair madam chair I move bill number three five dash zero zero three one as amended an act amending title five virgin islands code subtitle three part one by adding a new chapter three zero one a creating the child victims and child witnesses Rights Act and repealing chapter 3 0 1 sub chapter 4 section 3 5 1 0 be favorably voted upon by this committee and forwarded out to the full body for further action and consideration I so move motion properly made by senator Borges and seconded by senator Maurice James and senator Johnson may have roll call on bill number 35.0031.

3:36:48 Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr. Yeah. Senator Bocas Jr. Yeah. Senator Diane T. Capehart. Yes. Senator Capehart, Yeah. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins. Yes. Senator Gittins, Yeah. Senator Maurice C. James. Yes. Senator James, Yeah. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Yes. senator johnson yay senator carla j joseph senator joseph absent senator milton e potter yes senator potter yay madam chair you have six yeas one absent thank you bill number 35-0031 as amended, an act amending Title V, Virgin Islands Code, Subtitle 3, Part 1, by adding a new chapter, excuse me, 301A, creating the Child's Victims and Child Witnesses Right Act, and repealing Chapter 301, Subchapter 4, Section 3510, has been voted upon favorably by the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and will be reported out to the full body for further consideration.

3:38:10 Yes, Senator Bolquez, you may proceed. Point of personal privilege. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank my colleague for that, in addition to also notify the general public who are viewing and listening why it was waived. There was a hefty amount of amendments to support the bill, which all derived through testimony at the Homeland Security, Public Safety and Justice Committee hearing, in addition to uh discussions on the floor and all of the amendments uh were encompassed in this amendment number three uh five dash one zero one eight um and approved by the department of justice so i just wanted to at least put that on the record madam chair thank you thank you senator bolquez um do i hear a motion on bill number 35-0283 motion motion senator maurice james thank you Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Bill number 35-0283, an act amended Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part 3, Chapter 34, the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act, be favorably acted upon by this committee and be forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. I so move.

3:39:36 Motion properly made by Senator Maurice James and seconded by Senator Bolquez and Senator Johnson. Do I hear on St. Thomas? Senator... Second. Senator Potter may have roll call on bill number 35.0283. Senator Angel L. Boquez, Jr. Yes. Senator Boquez, Jr., yay.

3:40:06 Senator Diane T. Capehart. Yes. Senator Capehart, yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins. Yes. Senator Gittins, yay. Senator Maurice C. James. Yes. Senator James, yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Carla J. Joseph. Senator Joseph absent. Senator Milton E. Potter? Yes. Senator Potter, yay. Madam Chair, you have six yays, one absent. Madam Clerk, can you please change Senator Gittin's vote from yes to no?

3:40:46 And please repeat the count. I have five yays. Five yays, one nay, one absent. Thank you. Bill No. 35-0283, an act amending Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part 3, Chapter 34, the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act, has been voted upon favorably by the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and will be reported out to the full body for further consideration. Motion, Senator Potter?

- 3:41:29 Motion. Motion, Senator Potter. Motion. Thank you, thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that bill number 35-0289, an act amending Title 27 of the Virgin Islands Code by raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21 years of age be favorably voted upon in the Committee of Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. I so move.
- 3:42:03 Motion properly made by Senator Potter and seconded by Senator Boquez, Senator Marish James. Do I hear another second? Senator Franklin Johnson may have roll call on bill number 35.0289. Senator Angel L. Borges, Jr. Senator Borges, Jr., yay. Senator Diane T. Capehart, yes. Senator Capehart, yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins, yes. Senator Gittins, yay. Senator Maurice C. James, Senator James, yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson, yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Carla J. Joseph. Senator Joseph, absent.
- 3:42:50 Senator Milton E. Potter. Yes. Senator Potter, yay. Madam Chair, you have six yays, one absent. Thank you, Madam Clerk. May I have bill number 35.0289, an act amending Title 27 of the Virgin Islands Code by raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21 years of age, has been voted upon favorably by the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, and will be reported out to the full body for further consideration.
- 3:43:27 Colleagues, that has concluded Block 2. We're cooking. We can proceed right into Block 3. Who speaks to Bill number 35-0285? I do madam um senator bolkus you may no senator fonseca i'm sorry senator fonseca you may proceed thank you madam chair um colleagues it is with a sense of pride and honor i present to you bill number 35-0285 and act honoring and commending Brian Benedimos Boulay for his outstanding achievements in the music and entertainment industries and for his contributions to the Virgin Islands community, awarding him the official key to the Virgin Islands. Sporting a personality as vibrant as his native Virgin Islands, Benny Demos is globally known as an entertainer extraordinaire, internationally known as the DJ for ACON. Nobody wants to see us together, but it don't matter, no, because I got you. Benny D is also acknowledged as a first-class actor, music producer, screenwriter, and artist manager. Benny Demos has stamped his own ticket to success. He has thousands of fans in over 180 countries and has a clear passion for using his celebrity status and resources to enrich the lives of others. Having grown up knowing what a struggle it could be to recognize your dream firsthand, Benny D has vowed to give opportunities to youth. he could only dream about at their ages. Flamboyant and energetic in his own performances, many may be familiar with his works with singer Akon, but also Benny D has quietly contributed to the success of numerous other popular artists such as Rock City, Jada Kingdom, Bruce Simmons, Kendrick Lamar, Cardinal Ophichal, Jada Kingdom, many more. However, he didn't always have superstar status, checking for his DJ skills and expert advice.
- 3:46:04 Though Benny D first touched the wheels of steel at the tender age of 10, it was his hard hustle and sleepless grind that took him from the Islands Club of the VI to being worldwide on solo stages in Brazil, Germany, LA, New York, France, Uganda, Liberia, Senegal, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and so many more, always carrying the Virgin Islands name on his back fans and music lovers alike know that Benny Demos is not just the DJ he's the extreme entertainer otherwise known as the world's most entertaining DJ so colleagues I know acts for your support of bill number 35-0289 thank you madam chair thank you senator Fonseca now we'll go to bill number 35-0286 who speaks to that bill 35-0286, Vern Antonio Hodge. Thank you Madam Chair, Madam Chair and colleagues, I am again excited today to once again introduce This bill, bill number 35, that's 0286, an act honoring and uncommending von Antonio Hodge, retired presiding judge for his exemplary service and unwavering dedication,
- 3:48:02 not only to the judiciary of the Virgin Islands, but also to the Virgin Islands community. I humbly ask again for your support, I do believe that we have the support of the entire body as I saw this morning that approximately 13 or 12 rather of 15 of us have already signed on to this measure. You know, Varun Hadj has certainly demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to upholding the rule of law. And this bill simply recognizes his significant contributions to the territory, and I look forward to the support of this. And I do have a couple of amendments that were shared with everyone, simple amendments that we will just seek to correct some little minor stuff within the bill.
- 3:49:09 I look forward to the support of all of you and the good discussion. uh let us take the opportunity again to celebrate uh presiding judges uh hadges rather legacy and express our gratitude for his years of service to this community thank you uh thank you mr chair thank you so much uh senator kind of gittins and we're gonna move forward now who speaks to bill number 35-0257? I do, Mr. Chair. Senator Capehart, you're recognized. So colleagues, yesterday in the Committee of Economic Development, this bill was heard. This is a bill not only for the Virgin Islands, it's actually a bill for St. Croix.
- 3:50:01 We have distillers right in our backyard, Cruze and Rum, Diageo, Leatherback, Mutiny. You have also, I think, a new winery that's coming, Raising Cane. And I thought that this would be a great revenue generator for the island of St. Croix. And we had very healthy discussion, I must say, yesterday. we had the Department of Tourism that came before us and shared some suggestions. Those suggestions was actually taken an amendment that I'm providing today by inserting and incorporating the inaugural event of any part of any festival, any activity that they would have sole responsibility of

dealing with that. I also have an amendment that talks about extending the time not having enough time that's in there reducing the amount this is for the island of St. Croix and I say that with the Department of Tourism who would have oversight to make sure that this plan is executed I ask for your vote and your support today I will have further discussion closing when my time is here. Thank you Mr. Chair. Thank you Senator Capehart for speaking on that bill and we have one last bill which is the omnibus bill which is bill number 35-0388. Who speaks to this bill? I do Mr. Chair. Bill number 35-0388 is actually an omnibus bill in the first meeting that we had for rules and

3:51:54 judiciary to have the revision to have of the Virgin Islands code an overhaul of different amendments to title five we had government agencies protects participate that came before us even the judicial branch even local attorneys came in to talk about different bills, well not the bills but just different amendments in the VI code that needs to be amended. This is where all those amendments that were provided to the Rules and Judiciary Committee that we would be voting on those amendments today on the omnibus bill. This is just the revision of code title five because you have legislation on our books that would say if you're married to an idiot you can get a divorce that if a certain animal a pig runs down Main Street that that's not the only animal that's permitted coming down the Main Street and that was because back then I understand that there was a slaughterhouse and that's why animals were able to come down the street so there are legislation from since the beginning of time that needs to be changed simple words that need to be changed and this is just the initiative of the rules and judiciary committee did hard work had discussions even after our meetings we huddled with some of these stakeholders in the department saying this is a need so colleagues here it is we are able to vote today on just those simple changes nothing that is complicated nothing that is controversial so bill number 35.0388 i ask for your support thank you mr chair and thank you senator capeart

3:54:02 for all of your effort and work and the foresight in providing that symposium so that antiquated portions of the code are actually reviewed and thoroughly reviewed I should say and of course recommended by the department heads concerning what they would consider to be issues that they have in their operations things that are prohibiting them from operating to a certain extent so I commend you and your team and all the senators that were present for that symposium and your code revisor division as well um so you know i commend each and everyone for all of the hard work and determination and even similarly if i can say this um you know we have the sixth constitutional convention coming up um if you really think about it similarly the revised organic act of 1954 is actually what we are operating under and obviously if the sixth constitutional convention is successful we would then have an opportunity to go in to make the proper revisions and edits to that type of legal document which will be a living document but nevertheless for us to all be able to make the changes that reflect our common day lives today in 2024 and beyond. So I commend you once again and we're going to take a quick recess so that we can move forward with the rest of these bills on the last portion of this block.

3:55:24 The Committee on Rules and Judiciary will go on a one minute recess. Thank you. I'm going to, I'm going to, I'm going to I'll see you next time. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The Committee of Rules and Judiciary is out of recess. Colleagues, now we have

3:59:09 three-minute discussion time for Block 3. We are almost finished and I would start with Senator Bulquez. Three minutes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I rise in support of all of the bills in this block, block three. I'll start off with Benny Dimas. The bill honors what is considered to be our local hero and Benny Dimas has had contributions in music and community development and awarding him and supporting him and his foundation for all of his achievements in the area of music and entertainment and of Of course, his incorrigible philanthropy that he's given back to the Virgin Islands. It inspires and highlights his successful story as a Virgin Islander who has succeeded in the area of music and entertainment. Of course, without a doubt, Bill Number 35-0286. This bill pays tribute to the legacy of Vern Antonio Hodge by renaming the Superior Court in the St. Thomas St. John District in his honor and recognizing him for his decades of service and contributions to the Virgin Islands and the judiciary with renaming this, it upholds the values of integrity, justice and community service. And it also serves as an inspiration to future professionals in the area of legal profession. Uh, Vern Hodge is definitely a, uh, leader in that area of government and we are happy to support him in this endeavor. Um, also I look forward to supporting the, uh, festival, the beer, wine and spirits festival to help, uh, with economic, uh, viability and stability for the Island district of St. Croix. Um, I, I hope this is the first of many other ways that we can try to augment how we are able to create more economic activity in the Island District of St. Croix. Unlike the St. Thomas and St. John District, which sees a lot more tourism activity than St. Croix, we have to find very innovative ways of trying to support this district so that they're able to provide or achieve their economic goals and stability. In addition to that, I also support the omnibus bill, I spoke about it a little bit earlier. Very important achievement for the chair of this committee along with all of who are involved in the effort so that we're able to touch on antiquated portions of the code that do not speak to what is considered to be the common day issues or situations that we know it to be in the here and today. And that is part of our jobs as legislators, to be able to go into the code and revise it and amend it and change it so that we have the best version of what the law should be to reflect our common day reality.

So I thank each and every one for all of their efforts in that endeavor. And thank you again, Madam Chair, for the time.

4:02:26 Thank you, Senator Bulquez. Senator Johnson, three minutes. Thank you very much Madam Chair. At the appropriate time I will be supporting all these measures. Bill number 350285 is always an honor to recognize our people in the Goud and represent the territory and represent it well. Sometimes these measures can't pay for what the Virgin Islands receive as far as recognition, knowledge about this territory, and just the whole gamut of we being mentioned on a bigger scale when entertainers go out and perform at the magnitude of Benny Dimas. At the appropriate time, I'll definitely support that measure. Bill No. 350286, Judge Vern E. Hodge, gentleman, a small gentleman but walking big foots. When he ran the territorial court, at that time it was territorial court, it's now Supreme Court, it was a family affair.

4:03:28 It was a real family-oriented court where everyone pretty much knew everyone and everyone had that respect, but more so respect for that small giant. I was very sorry that I couldn't have been here to that hearing when it was being brought up. I had some other engagement, but I looked at it on TV and really was applauded for the amount of folks that came out and talked on his behalf. and definitely it will be supporting the beer, wine, and they're going to have food for sure. So definitely at the appropriate time, I'll support that measure. It's a measure just trying to do economic activities, bring people to the territory at the same time, and I think it's a very good piece of measure. And the omnibus bill, obviously something that we have to do. I so appreciate that we start doing it a little bit at a time, because there's a lot, a lot of bills that are outdated that we definitely need to fix. Some of them need improvement. Some of them need adjustment. So at the appropriate time, I will definitely support in all of these measures. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

4:04:36 Thank you, Senator Johnson. And now we'll go to Senator Fonseca. No, he's not there. Senator Potter. you may proceed three minutes thank you very much madam chair I am supportive of all of the measures in this final block I had the privilege of being here for the two resolutions bill number 35-0285 and bill number 35-0286 and I've always said I've always taken a position that progressive communities honor and commend and recognize those among us who achieve excellence and these two individuals brian benny demas boulay as well as the honorable verne antonio hodge a well deserving of the honor that they received um what you will find out what you can easily discover is that although these two gentlemen were are extremely talented in their own right they are even better human beings the character of the individual just really spoke volumes the people who came from far and near to be a part of um you know our hearing uh the other day um folks came from as far away as california uh in some cases uh for judge hodge every single seat in the chambers here on St. Thomas, every seat was filled. Judge Hodge is an incredible human being, an incredible legal mind,

4:06:35 and we're very fortunate and blessed to still have him with us. His contributions to this territory are vast. Similarly, Brian Benedimas, his contributions in the arts and entertainment and music and comedy is well known. He's highly regarded, and I am very proud that he is from the U.S. Virgin Islands. Bill number 35-0257, I must commend the chair of the committee, Senator K. Part, for having the vision to come up with the concept of a USVI beer and wine and spirits festival here in the territory, particularly on St. Croix. When St. Croix thrives, our territory thrives, as we have one treasury. So I'm looking forward to coming to the Big Island to experience its first beer and wine festival. And finally, Bill 35-0388, the bill updating the Virgin Islands Code and providing for efficiency in government operations. It's really a no-brainer. We were able to come together to examine some ancient, those aspects in the code that were outdated and outmoded. We were able to clean them up. So at the appropriate time, Madam Chair, I plan to vote affirmatively for all items in our final block, block three. Thank you very much.

4:08:12 Thank you, Senator Potter. Senator Maurice James, you may proceed with three minutes. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. I support the measures in this block with actually trying to understand some of them, I'm going to admit. The first one, you know, when I saw the official key to the Virgin Islands, I had a little conversation with my colleagues about exactly what is the key to the Virgin Islands and what does it mean and I think some people don't understand as well as I didn't initially what would be the criteria for giving the key to the city and it comes from a medieval tradition where someone was just ceremonially honored and a symbolic gesture for the contributions they've made to a community and it was usually given to a visitor so you're saying welcome to our city and you can come back and you're a trusted friend of the city but in the virgin islands we have decided we actually bestowing it on people who are from the virgin islands and probably live elsewhere I'm thinking so I myself I'm interested in the the criteria that we use but I am sure that the reason that Brian Benny Dimas was in fact chosen is because he's contributed to our community in a big way so going forward I think we need to to understand the parameters when it comes to giving the

4:10:02 key to the city and if in fact we're going to use it in a different way than it than is used elsewhere following the medieval tradition but definitely a deserving recognition. I as a young lawyer met Judge Vern Hodge years ago as a matter of fact I could have been one of the people who testified on his behalf at the hearing I enjoyed seeing him and hearing the people who testified on his behalf for me brought back memories for me of Judge Peterson attorneys Winston Hodge and Albert Sheen because that's how I met him when I joined their firm as a young attorney and went over to St. Thomas and met

what you know at the time was the great Judge Vern Hodge and had a wonderful conversation with him about practicing law and being from the Virgin Islands and how important it was to be a lawyer in the Virgin Islands community so definitely I feel more than ever with respect to someone like Judge Vern Hodge so deserving the time the fine you may conclude I just okay with respect to the omnibus bill that bill really covers changes like from the district when jurisdiction change from the district court to the superior court so what it does is it replaces that it increases penalties. It simply addresses, as the chair said, words and actually sometimes jurisdiction that has changed from one court to the next. And so that's what that did and I definitely believe that that was needed. With respect to the Virgin Islands Beer, Wine and Spirits Festival, I do want to point out that in In the Virgin Islands, we actually have Oktoberfest on St. Croix and on St. Thomas, which recognizes Bayer Festival, and the St. Croix Foundation does the wine in the warehouse at Bulky. So if the Department of Tourism can look at their events

4:12:30 and somehow promote this event, taking all the good from those, I think that we can actually take this somewhere. So at the appropriate time, I will vote in the affirmative. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Senator Maurice James. At this time, Senator Gittins, you may proceed. Thank you, Madam Chair, Madam Chair and colleagues, I support all the bills before us in the this block with just a little slight reservation with one. But particularly, I wholeheartedly support the bill, of course, to honor retired presiding judge Vernon Antonio Hodge by naming the courthouse building on St. Thomas in his honor. Judge Hodge's unwavering commitment to justice and his profound impact to our community deserves this recognition. And by naming, not renaming, and that's one of the amendments that I'm bringing forth because we're not renaming the courthouse, we're actually naming it. So by naming the courthouse after him, we not only honor his legacy, but also inspire future generations to uphold the values he embodied. Additionally, I want to also support the omnibus bill, which I think is aimed to simply enhancing government efficiency in an era where effective governance is crucial. This bill represents a significant step towards streamlining operations and improving

4:14:23 delivery of service to the people of this territory with regards to the other bill i i will support the bill but like my colleague stated um for the future i am hopeful that we will have uh prerequisites uh for the giving of the key uh to the city so that we don't uh water down this this honor this is almost like giving the the what is it the meritorious award or some the medal of honor etc we have to hold these recognitions in high regards and have a prerequisite for doing so so there should be no vote where any one of us or anyone sitting in this body has to guess or wonder what contributions if any that someone who is beside the key to the city is receiving but I am comfortable enough to go ahead and support the measure before us today and lastly with regards to the beer and wine festival I am staying away from the beer and wine but I wholeheartedly support this measure especially here in the st. Croix district we could remember the days of the the music festivals time in in Frederick said and I look forward to seeing St. Croix booming like that again with one of these festivals. So at the appropriate time, Madam Chair, I'm poised to support all the bills in this block.

4:16:18 Thank you so much. Thank you, Senator Gittins. Madam Clerk, you may start the time for me. I just want to say that I'm in support of all the measures before us today. But I want to take time to talk about two of the bills. one the bill that is the omnibus bill 35-0388 colleagues we did a lot of work on this and I just want to say to the code revisor division that approached me and and said that there are a lot of VI codes that need to be overhauled and this is where we took the time and this is the cause of this for code revisions that's their job they spoke to me I brought it to my colleagues and we had that symposium and I hope that this continues updating VI codes I want to make it clear that senators have updated the VI code it hasn't stopped but certain language that needs to be changed for departments to be able to provide efficiency for their government operations. So I hope this would help with that process. And I want to also say the bare wine and spirit that was bill that was in committee yesterday of jurisdiction that was vetted in the committee. I had meetings with all these stakeholders, Diageo, Cruz and Rom, Leatherback, Mutiny, Department of Tourism Commissioner, they were on full support of this legislation. I heard this bill in committee yesterday and I heard the director of tourism gave some input and I just want to say that's being done. So I just want to say that the Department of Tourism, Chamber of Commerce, and the local distilleries, breweries, for their contribution to the legislation, at the heart of resolving issues related to health care, education, elderly, behavior, health, housing, and youth services, is the need for funding to initiate or maintain services.

4:18:37 This is for economic growth. This is just not St. Croix. This is economic growth for the VI. Distilling happening mostly here on St. Croix is one of the largest revenue generator in the territory. It is happening here on the island of St. Croix, Santa Cruz. It makes sense to capitalize on that industry to enhance its growth. So colleagues, I ask for your support and I did listen to my colleagues their suggestions I did listen to tourism and that's why there's an amendment changing the date changing where Department of Tourism will be able to incorporate this event into any other event any other festival so there you go colleagues we may proceed now with voting you know we would have been out of here if we didn't have a little technical issues but we we're doing good so I'm ready to entertain a motion motion senator Volquez thank you madam chair madam chair I move bill number three five dash zero two eight five an act honoring and commending Brian

Benny Demas Boulay for his outstanding achievements in the music and entertainment industries and for his contributions to the Virgin Islands community awarding him the official kit of the Virgin Islands and appropriating 10,000 annually to the Dimas Foundation be favorably voted upon by this committee and forwarded to the full body for further action and consideration I so move motion properly made by Senator Bulquez seconded by Senator Maurice James, Senator Franklin Johnson, and Senator Potter-on-Saint-Thomas. May I

4:20:38 have roll call and bill number 35-0285. Senator Angel L. Borges Jr. Senator Borges Jr. Yay. Senator Diane T. Capehart. Yes. Senator Capehart, yea? Senator Kenneth L. Gittins? Senator Gittins yea? Senator Maurice C. James? Senator James yea? Senator Franklin D. Johnson? Senator Johnson yea? Senator Carla J. Joseph? Senator Joseph absent?

4:21:16 Senator Milton E. Potter? Senator Potter yea? Madam Chair, you have six yays, one absent. Thank you, Madam Clerk. Bill number 35-0285, an act honoring and commending Brian Benny Dimas Boulay for his outstanding achievements in the music and entertainment industries and for his contributions to the Virgin Islands community, awarding him the official key to the Virgin islands and appropriating 10 000 annually to the demas foundation has been voted upon favorably by the committee on rules and judiciary and will be reported out to the full body for further consideration do i hear amendment senator kittens thank you amendment thank you madam chair madam chair and colleagues I offer amendment number 35 there's eight four nine an amendment to bill number 35 there's zero two eight six offered by us truly all All these amendments were distributed and emailed to all members.

4:22:36 Bill number 35, that's 0286, is amended as follows. A, on page three, line one, before, open quote, superior court, close quote, insert, open quote, courthouse of the, close quote. And on line two, strike, open quote, renamed, close quote, and insert, open quote, named, close quote. B, in section one, number one, strike, open quote, renaming, close quote, and insert, open quote, naming, close quote. Two, before, open quote, superior court, close quote, insert, open quote, courthouse of the, close quote. Three, strike, open quote, St. Thomas, St. John, close quote, and insert, open quote, in the St. Thomas, St. John District, close quote. And four, strike the last instance of the phrase, open quote, of the Virgin Islands, close quote.

4:23:44 C, in section two after, open quote, court, close quote, insert, open quote, comma, currently located within the Alexander A. Farrelly Justice Center, close quote. D, in section three, one, striking, open quote, renaming, close quote, and insert, open quote, naming, close quote. Two, before, open quote, superior court, close quote, insert, open quote, courthouse of the, close quote. and three strike open quote st. Thomas st. John close quote and insert open quote in the st. Thomas slash st. John district close quote I so move amendment properly made by senator Gittins and seconded by senator Maurice James and Senator Johnson hearing no objection so ordered amendment Senator Gittins thank you madam chair I move amendment number 35-850 an amendment to bill number 35-0286 offered by yours truly bill number 35-0286 is amended as as follows, after the first whereas clause, insert the following, open quote, whereas Vern A. Hodge, graduated salutatorian of the Charlotte Amalia High School class of 1952,

4:25:32 semicolon, close quote. B, the seventh and eighth whereas clauses are stricken, and new whereas clauses are inserted as follows, open quote, whereas, 1973 comma, Governor Melvin H. Evans appointed him to become the Attorney General of the Virgin Islands comma, a position he held until 1976, semicolon, whereas, comma, in 1976 comma, Governor Cyril E. King appointed him to serve as the presiding judge of the then territorial court of the Virgin Islands, comma, which, comma, in 2004, comma, was renamed the superior court of the Virgin Islands, semicolon, close quote.

4:26:28 C, at the following, at the following whereas clause, after the eighth whereas clause, colon, open quote, whereas, comma, Vern A. Hodge was the presiding judge of the Territorial Court until October 31st, comma, 1999, semicolon, close quote. D, the following whereas clause is inserted before the last whereas clause, colon, open quote, whereas, comma, in 1999, comma, Judge Vern Antonio Hodge was bestowed the Medal of Honor by the 23rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands, semicolon close quote I so move amendment properly made by senator Gittins and seconded by senator Maurice James senator Volquez senator Johnson senator Potter senator Potter on st. Thomas hearing no objections so ordered amendment Senator Gittins amendment number 35-1010 amendment to bill number 35-0286 offered by yours truly bill number 35-0286 is amended by adding the following whereas clause after whereas clause number seven open Quote, whereas, comma, the summer of 1981, comma, presiding judge Vern Antonio Hodge created the Rising Stars Steel Orchestra, comma, with the goal of preventing school dropout and juvenile delinquency among our youth.

4:28:25 Semi-colon, close, quote, ISO move. Second. Amendment properly made by Senator Kenneth Gittins and seconded by Senator Johnson, Senator Bolquez, Senator Maurice James, and Senator Potter. Hearing no objections, so ordered. Motion, Senator Gettins. Thank you, Madam Chair and colleagues.

4:28:58 I move that Bill Number 35, that's 0286, as amended, An act honoring and commending Vern Antonio Hodge for his years of dedicated service to the people of the Virgin Islands and its jurisprudence by naming the Superior Court of the

- Virgin Islands, St. Thomas, St. John District, the Judge Vern A. Hodge, Superior Court of the Virgin Islands. I so move.
- 4:29:29 motion properly made by senator Kenneth Gittins and seconded second I I would create your motions and I would drop my motion thank you madam chair and colleagues I move bill number 35 there's zero two eight six as amended an act honoring and commending for an Antonio Hodge for his years of dedicated service to the people of virgin islands and its jurisprudence by naming the superior court of the virgin islands st thomas st john district the verne a hodge superior court of the virgin islands i request that this body uh this committee rather vote on this measure favorably and be forwarded to the full body for final consideration i so move motion properly made by Senator Kenneth Gittins and seconded by Senator Maurice James, Senator Johnson, Senator Potter. Roll call on bill number 35-0286 as amended.
- 4:30:43 Senator Angel L. Borges Jr. Senator Borges Jr. Senator Dianne T. Capehart? Yes. Senator Capehart, yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins? Yes. Senator Gittins, yay. Senator Maurice C. James? Yes. Senator James, yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson? Yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Carla J. Joseph? Senator Joseph absent. Senator Milton E. Potter? Senator Potter, Senator Milton E. Potter, you say yes?
- 4:31:23 Senator Potter, yay. Madam Chair, you have six yays, one absent. Thank you, Madam Clerk. Bill number 35-0286, as amended, an act honoring and commending Vern Antonia Hodge for his years of dedicated service to the people of the Virgin Islands and its jurisprudence by renaming the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas St. John, the Verne Hodge Superior Court of the Virgin Islands has been voted upon favorably by the Committee of Rules and Judiciary and will be reported out to the full body for further consideration.
- 4:32:15 points of information senator bulk is thank you madam chair madam chair I just wanted to clarify the record that the short title for bill number three five does zero two eight five was read incorrectly on the record it was read from the agenda but in fact the short title on the bill itself is differs from what is on the agenda so through the chair to the majority leader i mean i'm trying to figure just for the record um so i would like to have the liberty madam chair to read you may proceed you may proceed with the reading thank you madam chair um bill number three five does zero two For the record, the short title for the stenographers and everyone accounting today's meeting is an act honoring and commending Brian Benny Dimas Boulay for his outstanding achievements in the music and entertainment industries and for his contributions to the Virgin Islands community, awarding him the official key to the Virgin Islands. Thank you, Madam Chair.
- 4:33:30 You are welcome. do I hear an amendment Senator Volquez thank you madam chair madam chair I offer amendment number three five dash one zero three zero an amendment to bill number three five dash zero two five seven bill number three five dash zero 257 is amended as follows a in section one number one by inserting local before beers two by inserting and other related features as deemed necessary by the department after spirits three by striking july and in certain december and four by inserting and may incorporate the inaugural event as part of any festival activity at the end of the of the section b by inserting sections three and four as follows section three within 90 days of enactment the commissioner of tourism shall notify the president of the legislature and the chairperson of the committee on economic development and agriculture of the department's plans to host the U.S. Virgin Islands beer, wine, and spirit festival or solicit bids.
- 4:35:04 Four. A. The sum of \$500,000 or so, much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated annually from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, to the Department of Tourism Division of Festivals for the purposes outlined in section 1 of this Act B the sum appropriated in subsection a remain available until expended I so move amendment properly made by senator Bolquez and seconded by Senator Maurice James and Senator Franklin Johnson hearing no objections so ordered motion Senator Bolquez thank you madam chair madam chair I move bill number three five dash zero two five seven as amended an act to develop and produce an annual u.s virgin islands beer wine and spirits festival be favorably voted upon in this committee and forwarded to the full body for further action and consideration I so move motion properly made by senator Balkan's focus and seconded by senator Gittins senator Franklin Johnson and senator Maurice James and senator Potter on st. Thomas madam clerk might have I have roll call on the bill as amended. Senator Angel L. Borges, Jr.
- 4:36:50 Senator Borges, yay. Senator Diane T. Capehart. Yes. Senator Capehart, yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins. Yes. Senator Gittins, yay. Senator Maurice C. James. Yes. Senator James, yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Carla J. Joseph. Senator Joseph, absent. Senator Milton E. Potter. Yes. Senator Potter, yay. Madam Chair, you have six yeas, one absent.
- 4:37:25 Thank you, Madam Clerk. Bill number 35-0257, as amended, an act to develop and produce an annual U.S. Virgin Islands Bear Wine and Spirits Festival has been voted upon favorably by the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and will be reported out to the full body for further consideration. Motion, Senator Franklin Johnson, you may proceed. Madam

Chair, I move Bill No. 350388, an act to amend various sections of Title V Virgin Islands Code be voted on favorably in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and be forward to the full body for further consideration. I so move.

- 4:38:17 Restate my motion. Please restate your motion. Withdraw my motion. Withdraw. Madam Chair, I move that bill number 350388, an act updating the Virgin Islands code providing the efficiency in government operation across the NJ, across three states, Madam Chair. please restate your motion please don't interrupt senator franklin johnson in his thank you very much madam proceed madam chair i move that bill number 350388 an act updating the virgin islands code providing for efficiency in the government operation across the agency and the department i must bill be voted on favorably in the committee on rules and judiciary and be forwarded to the full body for further consideration i so move motion properly made by senator franklin johnson and seconded by senator angel bolquez senator kenneth gittins senator maurice james and senator potter madam clerk may have roll call on bill number 35.0388 Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr. Senator Bocas Jr. Senator Dianne T. K. Park Senator K. Park Senator Kenneth L. Gittins Senator Gittins Senator Maurice C. James Senator James Senator Franklin D. Johnson Senator Johnson Senator Carla J. Joseph Senator Joseph absent Senator Milton E. Potter Yes, Senator Potter. Madam Chair, you have six yays, one absent.
- 4:40:19 Thank you, Madam Clerk. Bill number 35.0388, an act updating the Virgin Islands Code providing for efficiency in government operations across the agencies and departments, omnibus bill has been voted upon favorably by the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and will be reported out to the full body for further consideration. Colleagues, we have concluded Block 1, Block 2, and Block 3 and at this time I would like to give special thanks to my colleagues. I want to give special thanks to media. I want to give special thanks to Sergeant of Arms, who's new on the block, and I'm sure this is quite interesting, and especially our legal division, Ayala, Attorney Carty, Attorney Sekou, Rogers, Moore, Attorney Hill, Mills, St. Tran, Fraser, and the support staff, legislative staff, media. I want to thank you guys because rules and judiciary, which is the clearinghouse of all the bills, nomination, leases, everything comes through here and we rock in this committee and we knock it out and you go home before at 2 o'clock, so and And especially, I want to say thank you to my team.
- 4:42:02 May God bless the people of the Virgin Islands. The Committee on Rules and Judiciary and the people of Florida, may God bless you. People of the Virgin Islands, may God bless you. The Committee of Rules and Judiciary is hereby adjourned. Thank you. Thank 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.

- 44x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**
heard in this transcript as: Gettins, Gittin, Gittin's, Gittins, Kenneth Gittins, Kenneth L. Gittins
- 41x **Senator Marise C. James**
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James, Marish James, Maryse James, Maurice C. James, Maurice James
- 36x **Senator Franklin D. Johnson**
heard in this transcript as: Franklin Johnson, Johnson
- 34x **Senator Milton E. Potter**
heard in this transcript as: Milton Potter, Potter
- 28x **Senator Carla Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph
heard in this transcript as: Carla J. Joseph, Joseph
- 22x **Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.**
heard in this transcript as: Angel L. Bolques Jr., Angel L. Boquez Jr., Angel L. Bulquez Jr, Bolquez, Boquez, Boquez Jr.
- 21x **Senator Diane T. Capeheart**
heard in this transcript as: Capehart, Diane T. Capehart, Dianne T. Capehart
- 19x **Senator Angel L. Borges Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Angel L. Borges Jr., Borges, Borges Jr, Borges Jr.
- 8x **Senator Ray Fonseca**

heard in this transcript as: Fonseca

8x **Judge Vern Hodge**
heard in this transcript as: Hodge, Vern A. Hodge, Vern Antonio Hodge, Vern E. Hodge

7x **Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bocas, Bocas Jr

4x **Senator Kaye Part**
heard in this transcript as: K. Park, K. Part

4x **Senator Novelle Francis**
heard in this transcript as: Francis, Novell E. Francis Jr

3x **Senator Diane T. K. Park**
heard in this transcript as: Diane T. K. Part, Dianne T. K. Park

2x **Senator Angel L. Bolkis Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Bolkis

2x **Senator Angel L. Bulkes Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Boulkes

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

2x **Senator Milton E. Potter Yes**

2x **Senator Samuel Carrion**

Bills and acts referred to

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

Bill 35-0283	Act 8925 · October 16, 2024 · An Act amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code, part III, chapter 34, the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act =o
Bill 35-0285	Act 8926 · An Act honoring and commending Bryan ·Benny-Demus· Boulai for his outstanding achievements in the music and entertainment industries and for his contributions to the Virgin Islands community and awarding him The Official Key to the Virgin Islands af
Act 8925	Act 8925 · October 16, 2024 · An Act amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code, part III, chapter 34, the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act =o
Act 8926	Act 8926 · An Act honoring and commending Bryan ·Benny-Demus· Boulai for his outstanding achievements in the music and entertainment industries and for his contributions to the Virgin Islands community and awarding him The Official Key to the Virgin Islands af

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Bill 35-0320, Bill 35-0374, Bill 35-0383, Bill 35-0384, Bill 35-0286, Bill 35-0300, Bill 35-0030, Bill 35-0031, Bill 35-0289, Bill 35-0257, Bill 35-0388