Good morning The Honorable Milton E. Potter, Chair of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary; The Honorable Kenneth L. Gittens, Vice-Chair; other members of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary; other Honorable Senators of the 34th Legislature in attendance; fellow testifiers; and those listening and viewing. Greetings.

My name is Karl Knight, Chief of Staff of the Office of the Governor and I appear before you today at your invitation to testify on Bill #34-0005. This bill seeks to clarify the limitation on the number of governmental or quasi-governmental boards and commissions on which Commissioners and Directors of the Virgin Islands Government can serve, while serving on the board or commission of any autonomous or semi-autonomous agency.

The Office of the Governor stands in support of this measure. Paragraph (c) in particular provides the Governor with the necessary flexibility to appoint alternative representatives to board and commissions who may be any other commissioner, deputy commissioner, assistant commissioner, director or executive officer of the executive branch of government. This alternative representative would be empowered to execute all the responsibilities and decision-making authority in place of the statutorily-designated department commissioner.

This flexibility is welcomed by the Office of the Governor. Over the years, the enabling statutes of several boards and commissions have designated specific Cabinet officials to serve as members. In some instances, it has created a significant burden on for certain Cabinet officials. As an example, the Commissioner of Finance, in addition to their duties as head of the Department of Finance, also is statutorily-designated to serve on the boards of the Public Finance Authority, the VI Lottery Commission, the Board of Tax Review, the V.I. Government Hospital and Health Facilities Corporation, the V.I. Banking and Insurance Board, and the Government Employees Service Commission- Group Health Insurance Board. Similarly, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget is statutorily designated to serve on five boards and commissions.

Granting a sitting governor some measure of discretion in how to best deploy his Cabinet-level personnel in their fiduciary roles ultimately serves the best interest of the Government of the Virgin Islands.

The only question that we have regarding the bill as proposed and drafted is whether Paragraph (b) intends to limit the number of boards and commissions that executive officers of the Government can serve on at two or three. The words “any other” seem to imply that the limitation is three. That is our preferred position. Clarity on that matter would be helpful prior to final action on the bill by this body.

I thank you for affording the Office of the Governor an opportunity to testify on this measure and I am available for any questions you may have on Bill #34-0005.