

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERAN
AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

BILL NO. 35-0075

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

May 3, 2023

An Act to designate the third Monday in February as Virgin Islands Governors Day

PROPOSED BY: Senators Angel L. Bolques, Jr. and Marvin A. Blyden

1 **WHEREAS**, on April 20, 1917, Rear Admiral James Harrison Oliver became the first
2 appointed military Governor of the Virgin Islands after the Territory was purchased by the
3 United States on March 31, 1917. From 1917 until November of 1970, Governors of the Virgin
4 Islands were appointed by the sitting president of the United States; and

5 **WHEREAS**, RALPH MOSES PAIEWONSKY was born on November 9, 1907 on Saint
6 Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. He was a businessman and politician who served on the
7 Municipal Council of St. Thomas and St. John from 1936-46, was a delegate to the Democratic
8 National Conventions between 1940 and 1960, and served as the National Democratic
9 Committeeman from the Virgin Islands. RALPH MOSES PAIEWONSKY served from 1961
10 until 1969 as the last civilian appointed governor of the Virgin Islands, appointed by President
11 John F. Kennedy.

1 **WHEREAS**, on August 23, 1968, the Virgin Islands Elective Governor Act was passed
2 in the 90th United States Congress which provides for the Governor of the Virgin Islands to be
3 popularly elected, rather than appointed as they had been up to that point; and

4 **WHEREAS**, MELVIN HERBERT EVANS, was born on August 7, 1917, in
5 Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, soon after the island had been purchased from
6 Denmark by the United States. He graduated from high school on St. Thomas, and received a
7 B.S. from Howard University in 1940, and an M.D. from the Howard College of Medicine in
8 1944. Melvin Evans served as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Medical Administrative Corps
9 from 1942 to 1945, and as the Virgin Islands Health Commissioner from 1959 to 1967.
10 President Richard Nixon appointed Evans Governor of the Islands in July of 1969, and he was
11 elected in November of 1970, becoming the first elected Governor of the Virgin Islands along
12 with DAVID E. MAAS who became the first elected Lieutenant Governor. Lt. Governor Maas
13 resigned his post in 1973 and was replaced by ATHNIEL C. “ADDIE” OTTLEY; and

14 **WHEREAS**, CYRIL EMMANUEL KING was born on St. Croix, Virgin Islands, on
15 April 7, 1921. He served with the U.S. Army during World War II, received a Bachelor’s
16 Degree in Public Administration from American University, and in 1949 he was appointed as
17 an aide to Senator Hubert Humphrey, becoming the first Black person to serve in the office of
18 a U.S. Senator. King served as Acting Governor of the Virgin Islands for six months in 1969
19 and was elected to the Virgin Islands Senate in 1972. In 1974, Cyril King persuaded JUAN
20 FRANCISCO LUIS to join his ticket and run for lieutenant governor. In the 1960s King
21 founded the Independent Citizens Movement (ICM), so he and Juan Luis ran for office as the
22 nominees of the ICM. King and Luis became the second elected Governor and Lieutenant
23 governor in a gubernatorial runoff election held in November 1974; and

24 **WHEREAS**, JUAN FRANCISCO LUIS was born in Vieques, Puerto Rico, on July 10,
25 1940, and his family moved to St. Croix, Virgin Islands when he was two months old. Juan

1 Luis grew up on St. Croix, graduated from the Christiansted High School as the Valedictorian
2 of the Class of 1958, and earned his pre-medicine equivalency from the University of Puerto
3 Rico. He became a sixth-grade teacher at the Christiansted Public Grammar School, and
4 worked briefly as a Project Office Manager for the Department of Housing and Urban
5 Development before he served as a sergeant in the U.S. Army. Juan Luis worked as a Personnel
6 Administrative Officer in the Virgin Islands Department of Health, and in 1972 was elected to
7 the Virgin Islands Senate. In 1974, he was elected as Lieutenant Governor under Cyril King,
8 and was sworn in as Governor on January 2, 1978, following the death of Cyril King. In
9 February of 1978, Juan Luis appointed HENRY A. MILLIN as his Lieutenant Governor, and
10 in November of 1978, they were both elected to a full four-year term becoming the third elected
11 Governor and Lieutenant Governor of the Virgin Islands. Governor Juan Luis was elected to
12 a second term in 1982 and served with JULIO ANTHONY BRADY as his Lieutenant
13 Governor from 1983 to 1987; and

14 **WHEREAS**, ALEXANDER A. FARRELLY was born on St. Croix, Virgin Islands on
15 December 29, 1923, and served with distinction in the U.S. Army earning an honorable
16 discharge in 1946. He earned degrees in history, government, a Bachelor of Law from St.
17 John's College in New York, and later obtained a Master of Laws degree from Yale University
18 in 1961. In 1962, he was appointed Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of the Virgin
19 Islands, and in 1965 he became a judge for the V.I. Municipal Court. In 1966 he was elected
20 as a Senator-at-Large to the 7th Legislature of the Virgin Islands with the highest number of
21 votes ever cast for an elected official of the Territory at that time. In 1986, ALEXANDER A.
22 FARRELLY and DEREK MICHAEL HODGE were elected as the Territory's fourth elected
23 Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Upon his inauguration on January 5, 1987, ALEXANDER
24 A. FARRELLY became the first elected Democrat to serve as Governor in the history of the

1 Virgin Islands. ALEXANDER A. FARRELLY and DEREK HODGE served two terms from
2 1987 to 1994; and

3 **WHEREAS**, ROY LESTER SCHNEIDER, was born on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
4 where he attended the Dober and Lincoln Elementary Schools and graduated as the salutatorian
5 of the Charlotte Amalie High School in 1957. He received a Bachelor's Degree in 1961 and a
6 medical degree in 1965 from Howard University. He was a captain in the U.S. Army from
7 1966 to 1968, serving as a medical adviser and surgeon in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968. In
8 1971, he became Chief Resident at Howard University and served as a faculty member until
9 1975, returning home in 1977 to assume the position of Commissioner of the Department of
10 Health, a position he held until 1986. As Commissioner of Health, ROY LESTER
11 SCHNEIDER was instrumental in having three new medical facilities constructed in the
12 Territory to provide modern services for the residents, helped establish the first kidney
13 transplant unit in the Virgin Islands, and was the first doctor to perform a kidney transplant in
14 the Territory. On November 22, 1994, ROY SCHNEIDER and KENNETH MAPP became
15 the fifth elected Governor and Lieutenant Governor in a special gubernatorial runoff election.
16 As governor, ROY SCHNEIDER, among his many accomplishments, was responsible for the
17 establishment of the Departments of Tourism and Agriculture, the creation of a hospitality
18 training institute, and the formation of an emergency action team to plan and prepare for
19 emergencies and disasters within the Territory that was instrumental in getting massive federal
20 aid into the Territory in the aftermath of Hurricane Marilyn; and

21 **WHEREAS**, CHARLES WESLEY TURNBULL was born on February 5, 1935, on St.
22 Thomas, Virgin Islands. After completing his elementary and secondary education he was
23 awarded a Ford Foundation five-year scholarship to Hampton University where he earned a
24 Bachelor of Science degree in 1958 with honors in history, and a Master of Arts degree in
25 Secondary Education in 1959. He earned a Doctorate in Educational Administration from the

1 University of Minnesota in 1976. He served as the Commissioner of Education from 1979 to
2 1987 and established a Cultural Education Division to promote greater knowledge, awareness,
3 and appreciation of the history and culture of the Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean. Over
4 the years, CHARLES W. TURNBULL established an exemplary record of community and
5 humanitarian service, including serving as an elected delegate to all five Constitutional
6 Conventions of the Virgin Islands; serving as Secretary of the Second Constitutional
7 Convention in 1972; serving as a delegate to numerous National Democratic Nominating
8 Conventions, and receiving numerous awards and citations for leadership including the first
9 Alexander A. Farrelly Public Service Award. Charles Wesley Turnbull was sworn in as the
10 sixth elected Governor of the Virgin Islands on January 4, 1999, along with GERARD LUZ
11 AMWUR JAMES II, as his Lieutenant Governor, and re-elected overwhelmingly to serve a
12 second term in November 2002, with VARGRAVE A. RICHARDS at his Lieutenant
13 Governor; and

14 **WHEREAS**, JOHN PERCY DE JONGH, JR., was born on November 13, 1957, in
15 Brooklyn, New York, grew up in the de Jongh Gut area of Savan and Estate Thomas, St.
16 Thomas, Virgin Islands and attended the Saints Peter and Paul Catholic School through the
17 eighth grade. After relocating with his family to Detroit, Michigan he graduated from the
18 Detroit Catholic Central High School in 1976 and earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in
19 Economics from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio in 1981. He returned to the Virgin
20 Islands after graduating from college and began his professional career working with the Tri-
21 Island Economic Development Council helping to identify funding for the preservation of
22 historic buildings in the Virgin Islands. In 1987, he served as Commissioner of Finance and in
23 addition to his primary responsibilities for the finances of the entire Government, he served as
24 the Chairman of the Governing Board of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority and as
25 the first Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Public Finance Authority. JOHN PERCY DE

1 JONGH, JR. and GREGORY R. FRANCIS served as the seventh elected Governor and
2 Lieutenant Governor of the Virgin Islands from January 1, 2007 to January 5, 2015. During
3 his tenure, JOHN PERCY DE JONGH, JR. championed early childhood education issues,
4 establishing the Children and Families Council, and pushed for economic diversification of the
5 four main islands that comprise the U.S. Virgin Islands. He instituted a government-wide
6 Energy Demand Reduction Program to reduce the Territory's dependency on fossil fuels and
7 advanced the use of alternative and renewable energy sources in the Territory; and

8 **WHEREAS**, KENNETH EZRA MAPP was born on November 2, 1955, in Brooklyn,
9 New York. He moved to Saint Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1961, where he was raised
10 by his maternal grandmother. He graduated from St. Croix Central High School in 1973, and
11 began his career in the New York City Police Department soon after graduating, based in the
12 83rd Police Precinct in Brooklyn. He later became a police officer in the Virgin Islands and
13 was elected President of the Virgin Islands Police Benevolent Association. He was elected to
14 three terms as a senator in the Legislature of the Virgin Islands and later served as Assistant
15 Director of the Industrial Development Commission and Director of the Consumer Services
16 Administration. He was elected to the 15th Legislature of the Virgin Islands in 1982, and later
17 in the 18th and 20th Legislatures, and in 2002, Governor Charles Turnbull appointed him as the
18 Virgin Island's Public Finance Authority's Director of Finance and Administration, where he
19 managed several major capital projects and served on the Governor's financial and budget team.
20 In November of 2014, KENNETH EZRA MAPP became the eighth elected Governor of the
21 Virgin Islands, with OSBERT POTTER as his Lieutenant Governor, and served the Territory
22 from 2015 to 2019; and

23 **WHEREAS**, ALBERT BRYAN JR., was born on born February 21, 1968, on St.
24 Thomas, Virgin Islands, to Albert Sr. and Genevieve (Pilgrim) Bryan, and is the oldest of five
25 sons. He grew up in the Savan neighborhood of Charlotte Amalie, and moved to St. Croix as

1 a teenager, where he graduated from St. Dunstan's Episcopal High School in 1985. Bryan
2 earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics from Wittenberg University in Springfield
3 Ohio, in 1989, and later received a Master of Business Administration from the University of
4 the Virgin Islands, St. Croix Campus in 2003. In 2007, Governor John de Jongh appointed
5 Albert Bryan Jr. as Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor. When de Jongh's
6 term ended in 2015, Bryan returned to the private sector as CEO and President of Aabra Group,
7 a consulting firm, and Master Strategies, a recruiting firm. He also was executive director of
8 the Virgin Islands chapter of Junior Achievement. On January 7, 2019, ALBERT BRYAN JR.
9 and TREGENZA ROACH were sworn in as the 9th elected Governor and Lieutenant Governor
10 of the Virgin Islands at the David Monsanto Bandstand, which was built by Governor Bryan's
11 grandfather Ulric "Sappy" Pilgrim in Emancipation Gardens on St. Thomas. During his first
12 term as governor, Governor Bryan led the Virgin Islands through economic growth and
13 infrastructure expansion and spearheaded a multi-billion-dollar recovery and rebuilding effort
14 to transform the territory's critical infrastructure in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria.
15 From March of 2020 through the present day, Governor Bryan has boldly and effectively led
16 the Virgin Islands through the COVID-19 pandemic keeping Virgin Islanders safe while
17 protecting the territory's tourism-driven economy from collapse. In January of 2023,
18 GOVERNOR ALBERT BRYAN JR. and LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR TREGENZA
19 ROACH were sworn in for a second term and continue to serve the people of the Virgin Islands.

20 **WHEREAS**, Presidents Day, is a holiday in the United States celebrated on the third
21 Monday of February. It is celebrated to honor all those who served as presidents of the United
22 States and, since 1879, has been the federal holiday honoring George Washington, the first
23 U.S. president; and

24 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands falls under the jurisdiction of the laws of the United
25 States. However, all residents of the Virgin Islands are deprived of the right to vote for

1 president of the United States because the Virgin Islands is not a state and does not have
2 members of the Electoral College; and

3 **WHEREAS**, on a local level, Virgin Islanders have the right to select those who govern
4 the Territories, and a day should be set aside to honor and recognize the contributions of former
5 Governors and Lieutenant Governors that were elected by and served the people of the Virgin
6 Islands; Now Therefore,

7 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

8 **SECTION 1.** Title 1 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 11, is amended by adding a new
9 section 200m to read as follows:

10 **“§ 200m. Virgin Islands Governors Day**

11 Each year, the 3rd Monday of February, shall be observed as “Virgin Islands Governors
12 Day” in honor of all the elected Governors and Lieutenant Governors of the Virgin Islands.
13 On that day the sitting Governor shall issue a proclamation honoring all past elected Governors
14 and Lt. Governors and hold an appropriate luncheon to commemorate the day.”

15 **BILL SUMMARY**

16 This bill adds a new section 200m to title 1, chapter 11 of the Virgin Islands Code
17 designating the 3rd Monday of February as Virgin Islands Governors Day. Section 1 makes
18 the designation and requires that the current Governor hold a luncheon to commemorate the
19 occasion.

20 **BR23-0232/April 12, 2023/HLF/REVISED April 13, 2023**