

The Committee on Budget, Appropriation, and Finance

The Honorable Novelle E. Francis, Chairman
36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Tuesday, October 7, 2025

Vincent L. Roberts
Commissioner,
The Department of Sports,
Parks, and Recreation



Re: Bill No. 36-0119 – An Act Amending Act No. 8651 by Reprogramming the Appropriated Funds to DSPR for the Completion of the Randall “Doc” James Racetrack

Good day, Honorable Senator Novelle E. Francis, Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance of the 36th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands, Honorable Senators, Central Staff, and the listening and viewing audience. I am Vincent Roberts, Commissioner of the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation. I am honored to present testimony in support of Bill No. 36-0119, an act amending Act No. 8651 by reprogramming the appropriated funds to the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation to fund the completion of the Randall “Doc” James Racetrack on St. Croix.

This measure is crucial for advancing sports, recreation, and economic development on St. Croix. It ensures responsible management of public resources under the direct oversight of the Government of the Virgin Islands.

Background on Act No. 8651 and VIGL Agreement

Act No. 8651, as originally enacted, allocated \$5 million as a grant to VIGL Operations, LLC for completing the Randall “Doc” James Racetrack project. This funding was connected to the franchise agreement between VIGL and the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) for the redevelopment and management of both Clinton E. Phipps Racetrack on St. Thomas and the Randall “Doc” James Racetrack on St. Croix.

That agreement ultimately did not lead to the completion of the facilities, and after years of delays, amendments, and unmet obligations, the racetrack projects remained unfinished. Importantly, all equipment that VIGL had brought onto the Randall “Doc” James Racetrack site has been removed, and no public assets were encumbered by their operations.

There have been some questions in the public sphere about whether the Government of the Virgin Islands has any further financial obligation to VIGL. The following outlines the Government’s position.

Contractual Performance – VIGL failed to fulfill its contractual obligations to deliver a fully functional racetrack facility on St. Croix. The GVI cannot be expected to release or retain public funds to a private entity that did not fulfill its end of the agreement.



Removal of Equipment – VIGL has removed all equipment and assets it placed on the Randall “Doc” James Racetrack site. There is no outstanding value left in materials or infrastructure that the Government has benefited from, thereby negating any claim of financial liability or reimbursement.

Public Stewardship – The appropriation of \$5 million was from the Community Facilities Trust Fund, a fund that exists for the improvement of public infrastructure. The best course of action is for these funds to remain under DSPR’s stewardship, ensuring direct accountability, transparency, and proper public benefit.

No Outstanding Invoices or Claims – At present, there are no recognized or valid outstanding invoices or claims by VIGL against the Government of the Virgin Islands for work completed on St. Croix. For these reasons, the Government of the Virgin Islands does not owe VIGL any monies related to the Randall “Doc” James Racetrack.

Scope of Work and Use of the \$5 Million

While the \$5 million appropriation is a critical step forward, it is essential to emphasize that this sum alone will not complete the Randall “Doc” James Racetrack. The total estimated cost for the complete construction and modernization of the facility is approximately **\$12-\$14 million**.

The \$5 million appropriation will, however, allow DSPR to:

- Cover the costs of a complete track design to ensure safety, functionality, and compliance with horse racing standards.
- Engage construction management services for oversight, quality assurance, and accountability throughout the project.
- Complete a comprehensive running surface assessment to create a safe and competitive racing environment.
- Install perimeter fencing to secure the facility and manage public access.
- Undertake clearing of overgrown vegetation and bush, which has overtaken the property during years of inactivity.

- Begin critical stable and paddock area renovations to ensure proper conditions for horses, trainers, and jockeys.

This phased investment will put the project on a solid footing, restore public confidence, and create momentum for securing the additional funds needed to complete the racetrack.

Importance of Reprogramming the Funds

Bill No. 36-0119 ensures that completion of this facility will be handled as a public priority, with oversight by the appropriate government agencies and in alignment with the people's expectations.

The Randall "Doc" James Racetrack is a cultural and economic anchor for the island of St. Croix. Its completion will:

- Reestablish horse racing as a sport deeply tied to Crucian cultural identity.
- Provide opportunities for local trainers, jockeys, and owners to operate in a safe, modernized facility.
- Drive tourism and economic activity by attracting visitors, vendors, and event revenue.
- Restore community trust that long-promised projects can, and will, be delivered.

In Conclusion

Honorable Senators, Bill No. 36-0119 is both a legislative correction and a reaffirmation of the Government's commitment to completing a long-delayed project that is vital to the people of this territory. The Randall "Doc" James Racetrack belongs to the people of St. Croix and the entire Virgin Islands.

The \$5 million appropriation, although not sufficient to complete the racetrack, will enable us to proceed with crucial design, management, and site preparation work that makes this project possible.

I respectfully urge this body to pass Bill No. 36-0119, which will enable us to continue the vital work of delivering this project to the people of St. Croix.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

