



September 5, 2025

Honorable Senator Carla J. Joseph  
Chair of the Rules and Judiciary  
Committee  
Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin  
Islands

P.O. Box 1690

St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00804

Subject: Opposition to Bill BR25-0706

**RE: Request to Testify Before the Legislature of the Virgin Islands (Bill No. 36-0144)**

## **Opposition to Bill No. 36-0144**

Gun Owners of America strongly opposes bill no. 36-0144, which seeks to amend Title 14 of the Virgin Islands Code. Representing lawful gun owners nationwide, we request the opportunity to testify against this legislation, which imposes firearm confiscation and punitive taxes on law-abiding citizens. As a national Second Amendment organization, we stand with Virgin Islanders whose voices must be heard.

### **Constitutional and Discriminatory Concerns**

Bill 36-0144 undermines constitutional rights and disproportionately targets minority and working-class gun owners through excessive taxes, fees, and restrictions. Historically, gun control in America—from post-Civil War Black Codes to Jim Crow laws and colonial disarmament in the Caribbean—has been used to oppress vulnerable communities. This bill continues that discriminatory tradition, disarming those who need protection most.

### **Why This Bill Assaults The Second Amendment**

- **Second Amendment Violation:** The U.S. Constitution, via the Revised Organic Act, guarantees Virgin Islanders the same Second Amendment protections as all

Americans. This bill bans commonly used firearms, magazines, and accessories, punishing law-abiding citizens while criminals ignore the law.

- **Vague Definitions:** Terms like “assault rifle” and “military-grade firearm” are undefined and politically charged, creating a blank check to outlaw virtually any firearm, including hunting rifles and home-defense weapons.
- **Mischaracterizing Suppressors:** Suppressors reduce noise to protect hearing, not to enable crime. Banning them ignores science and the needs of responsible gun owners.
- **Burdens on Law-Abiding Citizens:** The bill imposes unnecessary taxes and mandates, turning a constitutional right into a privilege only the wealthy can afford.
- **Failure to Address Crime:** Criminals do not obey gun laws. This bill weakens self-defense for law-abiding citizens while doing nothing to stop gangs, traffickers, or violent offenders.
- **Economic Harm:** Legal firearm businesses, including dealers and ranges, support jobs and revenue in the Virgin Islands. This bill threatens these livelihoods and strips business owners of their right to protect their property.

## A Discriminatory Legacy

Gun control has a racist history—Black Codes disarmed freedmen, Jim Crow laws targeted Black Americans, and colonial powers denied Caribbean communities self-defense. Bill 36-0144 perpetuates this legacy by burdening minority and working-class Virgin Islanders with restrictions that limit their constitutional rights.

## Better Solutions

To enhance public safety, the Legislature should focus on:

- Enforcing existing laws against violent criminals.
- Restore & expand carry rights & self-defense laws for law-abiding Virgin Islanders.
- Expanding mental health resources.
- Strengthening community policing.

These measures address crime without violating the Constitution or targeting law-abiding citizens.

## **Demand for Fair Process**

Virgin Islanders have the right to petition their government. We request that the Legislature delay voting on bill no. 36-0144 until all stakeholders, including lawful gun owners, receive a fair and properly noticed opportunity to testify.

Gun Owners of America urges the Legislature to reject this misguided and discriminatory bill and pursue constitutional, effective solutions for public safety.

Respectfully submitted,

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