

**TESTIMONY  
IN OPPOSITION TO  
BILL NO. 36-0144**

**Submitted by:**

**Luis Valdes**

Southeast Regional Director, Gun Owners of America  
National Co-Chair, Fuerza 2A

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Luis Valdes. I serve as Southeast Regional Director and National Spokesman for Gun Owners of America (GOA), a no-compromise organization defending the Second Amendment for millions of members. I am also National Co-Chair of Fuerza 2A, GOA's Minority coalition, and GOA's Outreach Director for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. As a proud Cuban-American whose family fled communist tyranny, I write to express my strong opposition to Bill 36-0144.

This bill is one of the most sweeping gun control measures proposed in the territories. It bans common defensive firearms through vague and overbroad definitions, prohibits hearing protection devices, arbitrarily limits magazines to ten rounds, and forces law-abiding citizens to surrender lawfully owned property within 90 days — with no compensation and under threat of felony prosecution. These provisions will not enhance public safety; they will disarm responsible Virgin Islanders while criminals remain unaffected.

**The “Tactical Pistol-Style Firearms” Ban is Arbitrary and Unconstitutional**

Section 1's new §2253a prohibits firearms originally designed as pistols, chambered in rifle calibers, with barrels under 16 inches, if they incorporate even one common feature such as a stabilizing brace, foregrip, threaded muzzle, or optics mount. The bill claims these weapons “serve no legitimate civilian purpose for self-defense or sport.” This assertion is false.

These platforms — often called braced pistols or PDW-style firearms — are chosen by law-abiding citizens, including many in America's minority communities, for home defense because they offer superior controllability and maneuverability in confined spaces. Stabilizing braces improve safety for disabled shooters and those with smaller stature. Optics-ready systems allow the visually impaired to be able to see. Threaded barrels allow effective muzzle devices that reduce recoil. Banning firearms based on these practical, common features is an arbitrary infringement on the right to keep and bear arms in common use for lawful purposes.

**The Suppressor Ban Is Anti-Safety and Ignores Federal Law**

Section 2 bans all suppressors and silencers while explicitly refusing to recognize federal ATF tax stamps and registrations. Suppressors are hearing protection devices. They reduce noise to prevent permanent hearing damage for shooters, families, and neighbors. Hunters and sport shooters rely on them for safe, responsible shooting. The U.S. already has the strictest suppressor regulations in the world under the National Firearms Act. This bill discards that framework and turns compliant citizens into felons. It does nothing to stop criminals while punishing the law-abiding.

### **Magazine Limits and Mandatory Surrender Are Unjust Confiscation**

The ban on magazines holding more than ten rounds, paired with the 90-day mandatory surrender or off-island transfer requirement, is deeply troubling. Standard-capacity magazines are the factory norm for most modern defensive firearms. Forcing citizens who have committed no crime to surrender property or face up to ten years in prison is a taking that violates basic principles of due process and fairness. Real-world defensive encounters often involve multiple threats; ten rounds can prove tragically insufficient. This bill ensures only the law-abiding are disadvantaged.

The new parts-tracking requirements in amended §466 add unnecessary compliance burdens on dealers and owners for previously unregulated conduct, further complicating lawful ownership without clear public safety gains.

### **Impact on Minority Communities and Lessons from History**

As National Co-Chair of Fuerza 2A, I am particularly concerned about the message this sends to minority communities in the Virgin Islands. Our families have fought for freedom and self-reliance. My Cuban heritage reminds us that the first step toward tyranny is often the disarmament of citizens under the guise of “public safety.” These measures disproportionately burden working-class minority families and those in higher-crime areas who rely on effective tools for self-defense. Fuerza 2A rejects the idea that minority Americans must surrender constitutional rights to be safe. We demand the same protections as all Americans.

### **A Better Path Forward**

Gun Owners of America and Fuerza 2A believe true public safety comes from prosecuting violent criminals, strengthening communities, and respecting the God-given right of law-abiding citizens to defend themselves. The Virgin Islands needs focused enforcement against predators — not new laws that turn homeowners into felons. The Second Amendment does not stop at the shoreline.

I respectfully urge this Committee to reject Bill 36-0144 in its entirety. GOA and Fuerza 2A are ready to work with legislators who want to reduce crime without infringing on the rights of Virgin Islanders. I am available to provide additional information or appear before the Committee.

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

Respectfully submitted,

### **Luis Valdes**

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