

**THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S.**

**VIRGIN ISLANDS**

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,**

**JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Chairman: The Honorable Clifford A. Joseph Sr.**

**Virgin Islands Police Department**

**St. Croix, USVI**

**June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**BILL NO. 36-0144 (Sponsored by: Senators Clifford A. Joseph, Sr. and Marice C. James)**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in this matter. I am Sean A. Santos Sr.; Assistant Commissioner of Police of the Virgin Islands Police Department present on behalf of Police Commissioner Mario M. Brooks, we sincerely appreciate this opportunity to share our perspective on the proposed amendments to Bill No. 36-0144, thoughtfully offered by Senators Clifford A. Joseph, Sr., and Marice C. James.

After a thorough and careful review, the U.S. Virgin Islands Police Department wholeheartedly agrees with the changes

presented in these amendments. We believe they strike a critical balance: significantly enhancing public safety and providing clearer guidelines for law enforcement, all while respectfully acknowledging and preserving the rights of our many law-abiding gun owners in the Virgin Islands. This legislation truly represents a forward-thinking step for our community.

Our support for these specific amendments is rooted in several key areas that benefit everyone:

## **1. Clarity for Everyone, Especially Law-Abiding Citizens**

**(Section 1: New 14 V.I.C. § 2253a – Tactical Pistol-Style Firearms and Variants):**

- These amendments provide much-needed, clear definitions for what constitutes "Restricted Firearms."

This clarity isn't just for us in law enforcement; it's equally important for responsible gun owners. It helps ensure that everyone understands the regulations, reducing confusion and inadvertently falling afoul of the

law.

- We particularly appreciate the provision that allows individuals already in possession of these firearms to maintain them for **home protection and range use only**, with a clear 90-day compliance window. This demonstrates a thoughtful approach that respects existing ownership while guiding future use. It's not about confiscation for responsible owners, but about safe and specific permissible use.
- Furthermore, the amendment directing that license denial should *not* be based on subjective criteria like "good character" or "need" is a significant win for law-abiding citizens. It reinforces a fair, objective licensing process, ensuring that permits are issued based solely on transparent, established requirements, protecting individuals from arbitrary decisions.
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**2. Targeted Measures for Community Safety (Section 2: New 14 V.I.C. § 2253a and § 2259 – Suppressors/Silencers and Large-Capacity Magazines):**

- We understand that restrictions can be concerning, but these particular measures are aimed squarely at preventing the most egregious forms of gun violence. Prohibiting suppressors and large-capacity magazines are targeted steps to make our streets safer, limit the potential for mass casualties, and protect our officers in high-risk situations. These are tools overwhelmingly associated with criminal misuse, not responsible sport or self-defense.
- The intent here is to reduce the lethality of potential criminal acts, thereby safeguarding the community, as a whole, while still allowing for the lawful ownership of standard firearms.

**3. Prioritizing Safety Through Education and Responsible**

**Practices (Section 3: Amendments to 23 V.I.C. § 454b and § 466 – Safety Training and Accessories):**

- The requirement for mandatory initial firearms safety training for rifle and shotgun owners is perhaps one of the most proactive and beneficial aspects of this legislation. Responsible gun ownership begins with thorough education and training. This course, covering safe handling, storage, and marksmanship, empowers gun owners to be safer, more competent, and more confident. It's about promoting responsibility, not just imposing rules.
- We are especially committed to implementing this, and the VIPD is prepared to dedicate resources, including potentially opening our own range facilities to the public, to ensure this vital training is accessible. This is about supporting responsible gun ownership through education.

- Regulating firearm accessories to ensure they are appropriate for the licensed firearm further enhances safety and clarifies expectations for everyone.

In summary, the U.S. Virgin Islands Police Department believes that the amendments to Bill No. 36-0144 thoughtfully advance public safety in our islands. They provide necessary clarity and tools for law enforcement, directly address serious public safety concerns, and importantly, do so with clear consideration for the rights and responsibilities of our law-abiding gun owners. We see this as a balanced, comprehensive approach that fosters a safer environment for every resident.

We are fully committed to working diligently and transparently to implement these changes, and we stand ready to partner with the Legislature and the community to achieve our shared goal of a safer Virgin Islands.

We stand ready to answer any follow-on questions that you may have.