

Opening Statement

Good morning Senator Bolques, Chairman of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports and Parks. Other Senate Committee Members, Fellow Testifiers, and Other Interested Parties.

My name is Jay Watson and I come before your committee to give testimony on Bill No. 35-0073 and Bill No. 35-0083

The last time I appeared before this body was more than 4 years ago, to discuss at that time, my efforts as the chairman of the VI Horse Racing Commission, and to commence gaining the status of becoming a recognized racing district. This would have been under the auspices of the United States as required by the Interstate Commerce Horse Racing Act. Needless to say, my efforts were not well received nor supported. In the interval between my departure and now, the requirements have increased with federal oversight becoming more stringent toward horseracing activities nationwide. Also in that same interval of time, the commission has not addressed the issue of achieving as far as I am aware to become a recognized racing district. To further complicate the issue, the commission, the Virgin Islands Government's authority on horseracing, remained silent when this legislature's well-intended but misguided passage of legislation to place the Anti-Doping statute that is required for horseracing, in abeyance, which is in direct contravention to the Interstate Commerce Horse Racing Act and HISA. Additionally, another area of concern is Equine aftercare as it relates to the disposition of horses after they are finished racing. So the question is what is the solution? and what is the path moving forward? 1) Each racing district must determine the best type of racing for their

individual districts. 2) The commission has to be comprised of individuals who are knowledgeable on industry horse racing rules and regulations while displaying the will necessary to meet the requirements necessary for establishing recognized horse racing along with fostering a relationship with the umbrella organization (ARCI) to facilitate recognized horse racing. 3) The commissions in each district should be adequately funded to meet their mandates. 4) Understanding the difference between Fair Circuit and Commercial Horse Racing. 5) Realizing that the Commission, the promoter, and the Horsemen Association are three separate branches in the horse racing industry, just like the Virgin Islands Gov't where you have the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. These separations are there for a reason and must be respected and free of undue interference from the entities and organizations that they regulate.

For the past 7 years all we have tried to do was to "WORK AROUND" the requirements necessary for horseracing instead of meeting the requirements which have stagnated horse racing in the territory. It is about time that we recognize that what has been done to try to expedite horseracing in the territory has actually regressed it. Unregulated horseracing will no longer be tolerated in the industry. This territory's refusal to accept the current reality of horseracing cannot continue.

Though I do support the intent of these legislations, there are some observations that I have made that would be required to bring this legislation into current industry standards and regulations that would enable us to participate in horse racing in the Virgin Islands.

The Virgin Islands is an unincorporated territory of the United States, and as such, we are subject to the federal laws and regulations governing horseracing and there is no workaround for that.

Subjective personal beliefs, logic, philosophies, and opinions do not outweigh the federal rules and regulations that govern horseracing. Facts will always outweigh statements and declarations. Everyone is entitled to his/her own opinion but no one is entitled to his/her own facts. The facts are what they are. The Interstate Commerce Horse Racing Act and HISA govern horseracing. We need to get into compliance if we want horseracing in the Virgin Islands and be able to realize any economic benefits or opportunities that this wonderful sport has to offer, or we can choose to continue to waste time, energy, and effort in looking for a “WORKAROUND”. That time, energy, and effort, would be better invested, in working towards compliance. Wasted money and missed opportunities are the results of chasing the “WORKAROUND”. So let us focus on getting compliant.

In closing, I would like to end this opening statement with a quote.

“Convenience Is the Enemy of Excellence”