

Good morning, Senate President, Senators and other officers. I bring Greetings from our beloved community of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. This year we celebrate with great joy the 59 years of the great friendship that exists between the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and like last year, we continue to Strengthen our Cultural Bonds With Pride.

This year the VIPR Committee is honored to have the presence of the Honorable José A. Corcino Acevedo, Mayor of Vieques. His attendance to our events motivates us to continue our work celebrating the friendship that exists between our islands.

This year we are honoring three Puerto Ricans who have enriched the Virgin Islands with their contributions, Ms. Domitila Vargas, Mr. Daniel Rodriguez and Mr. Soe Diaz. We will also celebrate our friendship with Puerto Rico with the VIPR Village that starts this afternoon with the soft opening and will continue until Sunday. This celebration is central to how Virgin Islanders embraced those who came and contributed to the socio-economic fabric that has defined us. We value this historic connection with our Puerto Rican brothers and sisters and ask you to support the related events.

The VIPR committee is very grateful to the Virgin Islands Legislature for your help all these years. Unfortunately, the VIPR committee is encountering financial difficulties because of the rising living cost in our territory. Our expenses have increased and the donations from the private sector are becoming less and less, as our businesses are struggling to keep afloat. Next year we will be celebrating our 60th year anniversary and as you know these events are of great importance to our community. I am humbly asking you, honorable senators, to appropriate additional funds for the St. Croix VIPR Committee to be able to continue the tradition of this celebration and leave a legacy of Cultural Pride to our younger generations.

It has been my honor to have served as the Committee President for two consecutive years and I am very proud as a Puerto Rican to be able to bring this celebration of friendship to our community. Thank you for your time and I am looking forward to seeing you at the VIPR Village.



Luis R. Torres
VIPR Committee President