

## **ST. CROIX RACING COMMISSION**

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Good day Senator Angel Bolques, Jr, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports and Parks, committee members and all other senators in attendance today; all those seated in the senate chambers; as well as those in the listening and viewing audience.

My name is Dodson K. James, Acting Chairman of the St. Croix Racing Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the status of Horse Racing as it relates to the racing commission.

There is established within the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation a commission for the regulation of horse racing known as the Virgin Islands Racing Commission. Four members must reside in the District of St. Croix, with four members on St. Thomas. Currently there are only three members representing the district of St. Croix. There is a request for a fourth member. The commission issues licenses for all individuals who intend to be part of the conduct of horse racing. Individuals are to be vetted before being assigned their license so that the integrity of horse racing is maintained.

Horse racing to many individuals is just the excitement of fun and games. It is the most exciting sport known to mankind, watching these majestic animals jockey for position, on their way to the finish line. However, it is a very complicated

sporting business. Locally, some fans see horse racing as simply part of the culture of the Virgin Islands. As I have stated to many in heated discussions, there is nothing cultural about a multimillion-dollar industry that affects so many lives and plays a major role in the economic development of the communities that conduct horseracing. The jobs and tax base that is created in the industry of horse racing is far reaching. On the track itself, the jobs that are associated with horse racing includes but is not limited to: mucking stalls, hot walkers, grooms, exercise riders, stable foreman, assistant trainer, trainer, veterinarian and farriers. These are all meaningful and fulfilling jobs in this industry; as we all know, horses cannot take care of themselves. But just imagine how much money horseracing contributes to the economy once implemented properly.

The Virgin Islands Racing Commission (St. Croix and St. Thomas) has been working on the rules and regulations of horse racing. It's just a matter of sharing them with the stakeholders of racing and giving them an opportunity to weigh in, providing input so that these rules and reg has the requisite teeth to assist in the governance of the most beautiful sport in the world. We must also take into consideration the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority Act of 2020 also known as **HISA**. This act is to improve the integrity and safety of horse racing by requiring a uniform anti-doping and medication control program to be developed and enforced by an independent Horseracing Anti-Doping and Medication Control Authority. This act in the opinion of many racing experts can make or break the success of horse racing and racetracks. It has already been effective in changing the way horse racing conducts itself. Anti-Doping is another area of concern for the Racing Commission. We have identified a lab that can conduct the testing; However, we must work on the process for such a very important operation. When it comes again to integrity, especially with respect to pari-mutual wagering and prize payments to the horse owners, the process has to be tight.

One last aspect that I must mention as it relates to the horseracing, and which is a critical part of the industry is the breeding and feeding of thoroughbred horses. The commission in the past has always encouraged the development of the breeding industry. In every other jurisdiction that conducts horse racing, a comprehensive breeding program is vital to the success of the industry. This is one area that the commission will use as a challenge to assist in building the industry, making the Virgin Islands a contributor to the betterment of the community. The second area is the ability to grow feed, minimizing the cost of importing feed from other jurisdictions. We have the land, the expertise and knowledge of the Department of Agriculture and the willingness to help ourselves

I thank you for the invitation and look forward to your questions and concerns.