



To: The Honorable Angel Bolques, Jr.
Chair, Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks
35th Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands

From: Elroy A. Bates, Jr.
President, Flamboyant Park Horsemen Association

Re: Hearing about the various aspects of horseracing

Date: September 20, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator Bolques, Jr., and other members of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks. I am Elroy Bates, Jr., president of the Flamboyant Park Horsemen Association (FPHA).

Thank you for the invitation to testify before this committee on such an important topic to the community of St. Croix, especially the members of The Flamboyant Park Horsemen Association, who have been crying out for help from the Legislative and Executive branches of government for a very long time to no avail.

This hearing has been postponed three times because an employee of VIGL could not attend. That's only one employee, while other higher-ranking members of VIGL could've attended and answered the critical questions that many of us have to ask. VIGL has had The Randall "Doc" James Racetrack going on eight years now without hosting any horseraces and cannot answer as to when there will be horseracing again in St. Croix.

A bill brought forward by Senator Javan James is giving five million dollars to VIGL after three months of construction. Governor Bryan agreed to give VIGL back forty percent of the taxes collected from the Racino for purses, which is ludicrous. Why are the people of the Virgin Islands paying purses at the racetrack? The Governor took the monies that the Horsemen were supposed to use to enhance purses on race days, bring in off-island jockeys, and support the Breeders Association with native horses.

On April 18, 2024, the Casino Control Commission unanimously approved VIGL's Racino license. To date, nothing has been done on the track. They got all they wanted, and no pressure from the powers that be is being applied. On July 30, 2024, VIGL issued a press release stating that construction would begin in September 2024. There are still a couple more days in the month, so let's see what happens.

The Horsemen Association hopes we will get a construction start date and a projected race date out of this hearing. If VIGL is not going to start the buildout of the racetrack, they should give it up and let us find another entity to run it. It's been too long now, and they have everything they requested.

Once again, on behalf of the Flamboyant Park Horsemen Association and myself, thank you for the opportunity to deliver testimony to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks.