

BILL NO. 35-0125

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

August 22, 2023

An Act honoring and commending the late Police Lieutenant Melbourne Clarke posthumously for his dedication, service, and contributions to the Virgin Islands community in law enforcement by adding the name, “Police Lieutenant Melbourne Clarke Drive”, at Route 669 on the island of St. Croix

PROPOSED BY: Senator Kenneth L. Gittens

1 **WHEREAS**, Melbourne Clarke was born on June 3, 1939, to Anna Maria James
2 (deceased) and Anthony Augustin Clarke (deceased), on the island of St. Croix. From this
3 union, Melbourne had two brothers, Bernard Clarke (deceased) and Anthony Clarke. After the
4 passing of her first husband, Anna Maria married Mr. Joseph Benners and gave birth to her
5 fourth child and Melbourne’s only sister, Magnolia Benners, by his mother; and

6 **WHEREAS**, Melbourne attended St. Mary’s Catholic School and the Christiansted High
7 School until the eleventh grade; and

8 **WHEREAS**, on St. Croix, Melbourne was a prolific baseball player, instilling fear in all
9 who faced him. He was locally dubbed “The Cannon” for his play at third base and enormous
10 hitting power. He played AAA baseball on St. Croix, on the championship team “Cubanos”
11 with the famous pitcher Juan F. Luis, on the island of Puerto Rico, and in the professional
12 baseball league in Pawtucket, New York. Due to hard times, he left St. Croix and relocated to
13 New York to finish school and pursue a baseball career;

1 **WHEREAS**, on May 17th, 1960, Melbourne enlisted in the United States Army. After
2 completing basic training, he was then stationed in Korea, where he received numerous awards
3 and trophies for his dominance on the baseball field. While in the military, he completed all his
4 studies and received his high school diploma. Additionally, he received outstanding
5 commendations for achieving top marks as an infantryman, paratrooper, and medic; and

6 **WHEREAS**, his military service ended with an Honorable Discharge on May 16, 1963,
7 and Melbourne relocated back to St. Croix. On July 11, 1963, he married his long-time
8 sweetheart, Janet Joyce Amaro. Subsequently, Melbourne and Janet left St. Croix and moved
9 to Mount Vernon, New York, eventually settling in the Bronx. While living in New York,
10 Melbourne worked as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) at Mount Vernon Hospital.
11 He also became an Ancient Free and Accepted Mason in King Solomon's Lodge of Mount
12 Vernon. In 1965 and 1967, respectively, Melbourne and Janet were blessed with two children;
13 a son Ray Anthony, and a daughter, Anna Maria; and

14 **WHEREAS**, in 1972 Melbourne relocated his entire family back to St. Croix. Upon his
15 return to St. Croix, he immediately gained employment with the Virgin Islands Police
16 Department's Insular Training School located in Estate Anna's Hope on the island of St. Croix.
17 Always the consummate protector and professional, Melbourne answered the call to protect and
18 serve, becoming a Virgin Islands police officer on January 14, 1974; and

19 **WHEREAS**, during his time with the Virgin Islands Police Department, Officer Clarke
20 received excellent marks in every exam he took, whether for promotion in rank or additional
21 training. On November 30, 1980, Officer Melbourne Clarke graduated top of his class in
22 Washington, D.C., when he completed training with several other Virgin Islands Police Officers
23 to become the first K-9 Corps for the Virgin Islands. He was also responsible for the inception,
24 selection, and training of Officers for the K-9 corps in St. Thomas. Officer Clarke was
25 recognized by then Delegate to Congress Melvin H. Evans in a special ceremony for his
26 achievements. Officer Clarke would eventually become Lieutenant Clarke through
27 perseverance and hard work; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Melbourne served with the Virgin Islands National Guard from 1979 until
2 1981, holding the rank of Sergeant. He also served as a Medical Specialist in the 651st Medical
3 Detachment with the Virgin Islands Army National Guard; and

4 **WHEREAS**, at the height of Lieutenant Clarke’s career, his wife of 21 years, Janet Joyce
5 Amaro Clarke, sadly died on December 20, 1984. Though the loss of his wife took a great toll
6 on his life, he persevered. On February 2, 1987, he married his second wife, Alice Farrelly,
7 and this union gave him another daughter, Lynette Maria Clarke.; and

8 **WHEREAS**, in 1981, Lieutenant Clarke became a member of the American Legion Post
9 #85. He served in many capacities, including Finance Officer for Post #85, 1st Vice Commander
10 – American Legion District 10, and Commander – American Legion District 10, to name a few.
11 The American Legion was his home, and all loved, respected as well as cherished Comrade
12 Clarke, especially when they went away to conventions and various meetings; and

13 **WHEREAS**, Lieutenant Clarke became Commander of the Traffic Division, serving
14 until his retirement on December 31, 1999. Over his exemplary career as a police officer,
15 Lieutenant Clarke received numerous commendations and awards from police commissioners,
16 community organizations, and local businesses; and

17 **WHEREAS**, on July 8th, 2012, Melbourne Clarke succumbed to illness in Hollywood,
18 Florida, and was subsequently laid to rest on July 18th, 2012, on the island of St. Croix at
19 Kingshill Cemetery. Though he suffered greatly in his last days, his time ended peacefully and
20 without incident; and

21 **WHEREAS**, he is truly missed by family, friends, and colleagues of the Virgin Islands
22 Police Department; and

23 **WHEREAS**, Lieutenant Clarke is survived by his three children and three grandchildren,
24 Aliyah M. Brooks, Ray A. Clarke II, and Khaleed A. Lang, Jr.; Now, Therefore,

25 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

26 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin
27 Islands, recognizes, honors, and commends the late Police Lieutenant Melbourne Clarke

1 posthumously for his dedication, service, and contributions to the Virgin Islands community in
2 the area of law enforcement by adding the name, “Police Lieutenant Melbourne Clarke Drive”
3 at Route 669 from Queen Mary Highway Intersection through Estate Golden Grove to Melvin
4 H. Evans Highway on St. Croix.

5 **SECTION 2.** The Department of Public Works shall affix the appropriate signage at a
6 proper location in accordance with section 1 of this act.

7 **SECTION 3.** The President of the Legislature or the President’s designee shall present
8 a perma plaque copy of this act to the family of the late Police Lieutenant Melbourne Clarke or
9 a designee at an appropriate ceremony.

10 **BILL SUMMARY**

11 This bill honors and commends the late retired Police Lieutenant Melbourne Clarke
12 posthumously for his dedication, service, and contributions to the Virgin Islands community in
13 Law Enforcement by adding his name to U.S. Route 669 on the island of St. Croix

14 **BR23-0686/ August 8, 2023/YLT**