

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,
VETERAN AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

05/31/2023-REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

BILL NO. 35-0075

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

May 3, 2023

An Act to designate the third Monday in February as Virgin Islands Governors Day

PROPOSED BY: Senators Angel L. Bolques, Jr. and Marvin A. Blyden

1 **WHEREAS**, on April 20, 1917, Rear Admiral James Harrison Oliver became the first
2 appointed military Governor of the Virgin Islands after the Territory was purchased by the
3 United States on March 31, 1917. From 1917 until November of 1970, Governors of the Virgin
4 Islands were appointed by the sitting president of the United States; and

5 **WHEREAS**, RALPH MOSES PAIEWONSKY was born on November 9, 1907 on St.
6 Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. He was a businessman and politician who served on the Municipal
7 Council of St. Thomas and St. John from 1936-1946, was a delegate to the Democratic National
8 Conventions between 1940 and 1960, and served as the National Democratic Committeeman
9 from the Virgin Islands. RALPH MOSES PAIEWONSKY served from 1961 until 1969 as the
10 last civilian appointed governor of the Virgin Islands, appointed by President John F. Kennedy.

11 **WHEREAS**, on August 23, 1968, the Virgin Islands Elective Governor Act was passed
12 in the 90th United States Congress, which provides for the Governor of the Virgin Islands to be
13 popularly elected, rather than appointed as they had been up to that time; and

1 **WHEREAS**, MELVIN HERBERT EVANS, was born on August 7, 1917, in
2 Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, soon after the island had been purchased from Denmark
3 by the United States. He graduated from high school on St. Thomas, and received a B.S. from
4 Howard University in 1940, and an M.D. from the Howard College of Medicine in 1944.
5 Melvin Evans served as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Medical Administrative Corps from
6 1942 to 1945, and as the Virgin Islands Health Commissioner from 1959 to 1967. President
7 Richard Nixon appointed Evans Governor of the Virgin Islands in July 1969, and he was elected
8 in November 1970, becoming the first elected Governor of the Virgin Islands along with
9 DAVID E. MAAS who became the first elected Lieutenant Governor. Lt. Governor Maas
10 resigned his post in 1973, and was replaced by ATHNIEL C. “ADDIE” OTTLEY; and

11 **WHEREAS**, CYRIL EMMANUEL KING was born on St. Croix, Virgin Islands, on
12 April 7, 1921. He served with the U.S. Army during World War II, received a Bachelor’s
13 Degree in Public Administration from American University, and in 1949 he was appointed as
14 an aide to Senator Hubert Humphrey, becoming the first Black person to serve in the office of
15 a U.S. Senator. King served as Acting Governor of the Virgin Islands for six months in 1969
16 and was elected to the Legislature of the Virgin Islands in 1972. In 1974, Cyril King persuaded
17 JUAN FRANCISCO LUIS to join his ticket and run for lieutenant governor. In the 1960s, King
18 founded the Independent Citizens Movement (ICM), so he and Juan Luis ran for office as the
19 nominees of the ICM. King and Luis became the second elected Governor and Lieutenant
20 Governor in a gubernatorial runoff election held in November 1974; and

21 **WHEREAS**, JUAN FRANCISCO LUIS was born in Vieques, Puerto Rico, on July 10,
22 1940, and his family moved to St. Croix, Virgin Islands when he was two months old. Juan
23 Luis grew up on St. Croix, graduated from the Christiansted High School as the valedictorian
24 of the class of 1958, and earned his pre-medicine equivalency from the University of Puerto
25 Rico. He became a sixth-grade teacher at the Christiansted Public Grammar School and worked

1 briefly as a Project Office Manager for the Department of Housing and Urban Development
2 before he served as a sergeant in the U.S. Army. Juan Luis worked as a Personnel
3 Administrative Officer in the Virgin Islands Department of Health, and in 1972 was elected to
4 the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. In 1974, he was elected as Lieutenant Governor under
5 Cyril King, and was sworn in as Governor on January 2, 1978, following the death of Cyril
6 King. In February of 1978, Juan Luis appointed HENRY A. MILLIN as his Lieutenant
7 Governor, and in November of 1978, they were both elected to a full four-year term becoming
8 the third elected Governor and Lieutenant Governor of the Virgin Islands. Governor Juan Luis
9 was elected to a second term in 1982 and served with JULIO ANTHONY BRADY as his
10 Lieutenant Governor from 1983 to 1987; and

11 **WHEREAS**, ALEXANDER A. FARRELLY was born on St. Croix, Virgin Islands on
12 December 29, 1923, and served with distinction in the U.S. Army earning an honorable
13 discharge in 1946. He earned degrees in history, government, a Bachelor of Law from St.
14 John's College in New York, and later obtained a Master of Laws degree from Yale University
15 in 1961. In 1962, he was appointed Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of the Virgin
16 Islands, and in 1965, he became a judge for the V.I. Municipal Court. In 1966 he was elected
17 as a Senator-at-Large to the 7th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, with the highest number of
18 votes ever cast for an elected official of the Territory at that time. In 1986, ALEXANDER A.
19 FARRELLY and DEREK MICHAEL HODGE were elected as the Territory's fourth elected
20 Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Upon his inauguration on January 5, 1987, ALEXANDER
21 A. FARRELLY became the first elected Democrat to serve as Governor in the history of the
22 Virgin Islands. ALEXANDER A. FARRELLY and DEREK HODGE served two terms from
23 1987 to 1994; and

24 **WHEREAS**, ROY LESTER SCHNEIDER, was born on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
25 where he attended the Dober and Lincoln Elementary Schools and graduated as the salutatorian

1 of the Charlotte Amalie High School in 1957. He received a Bachelor's Degree in 1961 and a
2 medical degree in 1965 from Howard University. He was a captain in the U.S. Army from
3 1966 to 1968, serving as a medical adviser and surgeon in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968. In
4 1971, he became Chief Resident at Howard University and served as a faculty member until
5 1975, returning home in 1977 to assume the position of Commissioner of the Department of
6 Health, a position he held until 1986. As Commissioner of Health, ROY LESTER
7 SCHNEIDER was instrumental in having three new medical facilities constructed in the
8 Territory to provide modern services for the residents, helped establish the first kidney
9 transplant unit in the Virgin Islands, and was the first doctor to perform a kidney transplant in
10 the Territory. On November 22, 1994, ROY SCHNEIDER and KENNETH MAPP became the
11 fifth elected Governor and Lieutenant Governor in a special gubernatorial runoff election. As
12 Governor, ROY SCHNEIDER, among his many accomplishments, was responsible for the
13 establishment of the Departments of Tourism and Agriculture, the creation of a hospitality
14 training institute, and the formation of an emergency action team to plan and prepare for
15 emergencies and disasters within the Territory, that was instrumental in getting massive federal
16 aid into the Territory in the aftermath of Hurricane Marilyn; and

17 **WHEREAS**, CHARLES WESLEY TURNBULL was born on February 5, 1935, on St.
18 Thomas, Virgin Islands. After completing his elementary and secondary education, he was
19 awarded a Ford Foundation five-year scholarship to Hampton University where he earned a
20 Bachelor of Science degree in 1958 with honors in History, and a Master of Arts degree in
21 Secondary Education in 1959. He earned a Doctorate in Educational Administration from the
22 University of Minnesota in 1976. He served as the Commissioner of Education from 1979 to
23 1987 and established a Cultural Education Division to promote greater knowledge, awareness,
24 and appreciation of the history and culture of the Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean. Over
25 the years, CHARLES W. TURNBULL established an exemplary record of community and

1 humanitarian service, including serving as an elected delegate to all five Constitutional
2 Conventions of the Virgin Islands; serving as Secretary of the Second Constitutional
3 Convention in 1972; serving as a delegate to numerous National Democratic Nominating
4 Conventions, and receiving numerous awards and citations for leadership including the first
5 Alexander A. Farrelly Public Service Award. Charles Wesley Turnbull was sworn in as the
6 sixth elected Governor of the Virgin Islands on January 4, 1999, along with GERARD LUZ
7 AMWUR JAMES II, as his Lieutenant Governor, and re-elected overwhelmingly to serve a
8 second term in November 2002, with VARGRAVE A. RICHARDS as his Lieutenant Governor;
9 and

10 **WHEREAS**, JOHN PERCY DE JONGH, JR., was born on November 13, 1957, in
11 Brooklyn, New York, grew up in the de Jongh Gut area of Savan and in Estate Thomas, St.
12 Thomas, Virgin Islands and attended the Saints Peter and Paul Catholic School through the
13 eighth grade. After relocating with his family to Detroit, Michigan, he graduated from the
14 Detroit Catholic Central High School in 1976 and earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in
15 Economics from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio in 1981. He returned to the Virgin
16 Islands after graduating from college and began his professional career working with the Tri-
17 Island Economic Development Council helping to identify funding for the preservation of
18 historic buildings in the Virgin Islands. In 1987, he served as Commissioner of Finance and in
19 addition to his primary responsibilities for the finances of the entire Government, he served as
20 the Chairman of the Governing Board of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority and as
21 the first Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Public Finance Authority. JOHN PERCY DE
22 JONGH, JR. and GREGORY R. FRANCIS served as the seventh elected Governor and
23 Lieutenant Governor of the Virgin Islands from January 1, 2007 to January 5, 2015. During
24 his tenure, JOHN PERCY DE JONGH, JR. championed early childhood education issues,
25 establishing the Children and Families Council, and pushed for economic diversification of the

1 four main islands that comprise the U.S. Virgin Islands. He instituted a government-wide
2 Energy Demand Reduction Program to reduce the Territory's dependency on fossil fuels and
3 advanced the use of alternative and renewable energy sources in the Territory; and

4 **WHEREAS**, KENNETH EZRA MAPP was born on November 2, 1955, in Brooklyn,
5 New York. He moved to St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1961, where he was raised by
6 his maternal grandmother. He graduated from St. Croix Central High School in 1973, and
7 began his career in the New York City Police Department soon after graduating, based in the
8 83rd Police Precinct in Brooklyn. He later became a police officer in the Virgin Islands and
9 was elected President of the Virgin Islands Police Benevolent Association. He was elected to
10 three terms as a senator in the Legislature of the Virgin Islands and later served as Assistant
11 Director of the Industrial Development Commission and Director of the Consumer Services
12 Administration. He was elected to the 15th Legislature of the Virgin Islands in 1982, and later
13 in the 18th and 20th Legislatures, and in 2002, Governor Charles Turnbull appointed him as the
14 Virgin Island's Public Finance Authority's Director of Finance and Administration, where he
15 managed several major capital projects and served on the Governor's financial and budget team.
16 In November of 2014, KENNETH EZRA MAPP became the eighth elected Governor of the
17 Virgin Islands, with OSBERT POTTER as his Lieutenant Governor, and served the Territory
18 from 2015 to 2019; and

19 **WHEREAS**, ALBERT BRYAN JR., was born on born February 21, 1968, on St.
20 Thomas, Virgin Islands, to Albert Sr. and Genevieve (Pilgrim) Bryan, and is the oldest of five
21 sons. He grew up in the Savan neighborhood of Charlotte Amalie, and moved to St. Croix as a
22 teenager, where he graduated from St. Dunstan's Episcopal High School in 1985. Bryan earned
23 a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics from Wittenberg University in Springfield Ohio, in
24 1989, and later received a Master of Business Administration from the University of the Virgin
25 Islands, St. Croix Campus in 2003. In 2007, Governor John de Jongh appointed Albert Bryan

1 Jr. as Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor. When Governor de Jongh's
2 term ended in 2015, Bryan returned to the private sector as CEO and President of Aabra Group,
3 a consulting firm, and Master Strategies, a recruiting firm. He also was executive director of
4 the Virgin Islands chapter of Junior Achievement. On January 7, 2019, ALBERT BRYAN JR.
5 and TREGENZA ROACH were sworn in as the 9th elected Governor and Lieutenant Governor
6 of the Virgin Islands at the David Monsanto Bandstand, which was built by Governor Bryan's
7 grandfather Ulric "Sappy" Pilgrim, in Emancipation Gardens on St. Thomas. During his first
8 term as governor, Governor Bryan led the Virgin Islands through economic growth and
9 infrastructure expansion and spearheaded a multi-billion-dollar recovery and rebuilding effort
10 to transform the Territory's critical infrastructure in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria.
11 From March 2020 through the present day, Governor Bryan has boldly and effectively led the
12 Virgin Islands through the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping Virgin Islanders safe while protecting
13 the Territory's tourism-driven economy from collapse. In January 2023, GOVERNOR
14 ALBERT BRYAN JR. and LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR TREGENZA ROACH were sworn
15 in for a second term and continue to serve the people of the Virgin Islands.

16 **WHEREAS**, Presidents Day is a holiday in the United States celebrated on the third
17 Monday of February. It is celebrated to honor all those who served as presidents of the United
18 States and, since 1879, has been the federal holiday honoring George Washington, the first
19 president of United States; and

20 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands falls under the jurisdiction of the laws of the United
21 States. However, all residents of the Virgin Islands are deprived of the right to vote for president
22 of the United States because the Virgin Islands is not a state and does not have members of the
23 Electoral College; and

24 **WHEREAS**, on a local level, Virgin Islanders have the right to select those who govern
25 the Territory, and a day should be set aside to honor and recognize the contributions of former

1 Governors and Lieutenant Governors that were elected by and served the people of the Virgin
2 Islands; Now Therefore,

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

4 **SECTION 1.** Title 1 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 11 is amended by adding a section
5 200m to read as follows:

6 **“§ 200m. Virgin Islands Governors Day**

7 Each year, the 3rd Monday of February shall be observed as “Virgin Islands Governors
8 Day” in honor of all the elected Governors and Lieutenant Governors of the Virgin Islands. On
9 that day, the sitting Governor shall issue a proclamation honoring all past elected Governors
10 and Lieutenant Governors and hold an appropriate luncheon to commemorate the day.”

11 **BILL SUMMARY**

12 This bill adds a section 200m to title 1, chapter 11 of the Virgin Islands Code designating
13 the 3rd Monday of February as Virgin Islands Governors Day. Section 1 makes the designation
14 and requires that the current Governor hold a luncheon to commemorate the occasion.

15 **BR23-0232/April 12, 2023/HLF/REVISED April 13, 2023**