

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERANS
AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

11/22/2024-REASSIGNED TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

BILL NO. 35-0411

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

November 19, 2024

An Act honoring and commending Georgia Francis for her community service and for her contributions to the youth of the Virgin Islands in the area of music and renaming the portion of Rumer Drive beginning at Mandela Circle and continuing to the bottom of the Dorothy “Dotsy” Lockhart-Elskoe Drive, the “Georgia Francis Drive”

PROPOSED BY: Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff

1 **WHEREAS**, Georgia Francis is the daughter of the late Manassah Francis, a
2 businessman who had several businesses in St. Thomas, such as: a bar and restaurant, Navieres
3 shipping, and the well-known, Manassah Bus Line;

4 **WHEREAS**, as a youngster growing up in public housing, Ms. Francis realized her
5 passion for music, which was instilled in her from a very young age by her mother, the late
6 Mrs. Eualie “Miss Lopie” Lopez-James;

7 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Francis’ mission was solidified when she entered Charlotte Amalie
8 High School;

9 **WHEREAS**, with the assistance of teachers at the Charlotte Amalie High School, Ms.
10 Francis was afforded the opportunity to travel to such places as: New York’s Mamaroneck High
11 School, the Ed Sullivan Theatre, and a band camp in Michigan;

1 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Francis' membership in the St. Thomas Community Band and other
2 inter-island orchestras provided additional experience and opportunities for her to perform with
3 some of the Virgin Islands most renowned musicians;

4 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Francis played basketball on the Charlotte Amalie female basketball
5 team for all four years of high school and in 1972, graduated from the Charlotte Amalie High
6 School with an academic and sport scholarship to Fisk University;

7 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Francis played basketball as a forward on Fisk's women's basketball
8 team and upon the recommendation of her college coaches, in the mid-1970's, she tried out for
9 the United States Women's Olympic Basketball Team;

10 **WHEREAS**, in 1977, Ms. Francis graduated from Fisk University and returned to the
11 Virgin Islands and began her teaching career;

12 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Francis got her first teaching job at the Bertha C. Boschulte Junior
13 High School and later transferred to the Charlotte Amalie High School;

14 **WHEREAS**, it was normal for Ms. Francis to be at the Charlotte Amalie campus daily
15 after school ended researching, composing, recreating, or planning new strategies to complete
16 her various assignments;

17 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Francis' creative and innovative musical arrangements, presentations,
18 and productions have afforded the opportunity for the Charlotte Amalie High School's Concert,
19 Marching, and Jazz Bands to participate in performances throughout the United States, St. Kitts,
20 Canada, England, and Argentina;

21 **WHEREAS**, the Bands, under Ms. Francis' tutelage, have performed at the inaugurations
22 of former Presidents William J. Clinton and Barack Obama;

23 **WHEREAS**, in conjunction with the Charlotte Amalie High School Band Boosters, the
24 Charlotte Amalie High School Music Department has received numerous awards from
25 competing in the United States and internationally against some of the top high school
26 programs;

1 **WHEREAS**, throughout Ms. Francis' career, she has been the recipient of many awards
2 and honors and, in 2006, the Rotary Club of St. Thomas awarded Ms. Francis the Paul Harris
3 Fellowship Award, she received the Virgin Islands State Teacher Award, she was selected as
4 the St. Thomas/St. John District Teacher of the Year, and represented the Virgin Islands at the
5 National Teacher of the Year Conference;

6 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Francis was among the many teachers from throughout the United
7 States who received the prestigious honor of meeting with President George W. Bush at the
8 White House;

9 **WHEREAS**, in 2009, Ms. Francis received an award from the Virgin Islands Cultural
10 Heritage Institute that recognized her as an Outstanding Virgin Islands Musician;

11 **WHEREAS**, in 2013, Ms. Francis was honored in New York City by the Virgin Islands
12 Freshwater Association, Inc. at its 22nd Annual Transfer Day Dinner Dance for her outstanding
13 contributions to education and for her other community service, and she was inducted into the
14 Charlotte Amalie High School Wall of Fame;

15 **WHEREAS**, in 2014, Ms. Francis was recognized by the Legislature of the Virgin
16 Islands for the Virgin Islands Finest Musicians Initiative;

17 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Francis' love for teaching music is reflected in the many success stories
18 of the students she has taught and continues to teach, these success stories include renowned
19 artists such as: Neville Peters, Dion Parson, Rueben Rogers, Rashawn Ross, Tabari Lake, and
20 local musical educators Malvern V. Gumbs, Akeel A. Breedy, Dionne R. Donadelle, Eljhaie
21 Brathwaite, and many more;

22 **WHEREAS**, in 2011, Ms. Francis retired from teaching with the Virgin Islands
23 Department of Education; however, thereafter, she taught at Antilles School for five years and
24 she is currently teaching at the All Saints Cathedral School;

1 **WHEREAS**, “To Excel Always” is not only the motto of the Charlotte Amalie High
2 School Mighty Chicken Hawks, but it is also the commitment to excellence that personifies
3 Ms. Georgia Francis; and

4 **WHEREAS**, for more than four decades, Ms. Francis has been a dedicated teacher,
5 preparing students for more than just a profession in music, but also preparing them for the
6 challenges life presents, by and through her motto: “You disciplined those you love”; Now,
7 Therefore,

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

9 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin
10 Islands, recognizes, honors, and commends Georgia Francis for her community service and for
11 her contributions to youth of the Virgin Islands, especially in the St. Thomas/St. John district,
12 as a music teacher and band director.

13 **SECTION 2.** In commemoration of Georgia Francis’ many contributions to the people
14 of the Virgin Islands, the Legislature of the Virgin Islands renames the portion of Rumer Drive
15 beginning at Mandela Circle and continuing to the bottom of the Dorothy “Dotsy” Lockhart-
16 Elskoe Drive, the “Georgia Francis Drive”.

17 **SECTION 3.** The Virgin Islands Department of Public Works shall erect two signs two
18 bearing the inscription “Georgia Francis Drive”, one at the junction of Mandela Circle and
19 Rumer Drive and the other at the junction of Rumer Drive and Dorothy “Dotsy” Lockhart-
20 Elskoe Drive.

21 **SECTION 4.** (a) The sum of \$10,000 is appropriated from the General Fund of the
22 Treasury of the Government of the Virgin Islands to the Virgin Islands Department of Public
23 Works to erect the signage.

24 (b) The sum appropriated in subsection (a) remains available until expended.

25 **SECTION 5.** The President of the Legislature, or the President’s designee, shall present
26 a perma plaque of this Act to Georgia Francis at an appropriate ceremony.

BILL SUMMARY

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2 This bill recognizes, honors, and commends Georgia Francis for her contributions to the
3 community, especially to the children of the Virgin Islands, and renames the portion of Rumer
4 Drive beginning at Mandela Circle and continuing to the bottom of the Dorothy “Dotsy”
5 Lockhart-Elskoe Drive, the “Georgia Francis Drive”.

6 **BR24-1102/November 7, 2024/SLR**