

# 35<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATURE OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

THE HONORABLE SENATOR DIANE T. CAPEHART



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**Chair**                      **Committee on Rules & Judiciary**  
**Vice Chair**              Committee on Disaster Recovery & Infrastructure  
**Member**                  Committees on Health, Hospitals and Human Services Phone: (340) 773-  
Committee on Education and Workforce Development  
Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture  
Subcommittee on Health and Public Safety

**TO:                      Kurell A. Sheridan, Executive Director**

**FROM:                 Senator Diane T. Capehart**

**DATE:                 July 18, 2024**

**RE:                     Committee Report for Committee on Rules and Judiciary**

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The Committee on Rules and Judiciary met in the Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room to consider 2 nominations and 11 bills and resolutions. With the exception of Bill #35-0227 and 35-0228, all of the approved bills and resolutions on the agenda were forwarded to the full body for today's Legislative Session.

The nominations of The Honorable Ernest E. Morris, Jr., to serve as a judge on the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands – District of St. Croix and Harith Wickrema to serve on the Virgin Islands Conservation District – District of St. John was approved.

Testimony was heard concerning **Bill No. 35-0229**, An Act honoring and commending 8<sup>th</sup> elected Governor of the Virgin Islands, Kenneth Ezra Mapp for his years of service to the people of the Virgin Islands and naming Route 75 on the island of St. Croix from Bassin Triangle intersection at Route 70, Estate Richmond and ending at Krausse's Lagune the "Gov. Kenneth E. Mapp Highway," Sponsored by Senators Franklin D. Johnson, Donna A. Frett-Gregory, Milton E. Potter, Samuel Carrión, and Javan E. James, Sr.

**Invited Testifiers in attendance were:**

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Friends of former Governor Kenneth E. Mapp, Attorney Peter Hiebert and Margaret Guarino; Pedro Cruz, former Commissioner of Sports, Parks, and Recreation, Val Collens, former Finance Commissioner; Mona Barnes, former VITEMA Director all under the Mapp Administration.

Furthermore, the Committee vetted **Bill No. 35-0227** related to the enactment of the Virgin Islands Commission on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest, Sponsored by Senators Kenneth L. Gittens, Franklin D. Johnson, Diane T. Capehart, and Marvin A. Blyden and Bill No. 35-0228 - to enumerate the duties and functions of the Virgin Islands Commission on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest, also Sponsored by Senators Kenneth L. Gittens, Diane T. Franklin D. Johnson and Marvin A. Blyden. Additionally, Committee members vetted Bill No. 35-0269, providing a penalty for the commission of perjury in proceedings before the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. The measure was sponsored by Senator Kenneth L. Gittens.

**Invited Testifiers in attendance were:**

Deputy Attorney General Ian Clement on behalf of Nominee Attorney Gordon Rhea, Department of Justice; Julie Smith-Todman, Esq., Chief Public Defender, Office of the Public Defender; Dr. Gwen Moolenaar, League of Women Voters.

However, Bill 35-0227 and Bill 35-0228 were both held in Committee at the call of the Chair.

Furthermore, the Committee approved the following bills and resolutions:

**Bill No. 35-0240** - An Act transferring the administration of the Government Insurance Fund from the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Finance to the Commissioner of Virgin Islands Department of Labor to facilitate better recovery for injury or disease that arises out of and in the course of employment in the Virgin Islands under the Workers' Compensation

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Administration, and to ensure that workers entitled to Workers' Compensation benefits receive medical coverage, rehabilitation services, and disability compensation without undue delay by merging the benefits and payment components of the Workers' Compensation Insurance Program, Sponsored by Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., by Request of the Governor.

**Bill No. 35-0262** - An Act appropriating \$1,434,950 in Fiscal Year 2024 from the Community Facilities Trust Fund for the pre-construction soft cost funding to prepare the Charlotte Amalie harbor for dredging, Sponsored by Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., and Marvin A. Blyden by Request of the Governor.

**Bill No. 35-0284** – An Act approving the lease agreement between the GVI, acting through its Commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement and Role Enterprises, Inc., d/b/a/ Best Car Rental, Parcel No. 294 Estate Contant and Enighed, Cruz Bay Quarter, St. John, Virgin Islands for the continued operation of a car and jeep rental business, and for other related purposes, Sponsored by Senator Novelle E. Francis Jr. by request of the Governor

**Bill No. 35-0294** –An Act approving the lease agreement between the GVI and Banco Popular de Puerto Rico for a portion of Lot No. 48b Norre Gade, Kings Quarter, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, Sponsored by Senator Novelle E Francis Jr. by request of the Governor.

**Bill No. 35-0195** - A Resolution honoring and commending Mr. Willard John for his contributions to the youth and Virgin Islands culture, Sponsored by Senator Marise C. James.

**Bill No. 35-0239** - An Act honoring and commending Mrs. Claire Lorraine Brown Roker for her dedicated service to the Virgin Islands community by naming the visitors center at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Facility, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, the “Claire L. Roker Visitors Center, Sponsored by Senators Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Javan E. James, Sr., and Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

**Bill No. 35-0242** - A Resolution honoring and commending Miguel Santos, Jr., aka “DJ Poppy Pops” for his contributions in the field of music and in radio broadcasting of musical events and local social musical events and specifically contributing to the art of deejaying and the teaching of deejaying, Sponsored by Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

Senators present at the July 18, 2024 Committee meeting included: Diane T. Capehart, Milton E. Potter, Kenneth L. Gittens, Marise C. James, Javan E. James, Sr., Franklin D. Johnson, and Carla J. Joseph. Non-Committee members included: Marvin A. Blyden, Novelle E. Francis, Jr.

**Mr. Chair, this ends the reading of the Committee Report for the Committee on Rules and Judiciary.**