

The Department of Sports, Parks & Recreation

Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, and Parks

July 17, 2026

WELCOME TO EMANCIPATION GARDEN

THIS GARDEN IS
DEDICATED TO
COMMEMORATE THE
FREEING OF THE ENSLAVED



EDUCATORS PARK

EST. 1980

THIS PARK WAS DEDICATED TO
HONOR PROMINENT VIRGIN
ISLANDERS WHOSE WORK IN
EDUCATION, JOURNALISM & CIVIL
RIGHTS HAVE HELPED TO SHAPE
OUR TERRITORY'S DEVELOPMENT

*Vincent Roberts,
Commissioner*



Good morning, Chair Angel Bolques, Jr., members of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, and Parks, Senators of the 36th Legislature, distinguished guests, and the listening and viewing audience.

I am Vincent L. Roberts, Commissioner of the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation (DSPR). Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Bill No. 36-0247, which seeks to establish a Territorial Park Naming Program and create a uniform process for naming and renaming parks, recreational areas, and facilities owned by the Government of the Virgin Islands.

Throughout our history, the Virgin Islands has honored educators, athletes, veterans, cultural icons, community leaders, and public servants through the naming of public facilities. These recognitions serve as lasting tributes to individuals whose contributions have helped shape our Territory and preserve the stories and accomplishments that define our collective identity.

As the agency primarily responsible for the management, maintenance, and operation of public parks, athletic facilities, playgrounds, beaches, recreational areas, and open spaces throughout the Territory, DSPR recognizes the value of a standardized and transparent process for considering future naming and renaming proposals. Such a process can promote consistency, encourage public participation, and ensure appropriate historical documentation and accountability.

As the Committee considers this legislation, the Department respectfully offers several recommendations to support successful implementation.

First, the Government of the Virgin Islands should undertake a comprehensive inventory of all parks, recreational areas, and public facilities that may fall within the scope of this legislation. While DSPR maintains records for facilities under its management, there remains a broader need to identify and document all government-owned recreational assets throughout the Territory and clearly establish which agency has ownership, management responsibility, or operational jurisdiction over each property.

For example, following the separation of housing functions from the former Department of Housing, Parks and Recreation, questions remain regarding ownership, maintenance

responsibility, and operational control of certain facilities. Similar issues may exist with properties currently associated with other government entities. Establishing a definitive inventory and jurisdictional framework will help eliminate uncertainty regarding which facilities are eligible for inclusion in the Territorial Park Naming Program.

Second, the Department recommends that all facilities covered under the program be identified with complete and standardized physical addresses. Many parks, beaches, and recreational areas throughout the Territory continue to be referenced primarily by estate names, neighborhood descriptions, landmarks, or informal designations. The absence of standardized location data can create challenges in maintaining records, processing naming requests, documenting legislative actions, and providing accurate public information.

DSPR is hopeful that the ongoing street addressing initiatives led by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor will include parks, recreational facilities, beaches, athletic venues, and other public spaces throughout the Virgin Islands.

These recommendations are critical to the development of an official Territorial Registry of named parks, recreational areas, and public facilities. Such a registry would preserve historical records, document legislative actions, identify facility locations, and prevent duplicate or conflicting naming designations. It would serve as the central repository for information regarding all named public facilities throughout the Virgin Islands.

The Department also sees an opportunity to utilize technology to enhance public education and engagement. Incorporating QR codes into facility signage would allow residents and visitors to access historical information, biographies, photographs, legislative records, and other educational resources related to the individuals or events being honored. A centralized territorial database would ensure consistency, accessibility, and long-term preservation of this information.

Equally important is the establishment of uniform signage standards throughout the Territory. Consistent graphics, design elements, historical interpretation, and educational content can strengthen the connection between our public facilities, the individuals they commemorate, and the communities they serve.

Our parks, beaches, athletic venues, and recreational facilities should function not only as public assets but also as educational resources that connect residents and visitors to the rich cultural heritage and history of the Virgin Islands.

In closing, DSPR believes that preserving our history through the naming of public facilities is an important responsibility. The long-term success of this program, however, will depend upon maintaining accurate facility inventories, clearly defining jurisdictional authority, establishing standardized location information, developing consistent signage and design standards, ensuring a transparent review process, and preserving historical records through a centralized territorial registry.

The Department appreciates Senator Marise C. James for introducing this legislation and thanks the Committee for its consideration of a matter that impacts both our public spaces and our shared history. We look forward to working collaboratively with the Legislature, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, the Department of Property and Procurement, community organizations, and other stakeholders to develop a process that is both practical and reflective of the values, history, and heritage of the people of the Virgin Islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am available to answer any questions the Committee may have.