



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

4611 Tutu Park Mall
Suite 300, 2nd Floor
St. Thomas, VI 00802
(340) 774-3320

45 Mars Hill, Frederiksted
St. Croix, VI 00840
(340) 773-1082
dpnr.vi.gov



Good afternoon to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports and Parks, Senators, Legislative staff, fellow testifiers, and all present and listening today.

I am Director Kristina K. Edwards of the Division of Territorial Parks & Protected Areas, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, and I am honored to testify today on Bill No 36-0247, an act amending title 32 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 2, establishing the Territorial Park Naming Program.

As the first Director of this division which was created via legislation in 2022 with the passing of Bill No 34-0267 and Bill No 34-0268, I have spent much time considering the great weight of creating a Territorial Parks System that honors and protects the natural and cultural resources of the Virgin Islands. Ensuring that each park unit and recreational area is named with reverence to the Virgin Islands, our history, and our future, will ensure that we are creating a system that will endure long after everyone listening today has been forgotten.

While I agree with the motivation behind this bill, there are changes that need to be made in order for this division to fully support the passing of this legislation. The following changes have been requested.

- The legislation needs to provide language that addresses properties that were donated with the stipulation that the park carry a specific name which is included in the deed. This situation also applies to properties which carry names from previous legislation.
- Properties purchased with federal funds often come with requirements for signage, and this also changes the funding source for creating and constructing the signage. Even if a name is eventually changed, federal requirements must always be followed, according to the terms of the grant (or funding source).
- I would like to request that the section dictating the creation and funding of signs, plaques, markers, and memorials be rewritten. As written, this gives the public the ability to place signage in our parks that we are then required to pay for out of trust fund that was created without any funding mechanism. Many signs are required by federal funding, and we do not think it would appropriate or timely to require these to also be approved by the legislature.
- For the creation of the regulations, we are requesting 365 days rather than 180 days in order to work within the reality of creating and approving such documents within the GVI system.

After working to address these changes, I and the rest of the team at the Division of Territorial Parks & Protected Areas are happy to support the passing of this bill with the goal of continuing to celebrate the parks that make up the Virgin Islands Territorial Parks System. Thank you for your time, I look forward to any questions.