

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERANS
AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

BILL NO. 36-0150

Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

September 10, 2025

An act honoring and commending Thelma Leona Petersen-Springer, posthumously, for her outstanding community service to the children and the people of the Virgin Islands

PROPOSED BY: Senator Kenneth L. Gittens

WHEREAS, the Virgin Islands has been profoundly enriched by the selfless contributions of dedicated individuals, whose efforts have significantly impacted the lives of our children and the broader community;

WHEREAS, Thelma Leona Petersen-Springer, a beloved member of our community, devoted her life to serving the children of the Virgin Islands, ensuring that they were nourished, cared for, and supported;

WHEREAS, born on April 13, 1936 and raised in Estate Prosperity, Frederiksted, Ms. Petersen-Springer, affectionately known as “Mama” was the daughter of devoted parents, Reuben Petersen Sr., and Alvira Lowe Petersen, and the third of six siblings, instilling in her a strong sense of family and community;

WHEREAS, Ms. Petersen-Springer married Irvin Springer, Sr. and became a nurturing mother to seven children (Louise, Janice, Irvin, Jr., Anthony, and Laverne, Keith and Kenneth) demonstrating her unwavering commitment to her family;

1 **WHEREAS**, after her divorce, she continued to embrace motherhood with grace and
2 strength, welcoming four additional children into her life (Ricky, Dari-Lee, Lorette, and Coy),
3 and providing a loving home to three more children (Victor Santos, David Dunlop, and Laurel
4 Martin) whom she cared for as her own;

5 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Petersen-Springer was a single parent, who herself had lost her mother
6 at a very young age. While times were hard over the years, she never relinquished her parental
7 duties to anyone and raised all her children on her own. She loved and adored her 14 children,
8 36 grandchildren, 76 great-grandchildren and 7 great-great-grandchildren. She was in constant
9 communication with all of them and made every effort to attend every celebration in their lives.

10 **WHEREAS**, given her love for children, she started a career in baby-sitting in her home
11 and she also made house visits to various families;

12 **WHEREAS**, beginning September 5, 1972, Ms. Petersen-Springer dedicated many years
13 of her life to the Department of Education, where she worked as a cook within the school lunch
14 program, ensuring that countless children received nutritious meals. She had a passion for
15 cooking and did it well. Assigned to the school lunch program, she worked at Claude O.
16 Markoe Elementary School for several years and then became the kitchen manager at the
17 Evelyn Williams Elementary School;

18 **WHEREAS**, after a long and impactful career, Ms. Petersen-Springer's exemplary
19 service culminated in her retirement as Kitchen Manager on April 30, 1998.

20 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Petersen-Springer was also known for her Crucian Christmas Festival
21 Village booth where she cooked some of the best Crucian food. She was up by dawn preparing
22 for the village night's opening with her daughters Lorette and Dari-Lee who helped clean
23 chicken and made other preparations. She retired in the late 1990s from cooking on such a large
24 scale for the Crucian Christmas Festival Village;

1 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Petersen-Springer was also involved in festival with her majorettes
2 and troupes. She was full of energy and her infectious laughter and happy personality shown
3 through as she marched down King Street with her children's groups. She would later change
4 into her adult costume and go back down King Street again in an adult troupe. She gathered
5 the little boys and girls around Frederiksted and created a majorette group called the
6 Frederiksted Dynamic Twirlers and Marching Band. Today her name can be found on the
7 picket fence in the Midre Cummings Park. The park was the main site for the majorette
8 practices.

9 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Petersen-Springer also had mastered the technique of setting bone
10 joints back in place, a technique that was passed onto her by her father, Rueben Petersen, Sr.
11 She used her home remedy of lard and painkiller bush made from the leaves of her Noni tree.
12 Parents would bring their children to her house to reset their bones. Her grip was so strong, and
13 she would not stop until she heard the joint snap back into place. While the children and adults
14 would scream from pain, when they left, they felt much better;

15 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Petersen-Springer was a registered member of the American Legion
16 Auxiliary Unit Post 133 because her father was a World War II veteran;

17 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Petersen-Springer's legacy of love, dedication, and community service
18 continues to inspire those who knew her and will be remembered by future generations;

19 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Petersen-Springer was the last survivor of her siblings and served as
20 the family's matriarch. She died April 24, 2022, and was laid to rest on May 11, 2022, in the
21 Frederiksted Cemetery;

22 **WHEREAS**, it is fitting and proper that we honor Thelma Leona Petersen-Springer,
23 posthumously, for her outstanding contributions to the children and people of the Virgin
24 Islands;

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the Virgin Islands hereby honors and commends Thelma Leona Petersen-Springer for her exceptional service and dedication to her family and community; and

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the People of the Virgin Islands, honors and commends Thelma Leona Petersen-Springer, posthumously, by renaming a portion of Pine Tree Road in Estate Whim, Frederiksted (from the corner of the old Billy Shop in Campo Rico heading east to the intersection of the Renholdt “Rookie” Jackson Ballpark in Whim) the Thelma Leona Petersen-Springer Memorial Drive.

SECTION 2. In recognition and appreciation of her contributions to the children and the People of the Virgin Islands, the President of the Legislature, or the President’s designee, shall have a perma plaque copy of the act prepared and presented to the family of the late Thelma Leona Petersen-Springer at an appropriate ceremony as a testament to her enduring impact on the lives of the children she served and the love she shared with her community.

SECTION 3. The sum of \$3,000 is appropriated from the General Fund of the Treasury of the Government of the Virgin Islands in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025, to erect the proper signage on the road.

BILL SUMMARY

This bill honors and commends Thelma Leona Petersen-Springer, posthumously, for her many contributions to the youth and the people of the Territory and renames a portion of Pine Tree Road to the Thelma Leona Petersen-Springer Memorial Drive. The bill further appropriates \$3,000 from the General Fund to erect the proper signage on the road.

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