

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL NO. 36-0227

A Resolution Honoring and Commending the Armstrong Family for their exceptional contributions to the economic growth, cultural heritage, and development of the Virgin Islands

Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection of the 36th Legislature

Submitted By: Claire L. Roker

Friday, February 5, 2026

Good day, Honorable Chairman, Avery L. Lewis, Honorable Senator Kenneth Gittens, chief primary sponsor of Bill No.36-0227, Senator Franklin D. Johnson, primary co-sponsor, and all honorable Senators of the 36th Legislature's Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection. Thank you for inviting me to testify in strong support of a resolution honoring and commending the Armstrong Family, long-time owners of Armstrong Ice Cream, for exceptional contributions to the economic growth, cultural heritage, and development of the Virgin Islands. An honor well-earned.

My name is Claire L. Roker, and I have dedicated my life to the cultural, artistic, and personal development of young people across the Virgin Islands. It warms my heart to support this resolution to honor Cedric Armstrong and his family for generations of bringing such sweet joy to the people of the Virgin Islands.

I fondly remember, as a six-year-old child, my aunt, Delta Minerva Jackson Dorsch, taking me on outings to King Street, Frederiksted, to purchase ice cream and Vienna cake from Minerva Petersen, the founder of Armstrong Ice Cream. My mother, Wilhelmina Brown, and Aunty Delta were close family friends of the Armstrongs and remained so for decades. To this day, like our family, locals and visitors alike know there's something very special about both the friendliness of the Armstrong family and about their homemade ice cream. Every spoonful makes one think it's a special occasion—something to love, something meant to be shared.

As the business grew from a cart to other Frederiksted locations and the famous green Armstrong Ice Cream Truck frequently parked at Sunny Isle Shopping Center, folks would come from around the world to enjoy the delicious treats. The late Athniel "Addie" Ottley, former Virgin Islands senator and Lieutenant Governor, would frequently call me from St. Thomas when planning trips to St. Croix to be sure I could get him gallons of his favorite ice creams. He requested that it had to be really hard-frozen and packed tight to get back to St. Thomas in the right way. He was under strict instructions to bring ice cream back to his family so they, too, could enjoy the delicacy that he truly loved. Ivan Armstrong, Minerva's son, and his wife, Irenia Armstrong, always came through.

There are many flavors of Armstrong Ice Cream that my family and I have enjoyed over the decades, including gooseberry and cherry vanilla, two of my favorites. But when you ask Cedric what his favorite is, he's careful. He just won't commit. He loves them all! He will admit, however, that guavaberry ice cream is probably the most challenging to make. For those who love guavaberry ice cream, remember that it's even more delightful because of the hard work, dedication, and time that goes into making that holiday treat so very special.

As a former Virgin Islands tourism official, I can say beyond the shadow of a doubt that visitors always ask about and look for Armstrong Ice Cream while here. As the business has expanded into more menu options, both visitors and Virgin Islanders frequently go to the very well-known location on Queen Mary Highway. You can't miss the sign--Armstrong's Homemade Ice Cream and Deli. It is not only a landmark on west end St. Croix, but part of our heritage tourism brand, and an important player in our economy. Visitors remember it, talk about it to family and friends, and come back often for it.

Also truly heartwarming is that Cedric is of our community. He always contributes to youth programs and events that support others. To keep the homemade ice cream tradition going, he hires young people who apprentice in the business and learn the art of ice cream making. The Armstrong Family is deeply committed to us, and we should be immensely proud of their commitment of over 100 years. Their love for our community and its people is exemplary.

Delta Dorsch used to say that if something still feeds our people, still brings them together, and still reminds them who they are—then it deserves to be honored. This resolution honors the elders whose hands first made the ice cream and set the standard; the generations who kept the doors open through storms and changing times; and the younger hands who are still learning, serving, and carrying this legacy forward. Our heritage survives through family, responsibility, and care.

Thank you, Cedric and the Armstrong Family, for quietly, faithfully, and across generations making Armstrong Homemade Ice Cream not just a business, but a living piece of Crucian heritage.

Thank you, Senators, for your time today and for honoring what makes us, Us.

Wheel Bend. Story End.