

**BILL NO. 36-0090**

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**Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands**

**May 19, 2025**

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An act amending title 1 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 11 by adding section 200m to declare the week beginning the Monday before the first Friday in June as the Virgin Islands Gun Violence Awareness Week

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**PROPOSED BY:** Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

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**WHEREAS**, gun violence continues to be a significant public health and safety issue in the Virgin Islands, with profound impacts on individuals, families, and communities at large; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 13, 2019, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislature passed Bill No. 33-0126 establishing the Office of Gun Violence Prevention under the Office of the Governor.

**WHEREAS**, according to recent data, the Virgin Islands has experienced a disturbingly high rate of gun violence, with 43 homicides reported in 2024 alone, the majority of which involved firearms; and

**WHEREAS**, a study revealed that the average homicide rate in the Virgin Islands was approximately 37.4 per 100,000 residents per year between 1999 and 2014, significantly higher than many other Caribbean islands and U.S. cities; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2020, the Virgin Islands had a homicide rate nine times higher than the mainland United States emphasizing the severity of gun violence in the territory; and

1       **WHEREAS**, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that the  
2 Virgin Islands has one of the highest per capita rates of gun deaths in the United States,  
3 highlighting the urgent need for community-based interventions and awareness campaigns; and

4       **WHEREAS**, gun violence has long-lasting physical, emotional, and psychological  
5 effects on survivors and their families, contributing to trauma and a cycle of violence; and

6       **WHEREAS**, declaring a specific week dedicated to gun violence awareness provides an  
7 opportunity for residents, community organizations, and the local government to come together  
8 to address this critical issue and work towards solutions; and

9       **WHEREAS**, Virgin Islands Gun Violence Awareness Week will encourage educational  
10 activities, community discussions, and initiatives aimed at preventing gun violence and  
11 supporting affected individuals and communities; and

12       **WHEREAS**, promoting gun violence awareness aligns with the broader goals of  
13 enhancing public safety, fostering a sense of community, and improving the overall well-being  
14 of Virgin Islands residents; Now Therefore,

15 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

16       **SECTION 1.** Title 1, Virgin Islands Code, chapter 11 is amended by adding the following  
17 section 200m:

18 **§ 200m.** Virgin Islands Gun Violence Awareness Week

19       (a) The week beginning the Monday before the first Friday in June is designated as  
20 “Virgin Islands Gun Violence Awareness Week” in alignment with annual National Gun  
21 Violence Awareness Day. Virgin Islands Gun Violence Awareness Week is an observance and  
22 not a holiday.

23       (b) Virgin Islands Gun Violence Awareness Week shall be observed as a week to raise  
24 awareness about gun violence, to honor and to remember victims and survivors of gun  
25 violence, and to promote efforts to reduce gun violence in our communities.

**BILL SUMMARY**

This bill amends title 1, Virgin Islands Code, chapter 11 by establishing the Virgin Islands National Gun Violence Awareness Week beginning on the Monday preceding the first Friday in June in alignment with the National Gun Violence Awareness Day.

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