



Mario M. Brooks
Police Commissioner

Government of
The Virgin Islands of the United States

VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONER



Criminal Justice Complex
Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, VI 00802
(340) 774-2211

Police Commissioner's Office
9059 Estate Castle
Coakley Suite 2-9
St. Croix, VI 00820
(340) 778-2211

Leander Jurgen Command
Cruz Bay
St. John, VI 00830
(340) 693-8880

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The Honorable Senator Avery Lewis
Chairman, Committee on Governmental Operations,
Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection
36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building, P.O. Box 1690
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

Dear Senator Lewis,

I write to extend my sincerest apologies for being unable to personally attend today's hearing on the important legislation that seeks to amend *Title 1, Chapter 11 of the Virgin Islands Code* by adding Section 200m, officially declaring the week beginning the Monday before the first Friday in June as **Virgin Islands Gun Violence Awareness Week**.

Though my current responsibilities prevent me from appearing in person today, please know that the **Virgin Islands Police Department stands in full and unwavering support** of this vital amendment, introduced by Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr. This act is not only timely, it is necessary.

Gun violence continues to cast a long and devastating shadow over families and communities throughout the Territory. According to the **National Gun Violence Archive**, as of mid-June 2025, the United States has experienced over **8,400 gun-related deaths** and more than **15,000 injuries**. While the national conversation continues, we in the Virgin Islands are reminded far too often that our own communities are not immune to this crisis. In recent years, we have endured tragic losses to young lives being taken far too soon, families broken, and neighborhoods shaken. To date the Virgin Islands have experienced 18 gun-related homicides and we press forward diligently in our efforts to deter these events and solve these crimes.

The designation of **Gun Violence Awareness Week** will provide our Territory with a focused opportunity to honor those we have lost, stand with survivors, engage in meaningful dialogue, and deepen our collective resolve to prevent further bloodshed. It is also a critical platform to highlight ongoing prevention efforts, strengthen partnerships, and promote responsible firearm ownership and legislation.

Again, I regret that the leadership team or I could not be present for this discussion, but I assure you that the Virgin Islands Police Department is committed to being an active partner in any and all efforts to reduce gun violence across the Territory.

Thank you for your continued leadership on this matter and for your steadfast commitment to the safety and well-being of all Virgin Islanders.

With highest regard,

Mario M. Brooks
Police Commissioner