

THE HONORABLE SENATOR AVERY L. LEWIS

Legislative Secretary

36TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



Chair: Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, Consumer Protection

Vice Chair: Committee on Education and Workforce Development

Member: Committee on Rules and Judiciary
Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, and Parks
Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety
Committee of the Whole

Location: Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

On Monday, March 23, 2026, the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection convened at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on St. Thomas to receive testimony and deliberate on legislative measures addressing environmental management, government operations, public safety, and consumer protection.

During this meeting, the Committee heard testimony from representatives of the Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services, Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority, Caribbean Green Technology Center, Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Virgin Islands Environmental Association, Office of Management and Budget, Department of Finance, Virgin Islands Lottery, Office of the Inspector General, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, Department of Justice, and members of the private sector and community .

The Committee considered multiple measures spanning waste management solutions, lottery operations, recognition of public service, and legislation aimed at strengthening accountability and public safety. Committee members engaged in substantive discussions and posed questions to better understand the impact, feasibility, and implications of each proposal.

In Block I:

Bill No. 36-0233: An Act amending Title 32 Virgin Islands Code Chapter 13 relating to the establishment and operation of the Virgin Islands Lottery.

Proposed by: Senator Avery L. Lewis

Invited Testifiers:

- Mr. Raymond J. Williams, Executive Director, Virgin Islands Lottery
- Mr. Julio Rhymer, Sr., Director, Office of Management and Budget
- Mr. Kevin G. McCurdy, Commissioner, Department of Finance

Highlights of Testimonies:

Testimony on Bill No. 36-0233 focused on proposed amendments designed to modernize and strengthen the statutory framework governing the Virgin Islands Lottery. Testifiers discussed operational considerations related to revenue generation, administrative oversight, and financial management.

Representatives from the Virgin Islands Lottery highlighted the importance of ensuring that the enabling legislation reflects current operational needs while maintaining transparency and accountability in the management of lottery revenues.

Committee members posed questions regarding regulatory oversight, fiscal accountability, and opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Lottery's operations while safeguarding public trust.

Bill No. 36-0232: An Act amending Act No. 8018 to authorize the disposal of green waste using controlled incineration technologies, including air curtain incinerators, and for other purposes. **Proposed by: Senator Clifford A. Joseph, Sr.**

Sponsored by: Senator Avery L. Lewis

Invited Testifiers:

- Mr. Antonio Stevens, Director, Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services
- Mr. Hannibal "Mike" Ware, Executive Director, Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority
- Dr. Gregory Guannel, Director, Caribbean Green Technology Center
- Mr. Daryl D. Jaschen, Director, Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency
- Mr. Jean Pierre Oriol, Commissioner, Department of Planning and Natural Resources
- Ms. Dawn Henry, CEO, Virgin Islands Environmental Association
- Ms. Felicia Blyden, Bovoni Bolongo Nadir Community Organization

Highlights of Testimonies

Officials from the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority and emergency management agencies highlighted that green waste accumulation poses logistical and environmental challenges, particularly following storms when debris collection and disposal systems are strained. The proposed technology was presented as a tool that could assist with reducing waste volume, improving operational efficiency, and supporting disaster response efforts.

Fire and emergency services representatives also addressed safety considerations, emphasizing the importance of strict operational guidelines, environmental compliance, and proper oversight to ensure that the use of controlled incineration technologies does not pose risks to surrounding communities or natural resources.

Committee members engaged in discussion regarding environmental safeguards, cost implications, and implementation strategies to ensure the responsible use of such technologies within the Territory.

THE HONORABLE SENATOR AVERY L. LEWIS

Legislative Secretary

36TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



Chair: Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, Consumer Protection

Vice Chair: Committee on Education and Workforce Development

Member: Committee on Rules and Judiciary
Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, and Parks
Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety
Committee of the Whole

In Block II:

Bill No. 36-0009: A Resolution honoring and commending Mr. Steven van Beverhoudt for his years of dedicated service and numerous contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands.

Proposed by Senator Milton E. Potter

Invited Testifiers

- Ms. Marsha DuBois, Lead Auditor, Office of the Virgin Islands Inspector General
 - Ms. Delia Thomas, Virgin Islands Inspector General
 - Mrs. Bernice Turnbull, Former Commissioner, Department of Finance
-

Highlights of Testimonies

Testimony in support of Bill No. 36-0009 was overwhelmingly favorable and reflective, highlighting Mr. Steven van Beverhoudt's distinguished 32-year career as Inspector General, during which he led the Office of the Inspector General with integrity, independence, and a strong commitment to accountability.

Testifiers emphasized his role in strengthening government oversight, conducting impactful audits, and fostering a culture of professionalism and excellence within the agency. His leadership contributed to major investigations addressing fraud, waste, and abuse, and earned him the respect of multiple administrations and the Legislature.

The measure was widely regarded as a fitting tribute to his legacy and lifelong service to the people of the Virgin Islands.

Block III:

Bill No. 36-0113: An Act amending Title 8 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 4 to assess liability on businesses that serve intoxicating beverages to patrons that have overconsumed the beverages. *Proposed by Senator Carla J. Joseph*

Invited Testifiers

- Hon. H. Nathalie Hodge, Commissioner, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs
 - Hon. Gordon C. Rhea, Esq., Attorney General, Department of Justice
 - Mr. Hugo Hodge Jr., Owner, Zanzi Bar
 - Mr. Nathan Mirocha, Esq.
 - Mr. Kareem Todman, Esq.
-

Highlights of Testimonies

Testimony on Bill No. 36-0113 focused on establishing a balanced legal framework for liquor liability, particularly in cases where over-service of alcohol contributes to motor vehicle accidents and injury to innocent persons. Proponents emphasized that the legislation would provide a pathway for victims to seek compensation while encouraging responsible alcohol service practices.

Testifiers discussed the bill's intent to shift away from outdated legal standards and introduce clearer criteria for liability, particularly in cases involving visibly intoxicated individuals or underage patrons. Supporters argued that the measure would enhance public safety and accountability.

Opposition and concerns raised included the potential impact on small businesses, increased insurance costs, and the need to ensure that liability standards are fair and not overly burdensome.

Committee members engaged in discussion regarding legal thresholds, enforcement, and balancing public safety with business protections.

In Block IV

Bill No. 36-0115: An Act amending Title 27, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 9, Subchapter I, Section 304, authorizing the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs to physically close a business when it finds that the business is causing a nuisance, presents a threat to safety, or is disturbing the peace. *Proposed by Senator Carla J. Joseph.*

Invited Testifiers

- Hon. H. Nathalie Hodge, Commissioner, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs
 - Hon. Gordon C. Rhea, Esq., Attorney General, Department of Justice
 - Hon. Mario M. Brooks, Commissioner, Virgin Islands Police Department
 - Mr. Hugo Hodge Jr., Owner, Zanzi Bar
 - Ms. Rashida Francis
 - Mr. Micheal Creque
-

Highlights of Testimonies

Testimony on Bill No. 36-0115 focused on enhancing the authority of regulatory agencies to address businesses that pose risks to public safety or disrupt community peace. Government officials emphasized the need for enforcement tools to address repeat violations and protect residents.

THE HONORABLE SENATOR AVERY L. LEWIS

Legislative Secretary

36TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



Chair: Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, Consumer Protection

Vice Chair: Committee on Education and Workforce Development

Member: Committee on Rules and Judiciary
Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, and Parks
Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety
Committee of the Whole

Testifiers also discussed due process considerations, the importance of clear enforcement standards, and ensuring that business owners are afforded fair notice and opportunity to comply before enforcement actions are taken.

Community members expressed support for measures that would improve neighborhood safety and reduce disturbances, while some stakeholders raised concerns about potential overreach and the need for safeguards.

COMMITTEE ACTION: THE VOTE

- Bill No. 36-0232: Passed to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary
- Bill No. 36-0009: Passed to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary
- Bill No. 36-0113: Held in Committee until the call of the Chair
- Bill No. 36-0233: Held in Committee until the call of the Chair
- Bill No. 36-0115: Held in Committee until the call of the Chair

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members: Senator Ray Fonseca, Senator Alma Francis Heyliger, Senator Kenneth L. Gittens, Senator Carla J. Joseph, Senator Novelle E. Francis Jr., Senator Avery L. Lewis

Non-Committee Members: Senator Clifford Joseph, Sr.

Motion: A motion from Senator Carla J. Joseph, seconded by Senator Ray Fonseca was placed to discuss BILL NO. 36-0233 before BILL NO. 36-0232 in Block I.

Through The Chair:

1. Would the legislation give VI Lottery the means to not come to the legislature for contracts if they become autonomous? – Senator Carla J. Joseph

2. Send a copy from the AG office with their opinion to become semi autonomous. – Senator Marvin Blyden
3. How much money did VI Lottery make through VLT? – Senator Kurt Vialet
4. How much money did VLT generate and how much money was remitted to the government? – Senator Kurt Vialet