



**GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM**

March 24, 2025

The Honorable Senate Avery Lewis

Thirty-Six (36th) Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00802

Re: Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection

Dear Senate Lewis:

Please find the Department of Tourism's testimony herein for the meeting of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands' Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection, at 9:30 am on March 24, 2025 at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on the island of St. Thomas.

Sincerely,

Joseph Boschulte
Commissioner
USVI Department of Tourism



March 25, 2025

VIA EMAIL TO: avery.lewis@legvi.org

Honorable Senator Avery Lewis
36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building
St. Thomas, VI 00802

Dear Senator Lewis,

Testimony Senate Hearing 03/24/2025

Good morning, Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection Committee Chairman, Honorable Senator Avery Lewis, Committee Members and Senators of the 36th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands, legislative staff, members of the media, and the listening and viewing audience.

I am Alani Henneman, Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Tourism, testifying today on behalf of Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, who is unable to attend this hearing. Pursuant to your invitation, I am joined by Ian Turnbull, Director of the Division of Festivals, and Halvor Hart III, Assistant Director of Festivals, to provide insight into the Department of Tourism and Division of Festivals' planning efforts for the 2025 St. Thomas Carnival. Our testimony will focus on safety, security, environmental clean-up, permitting requirements, operational planning, and interagency collaboration.

Following a successful 2024, which saw a year-over-year increase in air arrivals — including a 27% surge in arrivals to St. Thomas during Carnival and a steadily increasing surge around the Crucian Christmas Festival — we are excited to build on this momentum and further establish the U.S. Virgin Islands as a premier destination for cultural experiences. As we prepare for the upcoming St. Thomas Carnival season, we look to utilize key marketing tactics, including social media, advertising, and public relations, to continue growing our reach and impact.

Interdepartmental Collaboration

Since January 7, 2024, the Department of Tourism's Executive Team, including Festivals Assistant Directors Halvor Hart III, Leona Smith, and Shamari Haynes, along with Director Turnbull, has convened multiple interdepartmental planning meetings. These meetings included representatives from:

- Virgin Islands Police Department
- Virgin Islands Department of Sports, Parks & Recreation
- Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency
- Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services
- Virgin Islands Department of Public Works
- Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority
- Virgin Islands Port Authority
- Virgin Islands Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs

These discussions have prioritized event logistics, community health and safety, and preservation of event locations for all Division of Festivals-led events, including:

- Prince and Princess Pageant
- Queen Show Pageant
- Boat Race
- Pan-o-Rama
- Food Fair
- J'ouvert
- Children's and Adults Parades
- Fireworks display

Utility Installation and Facility Planning

In addition to interagency planning, the Department met with the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority to coordinate the installation of utilities for village booths and staging. A confirmed timeline for power connection aligns with other required inspections ahead of the village's opening date.

To ensure adequate sanitation facilities, the Department secured two local vendors to supply and service portable restrooms. These include:

- Eleven ADA-compliant stalls near the Carnival Village
- Seven stalls at the Food Fair venue in Crown Bay
- Fifteen porta-potties along the J'ouvert and Parade routes

These facilities will supplement existing public restrooms managed by the Department of Public Works.

Ongoing Commitment to Excellence

As we finalize the intricate details of the 73rd St. Thomas Carnival, the Department of Tourism remains committed to collaborating across agencies to ensure a seamless, safe, and organized celebration that honors our culture and traditions. Our focus spans from restroom accessibility and crowd control to managing J'ouvert and boat race access — all while adhering to regulatory standards.

Forthcoming Events

At the Department of Tourism, we are always exploring unique and strategic ways to market the territory. Over the next two quarters, our team will be partaking in a number of events that showcase the territory to both potential travelers and B2B entities related to the tourism industry. Events include:

- Seatrade Global
- On-Site Sports Partnerships and Activations (which in 2024 supported traveler increases from major US hubs including the New York Metro area with a 15% increase, the Greater Chicago area with a 19% increase, and a staggering 62% surge from the Greater Boston/New England area). Forthcoming partner events include:
 - Boston Red Sox
 - Chicago Cubs
 - New York Jets
 - New York Mets
- Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association Marketplace
- Caribbean Tourism Organization- Caribbean Week

In addition to existing events, the Department is actively working to facilitate all legislative mandates, including the feasibility study currently underway.

Acknowledgments

In closing, we extend our gratitude to Governor Bryan, Lieutenant Governor Roach, Commissioner Boschulte, our departmental partners, members of the Senate, our dedicated volunteers, and my exceptional colleagues at the Department of Tourism for their unwavering commitment to elevating the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We are prepared to answer any questions you may have.