

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

BILL NO. 36-0075

Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

May 8, 2025

A Resolution honoring and commending Austin A. Venzen posthumously for his unwavering commitment to music education and the arts, through his work in the classrooms, conducting private music lessons, on the concert stages, and by bringing Virgin Islanders together in choirs, bands, and community events, to foster camaraderie, collaboration, and cultural enrichment

PROPOSED BY: Senator Ray Fonseca

WHEREAS, Austin A. Venzen, was born on St. Thomas in 1952 and is the son of the late Petronita Foy and Ebenezer Venzen;

WHEREAS, he attended Jane E. Tuitt Elementary, Wayne Aspinall Junior High, and Charlotte Amalie High School, from where he graduated in 1970;

WHEREAS, upon graduating from high school, he attended Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, and Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tennessee, where, in May 1975, he earned a Bachelor of Science in Music Education and in August 1979, he earned a Master of Arts in Music Education;

WHEREAS, he dedicated his life to music, music education, and community service, making an indelible mark on the Virgin Islands and beyond through his innovative methods, passionate teaching, and steadfast commitment to excellence in music education;

WHEREAS, Austin A. Venzen was instrumental in shaping the music programs at Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School, Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, Charlotte Amalie High

School, and the University of the Virgin Islands, extending the impact of these programs beyond school walls to the broader community, the Caribbean, and the United States;

WHEREAS, he served as a mentor and inspiration to countless students, instilling in them a deep love of music and an appreciation for discipline, creativity, and hard work, regardless of whether they pursued music as a profession;

WHEREAS, he was the founder of the Esquire Wind Ensemble, which performed throughout the Virgin Islands for private and public events;

WHEREAS, Austin A. Venzen's unique and vibrant personality, coupled with his high expectations and unyielding standards, left a lasting impression on all who worked with him, creating a legacy of excellence, determination, and artistic achievement;

WHEREAS, his endeavors extended beyond traditional classrooms and concert stages, bringing people together in choirs, bands, private lessons, and community events, where he fostered camaraderie, collaboration, and cultural enrichment;

WHEREAS, Austin A. Venzen's contributions to music education and the arts were recognized and celebrated through community productions and the initiation of the UVI Summer Music Camp at the University of the Virgin Islands through its concert, jazz and ensembles, which expanded to a band and opera camp;

WHEREAS, the establishment of the Austin A. Venzen Music Memorial Scholarship is a lasting testament of the enduring affection and respect of his students, colleagues, and the wider community;

WHEREAS, his life and work embodied the principle of stirring up excellence, inspiring those around him to rise to his high standards and to carry forward his legacy of innovation and passion;

WHEREAS, on May 15, 2020, Austin A. Venzen passed away in Nashville, Tennessee;

1 **WHEREAS**, he was a dedicated husband to Roxie B. Venzen, proud father of DeWayne
2 T. Venzen and Derrick I. Venzen, father-in-law to Desiree D. Venzen, grandfather to Bianca
3 G. Venzen; and

4 **WHEREAS**, Austin A. Venzen's legacy as a masterful educator, talented musician, and
5 community leader is celebrated and honored through his efforts to support music education and
6 the arts, ensuring that his passion and vision continue to inspire future generations; Now,
7 Therefore,

8 ***Be it resolved by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

9 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin
10 Islands, honors and commends Austin A. Venzen posthumously for his significant
11 contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands through his unwavering commitment to music
12 education and the arts in the Virgin Islands.

13 **SECTION 2.** The President of the Legislature, or a designated representative, shall
14 prepare a permanent plaque of this Resolution to be presented to the family of Mr. Austin A.
15 Venzen during an appropriate ceremony.

16 **BILL SUMMARY**

17 This resolution honors and commends Austin A. Venzen posthumously for his
18 contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands for his unwavering commitment to music
19 education and the arts in the Virgin Islands.

20 **BR25-0242/March 17, 2025/SLR**