

Testimony in Support of the Medal of Honor for Rena Brodhurst

Good day, Sen. Avery L. Lewis, chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection, members of the committee, fellow senators, and members of the public.

I am Eunice Bedminster, former managing editor of The St. Croix Avis, here to support Bill No. 36-0319, introduced by Sen. Novelle E. Francis Jr., to award the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor to Rena Brodhurst, former owner, publisher, and editor of The Avis.

At long last, Rena is receiving this honor she has long deserved. Sen. Francis and his chief of staff, Ms. Shawna Richards, can attest to the many times I inquired about honoring her while she was still here to appreciate it.

When I first walked into The Avis in 2014, I was struck by the extraordinary work of its small staff, led by Rena. She understood that a newspaper does more than report news—it documents history daily. The late attorney Michael Joseph would frequently call to praise The Avis’ editorials, calling the work “documenting Virgin Islands history every day.” That’s exactly what Rena insisted on and did until January 2024 when The oldest paper in the Virgin Islands closed its doors.

Rena fiercely defended freedom of the press and made her no-holds-barred editorials must-reads. Early in my time at The Avis, she complimented me by saying, “You have a nose for news. My father would have loved you.” By entrusting me with The Avis’ editorial voice, she helped shape the journalist I am today. She taught me, whether directly or indirectly, that journalism is about accountability, community, hard questions, and preserving records for future generations.

That is why I never gave up trying to thank her. Since 2015, I approached various officials and organizations to recognize her contributions. The Rotary Club Harborside was the first to honor her as their “Woman of

Distinction” in 2016. I also sought congressional recognition through Delegate Stacey Plaskett, which led to the D. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award. The late Sen. Alicia “Chucky” Hansen also wanted to honor Rena, who always preferred to avoid the spotlight.

Although I left The Avis, my efforts continued. In February 2026, I nominated Rena for an honorary doctorate from the University of the Virgin Islands, which she received in May. Two of the first people I informed were Sen. Francis and Ms. Richards, whose support inspired this bill.

Rena, you followed in your father’s footsteps at The Avis but also made your own lasting

mark over 39 years—covering eight governors, hurricanes, and economic shifts. Beyond the press, you ensured prisoners had newspapers to learn to read, donated to those in need, and gave selflessly without expectation of recognition.

This moment means so much because you rarely sought the spotlight, but sometimes the spotlight must find those who deserve it. I have spent years trying to give Rena her flowers. Today, the Virgin Islands is doing same. Rena, you were deserving then, and you are deserving now.

Thank you again for opening the door that allowed me to become the journalist I am. For that, I am forever grateful.

Sen. Francis, thank you for bringing this recognition full circle.

The flowers have arrived.