

**THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
JUSTICE, AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

Chairman: The Honorable Clifford A. Joseph Sr.

**Virgin Islands Police
Department St. Croix, USVI
February 13th, 2026**

Good morning to the Chair, The Honorable Clifford Sr., Legislative body and Staff, Members of the VIPD Team, and to the listening and viewing audience. Good morning, I am Sean Santos, Assistant Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department and I am honored to stand before you today on behalf of Commissioner Mario Brooks and the U.S. Virgin Islands Police Department. We are here to offer our full and unequivocal support for Bill No. 36-0151, thoughtfully introduced by Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

After careful consideration and a thorough review of these proposed amendments, the U.S. Virgin Islands Police Department wholeheartedly agrees that this legislation is a critical and necessary step forward for public safety in our territory. This bill does not in any way restrict the rights of our many law-abiding gun owners; rather, it is a focused and essential effort to

prevent the proliferation of extremely dangerous devices that pose a direct and severe threat to our communities and the safety of our officers.

Our strong agreement with these amendments stems from several key principles:

Closing Dangerous Loopholes with Crystal-Clear Definitions (Section 1(1)(a) & (b)):

The proposed clarity, explicitly adding "machine gun" alongside "automatic weapon" in our code, is vital. In law enforcement, precise language is paramount, and this update ensures our laws are unambiguous when confronting the most dangerous types of firearms.

Crucially, the comprehensive definition of "Conversion kit" is a game-changer. It clearly identifies modern threats like machine gun conversion devices, chips, 3D printed parts designed to mimic selector plates, and binary triggers. These are not tools for sport or self-defense; their sole purpose is to illegally transform standard firearms into fully automatic or high-rate-of-fire weapons, creating an extreme danger. This updated language leaves no room for confusion or evasion, empowering our officers to effectively address these threats.

Directly Targeting a Grave Threat to Public Safety (Section 1(2): New § 481a):

The insertion of the new section 481a, which explicitly prohibits the possession, sale, manufacture, or distribution of these machine gun conversion devices, is an absolute necessity. These devices, whether purchased illegally or produced through modern means like 3D printing, circumvent existing laws and enable criminals to possess firepower that is incredibly destructive and difficult for our police to counter.

This amendment targets those who seek to bring illegal firearms and firearms with military-grade capabilities into our communities. It's about disarming the criminal element and ensuring our law enforcement officers do not face individuals equipped with unlawfully modified firearms that fire at rates similar to that of machine guns. This bill serves to protect our citizens, and it profoundly protects the brave men and women who serve on the front lines.

The significant penalties — up to a \$100,000 fine and 10 years imprisonment — send a clear message: the Virgin Islands will not tolerate the use or distribution of these dangerous devices. And the provision for immediate seizure and forfeiture is essential to removing these threats from our streets.

Respecting Lawful Conduct, Exempting Essential Personnel (Section 1(2)(e)):

It is important to emphasize that this legislation thoughtfully includes specific exemptions for law enforcement officers, active-duty military service members, and licensed firearms manufacturers acting within the scope of their duties and in compliance with federal and territorial law. This demonstrates that the bill is carefully aimed at criminal activity, not at those who lawfully serve or engage in regulated commerce. This distinction is vital for maintaining trust and ensuring our laws are applied fairly and effectively.

The U.S. Virgin Islands Police Department understands and respects the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens. These amendments are carefully crafted to distinguish between responsible firearm ownership and the illicit possession of devices designed solely to create illegal, high-rate-of-fire weapons. This legislation does not impact the vast majority of our community members who lawfully own firearms for sport, hunting, or self-defense. Instead, it focuses squarely on eliminating the tools used by those who would seek to inflict maximum harm.

The VIPD is fully prepared to diligently enforce these critical provisions once enacted. We believe these amendments will provide us with essential tools to maintain peace, deter serious criminal activity, and ultimately foster a safer environment for every person living in or visiting our beautiful islands.

Thank you for your leadership, your foresight, and your commitment to public safety. We are here to support this effort and stand ready to answer any questions you may have.