

**PRESENTATION OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
GORDON C. RHEA
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE'S TESTIMONY
THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
IN RE: BILL NO. 36-0036
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY
APRIL 3, 2025**

Good Morning honorable Senators, legislative staff, and the listening and viewing audience. I am Attorney General Gordon C. Rhea. It is my pleasure to appear before you today to address Proposed Bill No. 36-0036. Thank you for including the Department of Justice in this very important discussion.

The Department of Justice, the Office of the Attorney General, and the attorney for the People of the Virgin Islands, recognize and support this bill that seeks to update the fines imposed for traffic violations. We also fully support the establishment of a police impound lot, accompanied by the fee structure as set forth herein.

It is my understanding that a large portion of the traffic citations issued in the U.S. Virgin Islands go unpaid every year. The imposition of higher fines is unlikely to change that. However, it is important that drivers throughout the territory learn and understand how important it is to abide by the traffic laws in order for everyone to traverse the roads and highways safely. The increase in many of the traffic fines should serve as a deterrent to violations of our traffic laws.

The enactment of this bill will also provide for the establishment of an impound lot for the Virgin Islands Police Department and associated fees that will be passed on to the registered owner of the vehicle. This is very important, particularly as more

vehicles are being impounded as evidence of crime. In those instances, allowing the vehicle to remain outdoors and unsecured allows for evidence to be tampered with or removed from police custody. In particular, should DNA, fingerprints, blood, or other evidence be present in or on the vehicle, it is of utmost importance that such evidence be preserved.

The fee schedule included within this bill is reasonable and justifiable, given the nature of the costs associated with operating an impound lot. In addition, providing that a portion of the traffic fines be allocated to the Superior Court, the issuing law enforcement agency, and the Police Athletic League program is a creative and mindful way of generating funds for these projects and tying traffic fines to the Superior Court and the law enforcement agencies that enforce the traffic laws. All of these are very worthy agencies/projects and deserving of the attention that this bill provides.

That concludes my remarks. Thank you for your time and attention today.