

**PRESENTATION TESTIMONY OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
GORDON C. RHEA, ESQ.
THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
IN RE: BILL NO. 36-0338
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND PUBLIC
SAFETY
OCTOBER 15, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chairman Clifford Joseph, Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety members, other Senators, Legislative staff, and the listening and viewing audiences. I am Attorney General Gordon Rhea. It is an honor and privilege to appear before you this morning.

I have been practicing law in the Virgin Islands for 45 years. For forty of those years, I worked in private practice, where my major focus was representing injured individuals. Many clients were workers at the local oil and bauxite refineries who were subjected to toxic exposures or dangerous working conditions; others were injured by defectively designed products, including vehicles prone to rollovers or lacking adequate occupant protection; and many were harmed by the negligence of other individuals, such as careless drivers.

The local statute of limitations, or time within which a personal injury lawsuit must be filed, is currently two years in the Virgin Islands. In many instances, this period is simply too short. That is especially the case with seriously injured

individuals who have to spend extended periods on the mainland receiving treatment for their injuries. For many of those persons, obtaining legal representation and undertaking the investigations often necessary to determine liability is simply not possible within the two-year period.

Extending the Virgin Islands' statute of limitations for personal injury cases from two years to three years is consistent with the trend on the mainland. Currently, 25 of the 50 states have statutes of limitations of three or more years for personal injury cases. There is simply no reason for our citizens to be subjected to a statute of limitations that hinders many of them, including some of those suffering from the most serious injuries, from seeking legal redress and compensation from the parties responsible for their injuries.

In short, I support this bill. It is a reasonable extension by one year of the current statute of limitations for personal injuries that is consistent with current stateside trends and that will help ensure justice and compensation for some of our most needy citizens.

I thank the Committee for allowing the Department of Justice to testify on Bill No. 36-0338. This concludes my formal remarks and I welcome any questions you may have.