



# TESTIMONY

CELESTINO A. WHITE SR. - NOMINEE

VIRGIN ISLANDS PORT AUTHORITY BOARD OF GOVENORS

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## Introduction

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Good morning, Honorable Carla Joseph, Chairwoman of the 36th Legislature's Committee on Rules; esteemed Members of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands; legislative staff; and members of the community who are present or viewing remotely.

I am Celestino A. White, Sr., and I currently serve on the Virgin Islands Port Authority's Board of Governors. Today, I seek your approval to continue to serve on the Port Authority Board.

I have a strong background in professional, political, and personal experience relevant to serving on the Port Authority Board. A native of St. Thomas, they graduated from Charlotte Amalie High School in 1965 and served in the U.S. Air Force, including a year in Vietnam. After an honorable discharge in 1969, I joined the Virgin Islands Police Department, where I rose through the ranks to become Chief of Police over a 23-year career. I then served 22 years as a U.S. Virgin Islands Senator, completing 11 terms. Furthermore, I am proud to hold a master's degree in Common Sense and a Ph.D. in Street Sense from the School of Hard Knox.

VIPA plays an essential role in the U.S. Virgin Islands' economy. The agency's objective is to upgrade port facilities, improve cargo, cruise, and inter-island ferry services, ensure the safety of aviation and maritime operations, and support commerce, travel, and other economic activities throughout the Territory.

## The VIPA Board's Role

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The Virgin Islands Port Authority is governed by a nine-member board that sets policies. The executive director implements these policies and manages the agency's daily operations in collaboration with his management team and staff.

## VIPA Capital Improvement Projects – Marine, St. Thomas

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### Development of the Crown Bay District

On December 17, 2025, VIPA, Royal Caribbean Group (RCG), and Cruise Terminals International (CTI) held a signing ceremony to mark an agreement to redevelop the Crown Bay District in St. Thomas. The project is expected to boost the local economy by creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and increasing service demand. This public-private partnership aims to transform the Crown Bay waterfront into a vibrant mixed-use destination for residents and visitors alike. The redevelopment will modernize the Crown Bay Center, enhancing commercial, recreational, and cultural spaces. At the ceremony held at the Austin "Babe" Monsanto Marine Terminal in Crown Bay, VIPA's Executive Director emphasized that this project is crucial to the Territory's future competitiveness in tourism. The partners from CTI and Royal Caribbean expressed their commitment to long-term investment and improving cruise guest experience.

The Board is fully committed to this project, which aims to revitalize and enhance the region's cruise offerings. Many cruise visitors return as overnight guests.

Therefore, it is essential to provide facilities and experiences that are enjoyable, unique, and memorable.

VIPA is currently transitioning with CTI, which includes the permitting process for required dredging, finalizing property transfers, and establishing procedures and other operational details. Although VIPA is not obligated to provide relocation assistance to any of its tenants, the Board has authorized the executive director to create a relocation plan for the mechanics located in the Subbase district. This plan will facilitate the necessary expansion required for the redevelopment of Crown Bay. Tenants who are in good standing will be eligible for this relocation assistance.

### **Charlotte Amalie Harbor Dredging and Cancryn School Demolition**

Demolition is currently taking place at the former Adelita Cancryn Junior High School site on Veterans Drive to prepare for harbor dredging operations, which are part of the Charlotte Amalie Harbor dredging initiative. This project aims to increase port capacity for larger cruise vessels at the West Indian Company Dock. Custom Builders has the contract for the Cancryn demolition, with initial clearing scheduled to begin in December. Key dates include building clearance and remediation on January 16, 2026, and structural demolition from February 7, 2026, to late September 2026.

VIPA has received five bids for the dredging project at Charlotte Amalie Harbor and the Yacht Haven Grand area. These bids are currently under review and will be presented to the Board for consideration within the next 30 days.

## **Crown Bay Cargo Facility Improvements**

VIPA successfully partnered with Tropical Shipping and Crowley to apply for and was awarded a **\$21.9 million** grant from the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) in October 2020. The grant will be used to repair and modernize the cargo handling and storage infrastructure at the Crown Bay Sandfill Cargo facility. Following completion of the extensive design process, phase one of this project is scheduled to begin in the second quarter of 2026.

## **New U.S. Customs Facility in Red Hook**

The Board aims to construct a new terminal in Red Hook to provide U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) services for travelers between the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) and the British Virgin Islands. This development will significantly reduce travel time between the two territories, which are intricately linked through family connections, business, and leisure activities. This facility will need to be financed, and the Authority is taking the necessary steps to begin this process.

## **VIPA Capital Projects – Aviation, St. Thomas**

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### **CEKA Terminal Congestion and Operations Challenges**

The testimony from Board Chairman Willard John discusses the Virgin Islands Port Authority's partnership with Sky City to modernize the Cyril E. King Airport Terminal in St. Thomas and the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport in St. Croix. The St. Thomas terminal, built in 1989, was originally designed for 300,000 passengers but now accommodates 800,000 annually. Issues such as congestion and limited space have

arisen since the terminal's post-9/11 retrofit for large screening equipment, along with a notable increase in flights to the island between 1989 and today. The partnership between VIPA and Sky City aims to enhance the traveler experience by introducing modern amenities, improving cooling systems, and optimizing space on both floors of the King Terminal to address current congestion challenges. The P3 will also provide new opportunities for local and national businesses via concessions within the terminal.

### **CEKA Runway Rehabilitation**

The Cyril E. King Airport is undergoing essential runway repairs starting in December 2025, following a major improvement announcement by the Virgin Islands Port Authority. The initial phase involves pavement boring to enhance safety. A \$27 million resurfacing project will begin in January 2026, funded by federal grants and Passenger Facility Charges. The last major runway rehabilitation occurred in 2012, and this project has been in planning since 2018 with various stakeholders. The runway will be closed nightly from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. throughout 2026, but regular airport operations will continue without interruption during the day.

### **Dale A. Gregory Transportation Center Completion**

The Dale A. The Gregory Transportation Center at Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas has been completed, and a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on April 25, 2025, to mark its opening. The facility officially opened to the public on April 28 and features three levels, providing **320 parking spaces** on the second and third floors,

including accessible parking. It offers access to rental car services and taxis on the ground level and is designed with elevators. The lot is also a significant source of revenue for the Authority, generating between **\$80,000** and **\$90,000** per month.

## Conclusion

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VIPA is embarking on a transformative journey that will enhance its role as a key economic engine for the Territory. By strategically investing in innovative projects, practicing robust fiscal management, and fostering a culture of resilience, VIPA is poised to thrive in a rapidly changing landscape. On behalf of the Board and Management Team of the Port Authority, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Legislature and the Bryan/Roach Administration for their unwavering support of the agency's ambitious goals and objectives. I am here and ready to answer any questions you might have.

Respectfully submitted,

**Celestino A. White, Sr.**