

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
AGRICULTURE

10/10/2024-AMENDED AND REPORTED OUT TO THE FLOOR

10/09/2024-REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

BILL NO. 35-0257

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

April 10, 2024

An Act to develop and produce an annual U.S. Virgin Islands Beer, Wine, and Spirits Festival

PROPOSED BY: Senator Diane T. Capehart
Co-sponsor: Ray Fonseca

1 **WHEREAS**, beer, wine, and spirits festivals represent the largest gathering of alcoholic
2 beverages to promote collections of beverages;

3 **WHEREAS**, through public tasting events coupled with private competition activities,
4 these events draw large crowds to regions all over the world;

5 **WHEREAS**, festivals, in general, bring communities together, foster local and national
6 pride, and celebrate diversity;

7 **WHEREAS**, beer, wine, and spirits festivals generate significant economic growth for
8 small and large businesses alike, tourism and other sectors, including hotels, restaurants,
9 transportation services, and clothing stores, increasing the gross domestic product of the
10 destination;

11 **WHEREAS**, in 2019, festivals attracted an audience of over 896,000;

12 **WHEREAS**, the average festival enthusiast attends 2.7 festivals per year;

13 **WHEREAS**, in 2014, 32 million people attended at least one United States music
14 festival;

1 **WHEREAS**, beer, wine, and spirits festivals contribute to the growth and development
2 of the destination's local music industry;

3 **WHEREAS**, beer, wine, and spirits festivals have proven to be an effective and impactful
4 tool for promoting tourism and attracting visitors to travel to destinations worldwide;

5 **WHEREAS**, beer, wine, and spirits festivals provide a platform for local artists to
6 showcase their talents and gain exposure, providing them with significant marketing and
7 promotional opportunities;

8 **WHEREAS**, beer, wine, and spirits festivals have the potential to place the Virgin Islands
9 on the global stage;

10 **WHEREAS**, the success of previous festivals in the Virgin Islands such as the St. Croix
11 Jazz Festival and Sinbad's Soul Beer, Wine, and Spirits Festival demonstrated the potential for
12 a larger-scale, official beer, wine, and spirits festival;

13 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands has a rich culture expressed through our vibrant local
14 music scene, worthy of being showcased and celebrated through festivals that promote large
15 gatherings;

16 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands can benefit from the economic impact of a beer, wine,
17 and spirits festival, which can generate significant revenue for local businesses, including
18 hotels, restaurants, transportation services, and retail establishments;

19 **WHEREAS**, several Caribbean destinations that compete with the Virgin Islands for
20 visitor arrivals have developed large-scale gathering opportunities such as beer, wine, and
21 spirits festivals, food festivals, and major entertainment concerts, and the territory is without
22 such a powerful economic driver;

23 **WHEREAS**, the absence of a major beer, wine, and spirits festival in the Virgin Islands
24 puts the destination at a disadvantage compared to other jurisdictions and Caribbean
25 destinations;

1 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands is fully equipped with the expertise necessary to produce,
2 market, and promote a beer, wine, and spirits festival to distinction, including venue and audio-
3 visual capacity, and event production service providers with significant experience developing
4 major music events;

5 **WHEREAS**, the creation of an annual beer, wine, and spirits festival in the Virgin Islands
6 will contribute to the growth of the local economy, increase tourism, and enhance the
7 destination's global reputation as a tourist destination; Now, Therefore,

8 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

9 **SECTION 1.** No later than 60 days after the enactment of this act, the Virgin Islands
10 Department of Tourism shall issue an Invitation to Bid for the development, creation, and
11 production of an annual “U.S. Virgin Islands Beer, Wine, and Spirits Festival” on the island of
12 St. Croix that encompasses a vast array of local beers, wines, and spirits and other related
13 features as deemed necessary by the Department. The contractor, in conjunction with the
14 Department of Tourism, Division of Festivals, shall, not later than December 2025, hold the
15 inaugural U.S. Virgin Islands Beer, Wine, and Spirits Festival and may incorporate the
16 inaugural event as part of any festival activity.

17 **SECTION 2.** In addition to any other requirements for bids the Division of Festivals
18 may establish for proposals requested under section 1, all bids must provide not less than
19 \$1,000,000 or 20% of actual festival production costs in cash or value-in-kind sponsorships,
20 whichever is greater.

21 **SECTION 3.** Within 90 days of enactment, the Commissioner of Tourism shall notify
22 the President of the Legislature and the Chairperson of the Committee on Economic
23 Development and Agriculture of the Department’s intention to host the U.S. Virgin Islands
24 Beer, Wine and Spirits Festival or solicit bids.

