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Bryan Approves Eight Bills, Vetoes Measure on Student Expulsion

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Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Government House announced Wednesday evening that Governor Albert Bryan Jr. gave his approval to eight bills and vetoed one that was presented by the 35th Legislature during its session on September 22.

In his transmittal letter addressed to Senate President Novelle Francis Jr., Mr. Bryan gave special recognition to Resolution No. 1907 (Bill No. 35-0170), which commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the Virgin Islands National Guard.

However, Bill No. 35-0082 did not receive the same favor. This particular bill, aimed at limiting the suspension and expulsion of students from pre-kindergarten to third grade, also proposed

adding a course on mitigating behavioral issues for school-based professionals. Expressing his reservations, Governor Bryan mentioned, “While I applaud the intent of this measure, it would behoove the Legislature to collaborate with the Department of Education, the Board of Education, and Union representatives to evaluate the feasibility and wisdom of mandating an additional course of study for roughly 1000 employees of the Department.”

In response to the veto, Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory expressed disappointment, pointing out that the legislation sought to align the Virgin Islands with 22 states that have similar provisions. She emphasized that Bill No. 35-0082 doesn't introduce new requirements but rather clarifies existing ones, which ensure training for educators without imposing the financial burden on them. Frett-Gregory remarked that the governor's team seems unaware of existing laws and expressed her concern over the bill's misrepresentation.

Among the approved was Bill No. 35-0073, which outlines the powers and responsibilities of horse racing commissions for each district. The governor shared his concerns about this, stating, “As recently as 2017, the Legislature amended Title 32, section 201, to form a single Horse Racing Commission to unify the horse racing industry in the Virgin Islands. But now, in less than six years, the Legislature seeks to re-amend the same section to introduce two distinct commissions for horse racing regulation, even without giving the unified system a chance to host any races. I question the necessity of this change.”

The other bills that received Governor Bryan's approval are:

- Bill No. 35-0083: An act that amends title 32 of the Virgin Islands Code to establish individual horse racing commissions for each district and provisions for a temporary commission.
- Bill No. 35-0095: An act sanctioning the lease agreement between the Virgin Islands Government and Dave Jeffers operating under the name Dave Trucking Service.
- Bill No. 35-0124: An act giving the green light for the lease agreement between the Virgin Islands Government and Demah, Inc. operating as Moe’s Fresh Market.
- Bill No. 0126: An act endorsing the lease agreement between the Virgin Islands Government and Petrus Properties, LLC for a parcel in Kronprindsens Gade, St. Thomas.
- Bill No. 35-0134: An act permitting a use variance for specified plots in Christiansted Town, St. Croix for the establishment of a marina.
- Bill No. 35-0136: An act revising the Official Zoning Map for St. Croix.
- Bill No. 35-0138: An act granting a zoning use variance for specific plots in Frederiksted Town, St. Croix.