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Fish and Fungi Named Official Dish of the USVI as Governor Bryan Acts on 19 Bills

Bryan vetoes three bills including real estate licensing and handgun training bills, approves Lindel A. Williams and Conn J. Davis II to the WMA Board of Directors, and signs the bill into law declaring Tart as the official dessert

Government / **Published On July 11, 2024 09:32 AM /**

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Fish & Fungi has been established as the official dish of the USVI, and "Tart" as the official dessert.

Government House announced Thursday that Governor Albert Bryan has acted on 19 bills passed by the 35th Legislature during its session on June 24, vetoing three bills and acknowledging the Legislature's confirmation of two directors to serve on the Waste Management Authority's Board

of Directors.

Mr. Bryan approved Bill No. 35-0078, establishing "Fish and Fungi" as the official dish of the Virgin Islands and "Tart" as the official dessert. Additionally, he approved Bill No. 35-0117, which relates to the composition, qualifications, terms, and compensation of the members of the Real Estate Commission.

However, Gov. Bryan vetoed Bill No. 35-0193, which pertains to real estate brokers, sales associates, and property managers. In his letter to Senate President Novelle Francis Jr., Bryan noted that while he supports creating uniformity and standards for excellence in the real estate industry, this measure creates an unnecessary barrier to entry for aspiring property managers. Instead, he has directed the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA) to create a new business license category for property managers and to adopt best practice standards for the trade.

Mr. Bryan also vetoed Bill No. 35-0215, an Act relating to handgun training and the term of firearm licensure. He stated, "Although I support mandating a training course for all licensed gun owners, this bill imposes a training requirement upon renewal rather than at initial licensure, where it is most appropriate. I recommend that the bill be modified to require handgun training prior to initial licensure, and at reasonable intervals, such as every 10 years thereafter."

Additionally, the governor vetoed Bill No. 35-0236, known as the "21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act." He expressed concerns about the measure's funding and timeline, writing, "It would be irresponsible to sign this expensive and cumbersome measure into law, knowing that it is unfunded and that we are not able to meet the ambitious timeline proposed by the measure."

Among the bills approved by Governor Bryan were Bill No. 35-0230, which amends the Virgin Islands Code related to the inspection and licensing of automobiles for hire, and Bill No. 35-0291, appropriating \$3,000,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services to pay Medicaid program providers and vendors.

Mr. Bryan also approved Bill No. 35-0293, requiring the Government of the Virgin Islands to submit a Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Reduction Plan to align with current fiscal year revenues and expenditures.

Additionally, the governor approved several zoning measures, including Bill No. 35-0137, Bill No. 35-0241, Bill No. 35-0244, Bill No. 35-0256, and Bill No. 35-0260, as well as lease measures Bill No. 35-0255, Bill No. 35-0261, Bill No. 35-0263, Bill No. 35-0264, and Bill No. 35-0265.

Furthermore, Mr. Bryan approved Bill No. 35-0030, an Act honoring and commending Vaughn Benjamin posthumously for his contributions to reggae music. This Act appropriates \$45,000 to the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation for the design and construction of the "Vaughn Benjamin Monument" and names the waterfront park west of the Marley Homes "The Vaughn 'Akae Beka' Memorial Park."

Governor Bryan also acknowledged the Legislature's override of his veto of Bill No. 35-0115, now Act No. 8838, and thanked the Legislature for amending the penalties section.

Finally, the territory's leader acknowledged the confirmation of Lindel A. Williams of St. Croix and Conn J. Davis II of St. Thomas to the Waste Management Authority Board of Directors by the 35th Legislature.

