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Girl Scouts Take Over Legislature in USVI, Seek Support for Leadership and STEM Initiatives

During a mock legislative session, Girl Scouts advocated for funding to expand leadership, STEM, and community programs. Their proposals include a \$1.5M campground project, professional shadowing, and international exchange opportunities.

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The Girl Scouts of the U.S. Virgin Islands took over the Legislature on Friday, March 14, 2025. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

The Girl Scouts of the U.S. Virgin Islands took over the Legislature on Friday in a special mock session intended to immerse girls from both districts in the territory's law-making process.

As part of Girls Scouts History Week, members of Girl Scouts USVI Inc took over the roles of senators, chiefs of staff, chief researchers, clerks, time-keepers, and even media crew, as elected lawmakers and their legislative staffers took a backseat during the discussion.

“As I look around this room, I see the future of our beautiful territory; young women who embody the core values of courage, confidence and character that have defined the Girl Scout movement for generations,” said Senate President Milton Potter, before handing the gavel over to Julie Potter, “president for the day.”

Up for discussion was BR 25-0000, “an Act to recognize and support the efforts of Girl Scouts USVI Inc, in fostering leadership, community engagement and educational development among young girls and to appropriate funding to ensure the continuation and expansion of these initiatives.” A host of Girl Scouts introduced themselves as testifiers, eager to contribute to conversation.

Junior Girl Scout Joy Alexis Cranston informed lawmakers – elected and honorary – that “we are here to show you why the Girl Scout Bill is an investment, not just in our troop, but in the future of education, community leadership and global sisterhood.” She told listeners that the Girl Scouts intend to “demonstrate how our activities align with common core standards in mathematics, language, arts and science and how they prepare us for tomorrow's challenges.”

Others, like a young Ms. Broadhurst, highlighted that badges earned by the Girl Scouts are more than just symbolic. “When I earn a badge for completing a coding challenge in our STEM workshop, it shows that I can solve problems and think creatively,” she explained. “We learn by doing,” added Layla Cornell. “When we plan our cookie sales, we learn how to count money, set budgets and even practice basic math skills,” she illustrated. Teamwork and time management are also emphasized.

The Girl Scouts continue to keep up with the constantly evolving world, incorporating science and technology into learning activities. “Our STEM programs now include robotics challenges, engineering tasks and even coding workshops that require us to think critically and creatively,” explained one Scout. These skills are supplemented by community service requirements, learning “empathy, responsibility and how every action we take can have a positive impact on our community and our environment.”

Chief among their requests was an appropriation of \$1 million to \$1.5 million “over the course of three years” to construct an American Camp Association-certified campground, for which land has already been secured. “This range accounts for shipping costs, material fluctuations and the scale of our final designs,” explained a Scout. Expected to be completed in four phases, the project will include eight to twelve hurricane resilient cabins, a dining hall, and campsites, and will incorporate renewable energy and rain water harvesting. A STEM and Leadership Center, a rope course, zip line, and archery range are expected to keep girls engaged. “We can't move forward with large-scale construction until we secure a substantial initial investment, which we hope will come from you,” Aaliyah Green appealed to the elected lawmakers in the chamber.

Nonetheless, “local businesses have pledged in-kind donations for materials to support these initiatives” and cookie sales totaling \$20,000 to date and other fundraisers are expected to supplement the cost. The Girl Scouts intends to “rent out the camp to local schools and community groups for weekend retreats, sports clinics or educational programs” once completed. “Once phase one is underway, we'll ramp up corporate sponsorship drives, offering naming rights for certain facilities in exchange for larger donations,” added Ms. Green.

The Girl Scouts of the USVI Inc. has also called on legislators to take necessary action to provide the support needed to establish troops in every school across the territory. By doing so, “every student would gain access to leadership training, STEM projects and community service activities that complement their classroom learning,” said Joy Alexis Cranston. She also appealed for teacher stipends that would incentivize “more dedicated educators [to] volunteer their time to guide and mentor Girl Scouts.” Safe weekend meeting spaces, too, would “allow us more time for hands-on learning, community service projects and preparation for global Girl Scout events.”

The organization also called for “professional shadowing” that would allow the girls to get a “glimpse into various careers.” Additionally, BR 25-000 asked lawmakers to “[fund] participation in international exchanges and global events” to “connect with millions of girls around the world.” “These experiences enrich our understanding of diverse cultures, inspire innovative thinking and strengthen our sense of global citizenship,” noted Ms. Cranston.

The varied testimonies were followed by a line of questioning from those Scouts selected to act as senators. Their queries sought to glean information on the benefits of being a member of the organization, and specifics on the plan for a certified campground.

Designated a nominal bill number of Bill 36-00xx, the bill was voted upon favorably by the Girl Scout senators at the end of the day’s session.