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Bryan Says He Is “99.99999%” Sure He Will Sign Controversial Firearms Bill

With Bill 36-0144 nearing automatic enactment, Bryan said he is “99.99999%” sure he will sign the measure this week, despite a U.S. senator’s veto request and a 5th Circuit ruling that silencers are protected as Second Amendment “Arms,” adding scrutiny.

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Janeke Simon **June 23, 2026**

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said Tuesday he is “99.99999%” sure he will sign Bill 36-0144, despite a U.S. senator’s veto request and a Fifth Circuit ruling on silencers. By. GOV'T HOUSE.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said Tuesday that he is almost certain to sign Bill 36-0144, the controversial firearms measure passed by the Legislature, despite a [United States senator urging](#)

him to consider a veto and a recent federal appeals court ruling raising new questions over one of the bill's key provisions.

With time running down for the governor to act before the bill automatically becomes law, Mr. Bryan said the measure is necessary to reform what he described as a deficient local firearms framework.

"The gun control laws in the Virgin Islands, they don't protect the citizens, they protect the criminals, because they keep the citizens unarmed," he declared.

Bill 36-0144, sponsored by Senator Clifford Joseph, was passed by the Legislature on June 12. The measure defines and prohibits assault rifles, bans suppressors and silencers, and prohibits large-capacity magazines, among other provisions.

The legislation has drawn public scrutiny and sustained criticism from local gun rights advocates, but Governor Bryan said the territory must begin somewhere rather than leave the current laws unchanged.

"I heard everybody on the concerns, but we gotta start somewhere," the governor said. "I'm not gonna veto this bill and go all the way back to the crap that we have on the books now."

The governor also [indirectly referenced](#) the ongoing lawsuit between the federal Department of Justice and the Government of the Virgin Islands over the territory's firearm licensing framework. That case centers on the current apparent discretionary approach to issuing gun licenses.

Governor Bryan said the territory needs a new legal baseline to prevent future uncertainty over how applications are handled.

"we got to get something passed, so when we have an administration change, the next [VIPD] commissioner can't willy-nilly deny or accept applications and set rules."

The governor said efforts to reform local gun laws have been ongoing "for six and a half years," repeating his position that "gun control laws in the Virgin Islands have completely failed."

He acknowledged that some provisions in the bill before him are not ideal, pointing specifically to the prohibition against carrying firearms at carnival or festival events.

Still, Governor Bryan downplayed concerns that the legislation could face Second Amendment challenges. A recent Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals finding that gun silencers meet the definition of "arms" under the Second Amendment was only a "preliminary ruling," he said.

The governor indicated that the territory would not delay local legislation unless there is a final judicial decision on the issue.

"We'll wait until it gets to the Supreme Court, but I am 99.99999% sure that we're going to sign this gun bill this week," Governor Bryan said.