

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Violet 'Strongly Urging' Governor to Take Action on Status of Horseracing in Territory Following District Court Ruling

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Senator Kurt Violet on Wednesday strongly recommended that the Bryan administration take immediate action in light of Judge Curtis Gomez's ruling in reference to VIGL and Southland Gaming, with Mr. Violet stating that "horseracing is the largest spectator sport in the Virgin Islands and the recent ruling leaves the sport in limbo."

An agreement ratified by the 31st Legislature in December 2016 and signed into law by former Governor Kenneth Mapp, which promised the development of two state-of-the-art horseracing facilities in the territory, [was thrown into question](#) following the ruling of

District Court Judge Gomez on Friday, which concluded that the government of the Virgin Islands and its partner, VIGL Operations, LLC, violated the contract clause of the United States Constitution when the Legislature, through Act 7952, granted VIGL authorization to operate slot machines in St. Thomas in contravention of an agreement the GVI had signed with Southland Gaming in 2003.

The judgement puts on hold VIGL's plan to build horseracing facilities territory-wide, said Senator Kurt Vialet in an interview with the Consortium Sunday. He said the operation of slot machines at the impending racino facilities represented one of the major revenue sources, including the funding of purses, for the new facilities.

According to the release Mr. Vialet issued Wednesday, VIGL negotiated a contract with the GVI to invest \$27 million dollars for the upgrade and rebuild of the Clinton Phipps Racetrack on St. Thomas and the Randall "Doc" James Racetrack on St. Croix. After investing over \$5 million dollars on these two facilities, the contractual agreement has been voided by the recent court ruling.

With the lawsuit by Southland Gaming being filed against the GVI, Mr. Vialet is asking Governor Bryan the following:

- What is the official position of the GVI in reference to the recent court ruling?
- Does the government plan to appeal the decision?
- Since no VLT exists on St. Croix, does the government plan to renegotiate a newcontract with VIGL for St. Croix only?
- Is there a planned meeting with all parties involved to discuss a resolution?
- What is the plan for the STT racetrack?

"Senator Vialet is strongly urging the governor to immediately address the status of horse racing in the Virgin Islands by being proactive. The senator is extremely disappointed that the number one spectator sport is in limbo and expects to hear from Government House expeditiously. Senator Vialet anticipates that when COVID-19 passes we can resort to enjoying the sport of horse racing," said the release from Mr. Vialet's office.