The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Approves Bill Authorizing Single Commission For Horse Racing Industry

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Governor Kenneth Mapp on Thursday approved one of two proposed horse racing bills, specifically Bill No. 32-0092, which allows for the regulation of the horse racing industry by a single horse racing commission.

“My action will bring efficiency and confidence to the oversight and governance of an industry that is an integral part of the culture of the Virgin Islands," Mr. Mapp wrote in a transmittal letter to Senate President Myron Jackson. "Additionally, professional horse racing will bring positive growth of the economy by bringing jobs and tourism to both islands thus benefitting the territory as a whole."

A landmark agreement was ratified last year with local casino operator VIGL to revitalize the territory’s horse racing industry, however, amendments to the enabling legislation required approval by senators in order for the project to move forward. The agreement, which aims to create dozens of new jobs and make the Virgin Islands the region’s premier destination for horse racing, calls for nearly $30 million in private capital to build modern state-of-the-art racetracks and related facilities on both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

Last month, Mr. Mapp made a fourth formal request to senators to move the necessary legislation, in the form of Bill No. 32-0092 and Bill No. 32-0093, which prohibits doping of horses and consolidates the territory's two horse racing commissions into one body. Bill No. 32-0093 remains in the hands of the Legislature.

"While recovery from Hurricanes Irma and Maria remains our focus, it's essential we continue to look ahead towards normalcy and developing our economy. We await formal receipt of the legislation, however, I am hopeful the racetrack redevelopment can get underway at last."

In addition, Mr. Mapp approved the Legislature’s ratification of a number of Coastal Zone Permits, including for AT&T of the Virgin Islands, Inc. and Lovango Shores, LLC in St. John.