

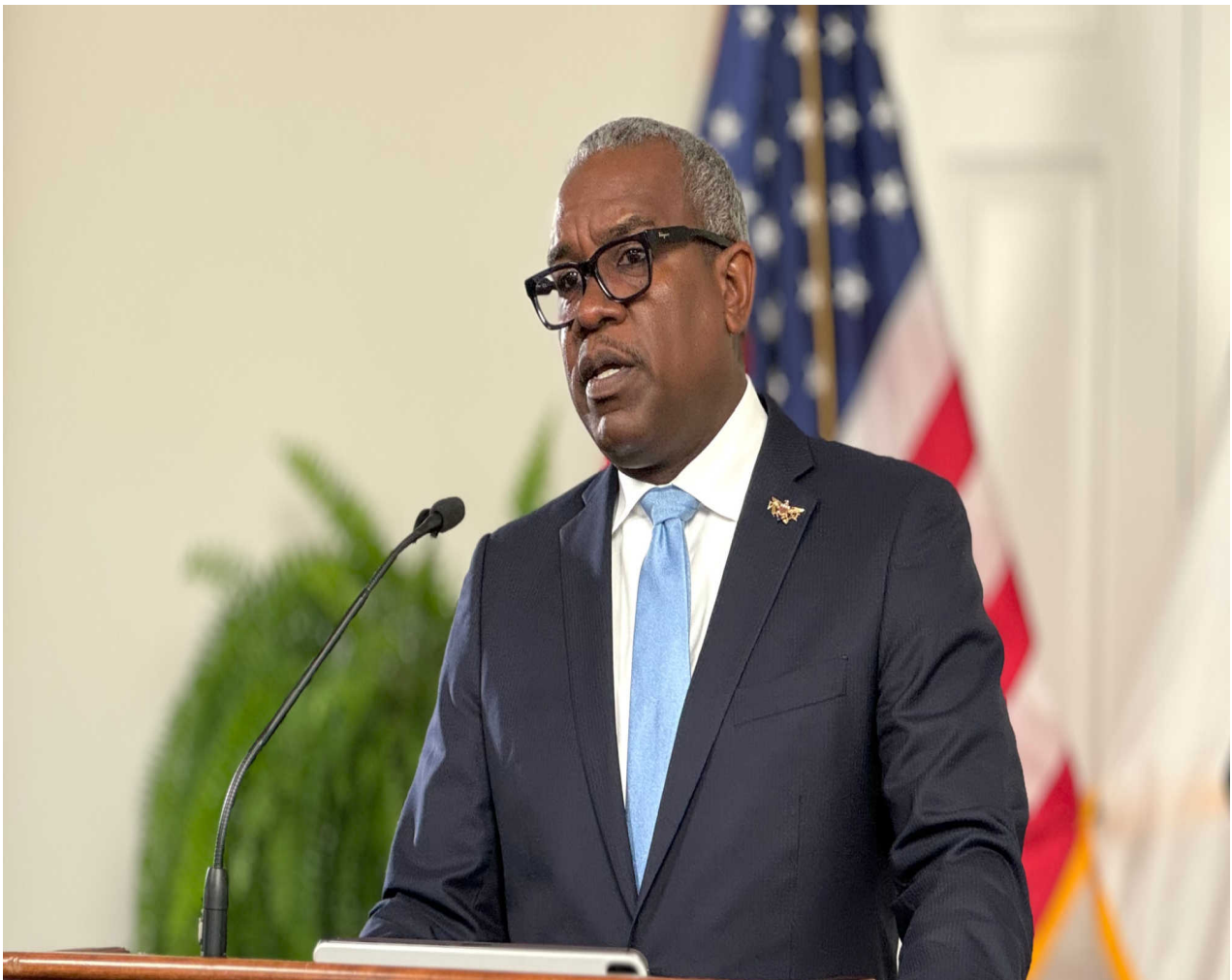
# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Bryan Vetoes Bill With Major Gun-Law Changes, Signs Measures on Housing, Veterans and Public Health

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. approved measures on homeownership, veterans, public health and other issues while vetoing an omnibus bill with major gun-law changes, saying lawmakers advanced those provisions without adequate public scrutiny or testimony.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. By. GOV'T HOUSE.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has vetoed a bill containing substantial changes to the Virgin Islands' gun laws, criticizing the Legislature for advancing the provisions without a public hearing or an opportunity for stakeholders to testify, while approving a series of other

measures addressing homeownership, veterans services, public health and other matters.

The governor acted on legislation passed by the 36th Legislature during its Aug. 26 session, approving eight measures and vetoing three, including Bill No. 36-0344 in its entirety.

Mr. Bryan said Bill No. 36-0344 contained a single appropriation along with nine nongermane sections, preventing him from using his line-item veto authority to remove individual provisions. Among the sections that concerned him most was one making substantial amendments to the territory's gun safety laws.

"I vetoed Bill No. 36-0344 in its entirety," Mr. Bryan wrote in his transmittal to Senate President Milton Potter. "Because the bill contains a single appropriation, I was limited to either approving or vetoing the measure in its entirety; a line-item veto was not available."

The governor said he was particularly troubled that legislation affecting Second Amendment rights and pending legal matters moved through the Legislature without a hearing or an opportunity for stakeholders to testify.

He contrasted that process with the Legislature's handling of proposed legislation related to construction of a horse racetrack on St. Croix. According to Mr. Bryan, the horse racing proposal underwent multiple discussions between the executive and legislative branches, a Committee of the Whole hearing and stakeholder input before being referred to the Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance.

"One would think that matters of such significance, particularly those affecting constitutional rights and pending legal proceedings, warrant a deliberate, transparent, and inclusive legislative process," Mr. Bryan wrote.

Government House similarly said the governor believed the different levels of legislative scrutiny were difficult to reconcile. The administration said significant gun-law changes moved forward without a public hearing while the horse racing proposal underwent months of negotiation, public discussion and legislative review.

Among the measures Mr. Bryan approved was Bill No. 36-0273, which redirects funding previously appropriated under Act No. 8465 to the Williams Delight Community Homeownership Program and the VI Slice Homeownership Program.

He also signed Bill No. 36-0274, requiring the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority to compensate homeowners in the Lyndon B. Johnson Gardens community who were required to leave their homes because of demolition activity involving VIHFA properties and operations associated with the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority and Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority.

Bill No. 36-0278, also approved by the governor, establishes immunization requirements for children and students enrolling in educational institutions in the Virgin Islands, provides for exemptions and requires electronic reporting of compliance through the Virgin Islands Immunization Registry.

Mr. Bryan also signed Bill No. 36-0279, establishing the position of Women Veterans Coordinator within the Virgin Islands Office of Veterans Affairs.

Additional measures approved by the governor include Bill No. 36-0250, amending provisions governing personal loans to members of the Government Employees' Retirement System, and Bill No. 36-0224, amending the Virgin Islands Code provisions governing the moving-violations point system.

Mr. Bryan also approved Bill No. 36-0213, renaming Contentment Road on St. Croix "Senator Alicia 'Chucky' Hansen Lane" and appropriating \$10,000 for signage. Bill No. 36-0252, ratifying a perpetual access easement over a portion of Store Tvaer Gade in Queen's Quarter, St. Thomas, was also approved.

Apart from Bill No. 36-0344, the governor vetoed two zoning measures.

Bill No. 36-0272 would have rezoned Plot No. 4 of 12 Estate Richmond on St. Croix from R-3 Residential-Medium Density to B-2 Business-Secondary/Neighborhood. Mr. Bryan said the proposed rezoning required stronger restrictions to ensure that commercial development would not become a persistent nuisance or interfere with the quality of life of neighboring residents.

He also vetoed Bill No. 36-0307, which would have rezoned Parcel No. 17-D-5 Estate Adrian in Cruz Bay Quarter, St. John, from R-1 Residential-Low Density to B-3 Business-Scattered.

The governor said the change would adversely alter an established residential neighborhood. Although acknowledging that industrial-zoned property is particularly difficult to obtain on St. John, Mr. Bryan concluded that rezoning an existing residential neighborhood to accommodate the parking and storage of heavy equipment was not reasonable land-use policy.

Mr. Bryan also thanked lawmakers for approving the nominations of Lynton Scotland to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority Governing Board and Dr. Kisha M. Christian to the Virgin Islands Board of Pharmacy.