

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senators Condemn Homicides, Express Condolences, Pledge and Call for Action as Gun Violence Rocks St. Croix

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The Juan F. Luis Hospital Emergency Room. At one point, the ER was treating nine gunshot victims simultaneously following the violent weekend on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM

After a [weekend of deadly shootings](#) on St. Croix, senators released statements calling for action, asking for the community's help and denouncing the events that have left six residents dead in five days in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Senator Samuel Carrion focused his statement on getting the [Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#) running as soon as possible. "It is time to try a different approach," he said. "I believe the new Office of Gun Violence Prevention should be utilized to bring our public, private, and non-profit sectors, as well as our clergy, together to develop more innovative strategies for addressing violence in our communities with an emphasis on deterrence and conflict prevention."

Mr. Carrion said he wrote a letter to Governor Albert Bryan in which he stated, "While I know it has been less than two months since you signed this measure into law, it could not come at a more critical juncture and we must move ahead."

Mr. Carrion pledged his support as a legislator and civilian in the letter.

As chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, Senator Steven Payne said he "is determined to use his platform to confront the issue of gun violence utilizing a multitude of strategies."

He added, "My committee will be looking to engage again with the Commissioner of the VIPD and his leadership to address this body so that we can understand how the department is looking to stem the tide of gun violence that has been plaguing our community."

Mr. Payne said the office of the Senator-at-large is poised to introduce legislation that will begin to confront this issue.

Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger sent her prayers and condolences to all those affected by the incidents and said, "We need to participate in comforting those affected by these tragedies. We need to participate in helping law enforcement agencies find the perpetrators who committed these acts, and we need to participate in the timely prosecution of these heinous criminals."

Ms. Francis-Heyliger urged those who "saw something to say something," and reminded Virgin Islanders that they can make anonymous tips through Crime Stoppers USVI at www.crimestoppersvi.org or call (800) 222-8477 (TIPS).

Senator Dwayne Degraff said, "We need to bring the perpetrators to justice. We cannot stand idly by and let a few individuals destroy the fabric of our community." Mr. DeGraff called on the V.I.P.D to step up its efforts in finding those responsible for the shootings, but also asked for the community to assist the department.

He ended his statement with a plea to young people to find other solutions to these conflicts. "To our young people, I stress that violence is not the answer. We must seek non-violent ways to resolve conflict."

This article will be updated if more senators release statements about the weekend's tragic events.