

The Virgin Islands Consortium

With Mass Shootings on the Rise in The U.S., Bryan Crafts Legislation to Address Security at Mass Gatherings

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Scene at Fort Frederik Beach area following the shooting at Floatopia that left 6 people injured . By. Kareem Alexander

The way law enforcement and event organizers in the territory plan for the safety of large crowds could change under legislation crafted by the Bryan-Roach administration.

In an age when mass shootings are commonplace in the states, the legislation creates a new panel of law enforcement personnel that will assess in advance whether “mass gathering” events have sufficient precautions in place to protect the people in attendance,

Gov. Albert Bryan said on Monday.

“What happens in the United States mainland soon comes to visit us. So we want to make sure we are prepared,” the governor said during the weekly Government House press conference on St. Thomas.

Under the legislation, a “mass gathering” is defined as an event in a public space and with 50 or more people are in attendance. Private residences would be exempted from provisions of the bill.

The panel of law enforcement officers would determine, ahead of an event, whether entrances and exits are appropriately marked and located; whether sufficient lighting is in place; whether event organizers are properly insured and, simply, whether enough law enforcement personnel have been assigned to the area.

Gov. Bryan said the legislation was being finalized and sent to the legislature as early as Monday.

“It places a real emphasis on mass gatherings, especially with people who are under 21 and especially those events in which alcohol is involved,” Mr. Bryan said.

Floatopia is an example of a large, outdoor event [where the worst-case scenario played out](#). All the factors were in place: Big crowds for an all-day event. A hard to secure location. Alcohol flowed.

In July’s Floatopia – one of the most popular summer events on St. Croix – gunmen opened fire at the crowded Fort Frederik beach, setting off a wave of panic in the crowd of adults, teens and young children.

Police said at the time that six people, including a teenager, were injured in the gun battle that extended from the Floatopia bar area to the main road.

The more established mass gatherings, such as a Carnival village, usually have a security plan, officials said. “But there are a lot of events being conducted in the territory that don’t (have a plan) and are not really thought well for the worst-case-scenario.”