

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Carnival Celebrations Face Stricter Alcohol Sales Enforcement and Venue Patrolling

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**Jouvert morning in St. Thomas. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM**

Business owners need to be scrupulous in their age-verification practices this Carnival if they want to avoid facing penalties for selling alcohol to minors. That's because police presence and patrols around drinking spots and popular venues is expected to be significantly stepped up until April 30th, when festivities on St. Thomas culminate.

The legal age to purchase alcohol in the U.S. Virgin Islands is 18, and during this week's meeting of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety, Senator Javan James said law enforcement officers need to send a strong

message: do not provide alcohol to minors.

While the police themselves have not engaged in any sting operations, Deputy Chief Uston Cornelius said the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA) has indicated its intention to scout bars and food places during the upcoming carnival celebrations. "Those guys have been saying that they are going to be out especially during the Carnival season where the business owners should be careful because that minor that comes in there and asks to purchase alcohol, just might be one of their individuals that they have set up," Mr. Cornelius warned.

The group is also working with law enforcement to encourage club owners in St. Thomas to close in a timely manner so their activities do not encourage loitering, which is thought to be a breeding ground for gun violence.

"One of the things that we want to implement is last call for alcohol. If the establishment is set to close at 4am, they cannot be closing at 4am. Our position is that the establishment actually prepares to close as early as 3:30 am," explained Mario Brooks, VIPD assistant commissioner for St. Thomas-St. John.

He said the practice of safe closures will give patrons enough time to leave in a safe way. According to Mr. Brooks, this effort will also be replicated on St. Croix.

Mr. James also encouraged the VIPD to have officers patrol popular venues nearer to closing time to reduce loitering. "I'm just hoping and praying that moving forward, you can't do that from Monday to Thursday but at least from Friday to Saturday you know those are the main areas where individuals are going to be partying and having a good time; have some patrols," he insisted.

In addition, Mr. Brooks spoke of the police department's mobilization plan which includes bringing additional resources over to St Thomas. "We will also be augmented by the VI National Guard during the height of the carnival season as well as the other law enforcement agencies within the territory," the assistant commissioner said. Meanwhile, VIPD officers will continue taking up 12-hour shifts to make up for current vacancies within the department.

Highway Safety will also be a component of surveillance this carnival season. The public is being advised to be cognizant of parking restrictions and blocked and barricaded roads meant to keep them safe.

"We're hoping that the public comply with these rules and the regulations and make sure that they cooperate with us because we're not out there trying to tow everybody's car that's in violation, but we're expecting everyone to please cooperate with us," urged Captain Rosalyn Jarvis.

The height of the [2023 carnival season](#) in St. Thomas begins on Monday, April 24 with the opening of the Carnival Village with superstar Soca Artist Machel Montano. Events culminate on April 29 with the Adults Parade in the day and Carnival Village during the night, with Soca artist Bunji Garlin — whose "Hard Fete" [was produced by a Virgin Islander and won Road March during the 2023 Trinidad Carnival](#) — headlining the night.