

RESOLUTION NO. 1925

BILL NO. 36-0223

THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Regular Session

2026

A resolution honoring and commending the life, legacy, and service of former Warden Thomas Martin, posthumously, for his distinguished public service to the people of the Virgin Islands, his honorable military service as a Montford Point Marine during World War II, and his posthumous receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal

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WHEREAS, Thomas Martin was born on January 22, 1916, in Reading, England, to the late Annie Martin of Hastings, England, and Stephen Martin of Jamaica, and was one of nine children;

WHEREAS, after completing his formal education at the age of fourteen at Stanley Street School, Thomas Martin left home and joined the fairgrounds, where he developed a strong skill and passion for boxing;

WHEREAS, Thomas Martin began his professional boxing career at the age of sixteen and rose to become the Light Heavyweight Champion of the British Isles, later ranking among the top ten heavyweight boxers in the world;

WHEREAS, due to the color bar in England, Thomas Martin was prohibited from competing for the heavyweight title, and he courageously challenged this racial discrimination by taking his case to Parliament, laying important groundwork for reforms that occurred after his boxing career had concluded;

WHEREAS, Thomas Martin's boxing career took him across the globe, including Australia, British Guiana, India, parts of Africa, and Hollywood, California, establishing him as an internationally recognized athlete;

WHEREAS, during World War II, Thomas Martin returned home to serve his country by joining the Royal Air Force and later the Merchant Navy, during which time his ship was torpedoed, resulting in injuries that left him temporarily blind;

WHEREAS, after recovering in Canada, Thomas Martin continued his commitment to public service by joining the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;

WHEREAS, on December 16, 1943, at the age of twenty-seven, Thomas Martin enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and became one of the first Black Marines trained at Montford Point Camp in North Carolina;

WHEREAS, the Montford Point Marines were the first Black Marines in the United States since 1776, trained under harsh and segregated conditions, and played a critical role in the eventual integration of the United States Armed Forces;

WHEREAS, after successfully completing basic training, Thomas Martin was assigned to Camp Recreation, where a recurrence of a prior eye injury required medical treatment and ultimately resulted in his honorable medical discharge from the Marine Corps;

WHEREAS, in 2012, the Montford Point Marines were collectively awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by President Barack Obama in recognition of their historic and honorable military service during World War II;

WHEREAS, the Congressional Gold Medal will be posthumously bestowed upon former Warden Thomas Martin, a Montford Point Marine, in recognition of his faithful and honorable military service during World War II;

WHEREAS, the National Montford Point Marine Association has undertaken the mission of locating surviving Montford Point Marines or their descendants to ensure that this distinguished honor is properly bestowed;

WHEREAS, the Martin family relocated to the Virgin Islands in 1950, and in 1974, Thomas Martin was appointed Warden of the Richmond Penitentiary on St. Croix;

WHEREAS, during his tenure as warden, Thomas Martin was a staunch believer in fair and humane discipline, never carrying a firearm or a club, and earning the respect of both inmates and staff;

WHEREAS, Warden Martin and his wife, Norma Martin, who served as Assistant Director of Personnel, raised their daughters, Diana, Phyllis, Margaret, and Blanche, on St. Croix, firmly embedding their family in the Virgin Islands community;

WHEREAS, Warden Martin frequently escorted inmates to church services on Sundays, personally participated in blood bank drives alongside inmate volunteers, and provided for his men when local vendors were unable to do so, demonstrating leadership rooted in dignity and compassion;

WHEREAS, under his leadership, inmates were encouraged to improve themselves morally, physically, mentally, and vocationally, resulting in the establishment of training programs and workshops including tailoring, shoemaking, barbering, boat building and repair, furniture making, fishing net production, ceramics, farming, fishing, concrete block construction, and an inmate-operated art gallery and commissary;

WHEREAS, inmate musicians trained under Warden Martin's administration performed Sunday concerts in public parks as part of a steel band program, reflecting his commitment to rehabilitation, productivity, and community engagement;

WHEREAS, throughout his life, Thomas Martin confronted and overcame numerous battles, as a professional boxer, an advocate against racial discrimination, a World War II serviceman, and a correctional leader, consistently standing for justice, equality, and service;

WHEREAS, although he traveled extensively throughout the world, Thomas Martin chose St. Croix as his home and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the people of the Virgin Islands;

WHEREAS, the 11th Legislature of the Virgin Islands adopted Resolution No. 807 (Bill No. 6960), honoring and commending Thomas Martin, Retired, for his distinguished and dedicated public service to the people of the Virgin Islands as Warden of the Richmond Penitentiary on the island of St. Croix;

WHEREAS, following his retirement, Thomas Martin spent his later years gardening and focusing on family, before ultimately succumbing to cancer and passing away on St. Croix in 1987; and

WHEREAS, the life, legacy, and service of former Warden Thomas Martin continue to serve as a powerful example of honor, resilience, leadership, and devotion to public service in the Virgin Islands; Now, Therefore,

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands, honors and commends the life, legacy, and service of former Warden Thomas Martin, posthumously, in recognition of his honorable military service as a Montford Point Marine during World War II and his distinguished public service to the people of the Virgin Islands, and acknowledges that he will be posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of that service.

SECTION 2. In recognition of his lifetime of service and posthumous receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal, the President of the Legislature shall present a copy of this resolution to the family of former Warden Thomas Martin at an appropriate ceremony.

Thus passed by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands on January 12, 2026.

Witness our Hands and Seal of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands this 13th day of January, A.D., 2026.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Milton E. Potter".

Milton E. Potter
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Avery L. Lewis".

Avery L. Lewis
Secretary