

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,
VETERAN AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

03/20/2024-AMENDED AND REPORTED OUT TO THE FLOOR
01/23/2024-REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

BILL NO. 35-0208

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

December 11, 2023

An Act honoring and commending Mrs. Bernice Alma Turnbull for her lifetime of service and dedication to the people of the Virgin Islands

PROPOSED BY: Senators: Milton E. Potter, Carla Joseph, Alma Francis Heyliger,
Kenneth L. Gittens and Dwayne M. DeGraff
Co-Sponsors: Samuel Carrión and Ray Fonseca

1 **WHEREAS**, Bernice Alma Turnbull (nee Vanterpool) was born the third of five children
2 to James and Viola Vanterpool on March 22, 1945, on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, in the Savan
3 neighborhood;

4 **WHEREAS**, Bernice Alma Turnbull lived in Savan and attended the Leonard Dober
5 Elementary School, Commandant Gade Junior High School, and from 1958 to 1959, the
6 Charlotte Amalie High School;

7 **WHEREAS**, Bernice Alma Turnbull learned about money and honesty at a very young
8 age. In 1957, when she was twelve, her teacher got her a job working at the Scandinavian
9 Silver Center where she packaged items that tourists bought to be sent back to the mainland.
10 She earned thirty dollars a month, which her employer put into a little brown envelope at the

1 end of each month. She brought home the envelope every month, she never opened it, and gave
2 it right to her mother;

3 **WHEREAS**, in 1960, Bernice Alma Turnbull moved to New York where she attended
4 Girls High School in Brooklyn, graduating with her diploma in 1963;

5 **WHEREAS**, Bernice Alma Turnbull attended college part-time at City College in
6 Brooklyn New York from 1963 to 1964 and held various positions at companies in Brooklyn
7 and Manhattan. She worked at New York Life Insurance Company in Manhattan from June to
8 September 1963, as an Assistant Secretary. She also worked as a secretary for the New York
9 Department of Social Welfare in Brooklyn from September 1963 to April 1964;

10 **WHEREAS**, in 1964, Bernice Alma Turnbull returned to St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
11 and joined the workforce;

12 **WHEREAS**, upon her return to the Virgin Islands in 1964, Bernice Alma Turnbull met
13 Ludence Alford Turnbull from Tortola, British Virgin Islands, at a dance at Yacht Haven
14 Grande in the romantic Charlotte Amalie harbor. They fell in love, got married on November
15 26, 1966, and had two children—Raaya Churgin (nee Turnbull) born, Sept 11, 1968, and
16 Ludence A. Turnbull, Jr., born December 15, 1969;

17 **WHEREAS**, Bernice Alma Turnbull was employed at the Virgin Islands Telephone
18 Company from 1964 to 1971, first as an Account Clerk, then rising in the ranks to Account
19 Clerk III. During that time, she was thrilled to be a Girl Scout Leader from 1968 to 1970;

20 **WHEREAS**, in July of 1971, Bernice Alma Turnbull became Chief of the
21 Reconciliation Section in the Virgin Islands Department of Finance and remained in that
22 position from 1971 to 1991;

23 **WHEREAS**, in 1975, Bernice Alma Turnbull attended the then College of the Virgin
24 Islands where she earned an Associate of Arts/Accounting degree;

1 **WHEREAS**, in 1976, Bernice Alma Turnbull and her husband formed a partnership and
2 opened the LB Construction and Landscaping Company, which they owned and operated
3 together until his passing in 2016;

4 **WHEREAS**, while working a full-time job at the Department of Finance, helping her
5 husband run a business, and raising two children, Bernice Alma Turnbull earned a B.A. degree
6 in business administration from the College of the Virgin Islands in 1980, and a master's degree
7 in business administration from the University of the Virgin Islands in 1988;

8 **WHEREAS**, Bernice Alma Turnbull served as the Assistant Director of the Treasury
9 Division, in the Virgin Islands Department of Finance from 1991 to 1998, then as Acting
10 Director and Director from 1998 to 1999. During those years, in her free time, from 1989 to
11 1997, Bernice Alma Turnbull sold life insurance for the American Bankers Life Assurance
12 company, and for many years, she worked as a clerk for the Supervisor of Elections and then
13 became a judge to oversee the polling place until 1999;

14 **WHEREAS**, in January of 1999, Governor Charles Wesley Turnbull appointed Bernice
15 Alma Turnbull as the Commissioner of Finance, and she was unanimously approved by the
16 Legislature. She served in that role until December 30, 2006, when she retired. She is grateful
17 to Governor Turnbull who gave her the opportunity, but she would like everyone to know that
18 she did not get the job because she was a Turnbull—she got the job because she was qualified;

19 **WHEREAS**, as Commissioner of Finance, Bernice Alma Turnbull had an excellent and
20 highly qualified financial team, and during her tenure she and her team were able to acquire the
21 equipment and technology to start printing government payroll and vendor checks on St Croix
22 for the first time. Until that time, checks were only printed on St. Thomas and had to be sent to
23 St. Croix which delayed government employees on St Croix receiving their paychecks;

1 **WHEREAS**, under her direction, the Department of Finance introduced a direct deposit
2 system into the Virgin Islands Government payroll system, in 2003, all income tax returns were
3 brought up to date, and she and her team implemented a new financial accounting system for
4 the Government of the Virgin Islands that went live October 1, 2006;

5 **WHEREAS**, the U.S. Department of the Interior encouraged Bernice Alma Turnbull to
6 be involved with the Government Finance Officers Association and paid for her subscription to
7 attend national meetings from 2002-2006. The Government Finance Officers Association is a
8 professional association of approximately 19,000 state, provincial, and local government
9 finance officers in the United States and Canada and is responsible reviewing governmental
10 accounting operations and recommending changes as necessary. It was important for her to
11 attend the meetings so she could learn what was being recommended nationally and bring the
12 best practices back to the Virgin Islands. She learned that all local governments are required to
13 keep financial audits up to date or risk losing federal funding. To keep the Virgin Islands in
14 compliance with the national recommendations, she and her team performed 12 years' worth of
15 audits in 18 months from 2004 to 2005, and she was able to update the government about best
16 practices and ensure that the Virgin Islands would not lose federal government funding;

17 **WHEREAS**, when Bernice Alma Turnbull retired in 2006, she is proud to say she and
18 her financial team and Governor Turnbull were able to take the Virgin Islands government from
19 almost insolvency to prosperity;

20 **WHEREAS**, because the Commissioner of Finance is 3rd in succession to Governor in
21 the absence of both the Governor and the Lt. Governor, three times during her tenure as
22 Commissioner, Bernice Alma Turnbull served as Acting Governor of the Virgin Islands;

23 **WHEREAS**, during her career, Bernice Alma Turnbull devoted herself to her own
24 personal growth and to improving and enhancing her community. She had the privilege of

1 attending a Management and Leadership Workshop at Duke University in North Carolina, in
2 the summer of 2004. She was a member and the secretary of the Virgin Islands Banking Board
3 from 1999-2006, a member of the Economic Development Board from 1999-2004, a member
4 of the Roy Schneider Hospital Board from 1999-2006, and Chairperson of the Virgin Islands
5 Lottery Commission from 1999-2006. She was elected as a board member of the St. Thomas
6 Federal Credit Union June from 2012-2023, she was a member of the St. Thomas Historical
7 Trust Board from 2009-2016, and the sole proprietor of LB Landscaping and Trucking from
8 2017 to the present;

9 **WHEREAS**, Bernice Alma Turnbull, is a long-standing member of the Wesley
10 Methodist Church and has served in many capacities. She has been the Circuit Steward during
11 two different periods; accountant, assistant class leader, class leader, Chairperson of the
12 Resource and Development Committee, Chairperson for the Circuit Evangelism and Outreach
13 Committee, a representative on the Virgin Islands Christian Council, a member of the District
14 Audit Team which audited the books for methodist churches on 11 different islands, and from
15 1965-2020, she was a Sunday school teacher;

16 **WHEREAS**, Bernice Alma Turnbull credits her lifetime of success to her faith and to
17 her husband of 50 years, Ludence Alford Turnbull, who stood by her side through thick and
18 thin until his passing in 2016. Her favorite scripture is: ***“He has shown you, Oh man, what is
19 good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to
20 walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8***; Now, Therefore,
21 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

22 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin
23 Islands, honors and commends Mrs. Bernice Alma Turnbull for her lifetime of service and
24 dedication to the people of the Virgin Islands.

