

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, DEVELOPMENT AND
AGRICULTURE

11/13/2024-HELD IN COMMITTEE

BILL NO. 35-0396

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

October 30, 2024

An Act requiring the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism to reestablish weekly Harbor Night events in Frederiksted, St. Croix

PROPOSED BY: Senator Diane T. Capehart

1 **WHEREAS**, Harbor Night began in the 1990's in the town of Frederiksted as an
2 economic driver to the island of St. Croix; and

3 **WHEREAS**, live performances, music and dance lessons, local foods, and more gave
4 tourists a deeper connection to St. Croix; and

5 **WHEREAS**, the cruise industry has recognized the equal significance of onboard and
6 destination activities; and

7 **WHEREAS**, the island of St. Croix is a cultural, historical, agricultural, and family-
8 friendly destination; and

9 **WHEREAS**, St. Croix tourists can receive more out of their travels by engaging in multi-
10 media presentations by local destination experts, vendors, naturalists, and specialists in their
11 fields who provide education about the island; and

12 **WHEREAS**, many destinations provide staged activities for the tourism experience; and

1 **WHEREAS**, to provide a deeper understanding of the island of St. Croix, business
2 owners, residents, and stakeholders are invited to offer the island of St. Croix, through their
3 expert eyes, as residents and local investors; and

4 **WHEREAS**, through experience and knowledge, locals should share their skills as
5 regional destination specialists as they are uniquely qualified to share the rich indigenous
6 history, and details of daily life in the locale they are proud to call home, and coordinate efforts
7 to present a grand welcome to visitors at the ports regularly;

8 **WHEREAS**, Harbor Night is not just an event, but a crucial element in allowing tourists
9 to encounter fresh insights into our world and its heritage and culture which helps them gain
10 fresh perspectives that will enrich their experience and encourage them to return, underscoring
11 the significance of the audience's involvement.

12 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism, the Virgin Islands Casino
13 Control Commission, and the Virgin Islands Port Authority hold unique roles in repositioning
14 St. Croix to measure the intersection of local marketing and customer experience to become a
15 tourist destination of choice; and

16 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission is responsible for hearing
17 and promptly deciding on all license, registration, certificate, and permit applications, and
18 matters affecting the granting, suspension, revocation, or renewal thereof; and

19 **WHEREAS**, as proposed, a comprehensive, well-executed local experience enables
20 businesses to foster loyalty, improve customer delight, and achieve sustainable growth;

21 **WHEREAS**, this potential for growth is a reason to support and be optimistic about the
22 festivities, thereby instilling a sense of hope and positivity in the community; Now, Therefore,

23 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

24 **SECTION 1.** The Virgin Islands Department of Tourism shall reestablish weekly Harbor
25 Night events in Frederiksted, St. Croix with the participation of local business owners, artists,

1 school dance clubs, culture and heritage dancers, storytellers, and local chefs. The Department
2 of Tourism shall hold the initial Harbor Night by December 2025 to be hosted as a part of the
3 regular festival activities, or separately, during the calendar year. The Harbor Night events
4 must include the following activities:

- 5 (1) guided tours of Frederiksted town;
- 6 (2) pop-up casino, internet gaming, off-track betting (OTB) kiosks;
- 7 (3) cultural dance;
- 8 (4) music;
- 9 (5) local food experiences; and
- 10 (6) festivals.

11 **SECTION 2.** Notwithstanding title 14, Virgin Islands Code, chapter 61 and title 32,
12 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 21, the Casino Control Commission shall issue mobile casino
13 licenses to allow established casinos in the St. Croix district to apply for rotated participation
14 in the weekly Harbor Night activities for the purposes of pop-up casinos.

15 **SECTION 3.** The Department of Tourism may collaborate with the Virgin Islands Port
16 Authority (VIPA) or the Department of Property and Procurement to secure government
17 property located in Frederiksted including, VIPA property, adjoining parcels of the
18 Frederiksted Mall at No. 9 Strand Street, No. 63 King Street, or at the Frederiksted Pier, for
19 pop-up casinos, off-track betting, and internet gaming operations.

20 **SECTION 4.** The Department of Tourism shall collaborate with the Virgin Islands Port
21 Authority and the Water and Power Authority to establish water lines to provide freshwater
22 amenities and provide electricity to cruise ships in port for Harbor Night events.

23 **SECTION 5.** (a) The sum of \$300,000 is appropriated annually from the Tourism
24 Advertising Revolving Fund beginning in the Fiscal Year ending September 30, 2026, to the
25 Department of Tourism, Division of Festivals for the purposes outlined in section 1 of this Act.

1 (b) The sum appropriated in subsection (a) remain available until expended.

2 **BILL SUMMARY**

3 This bill requires the Department of Tourism to re-establish Harbor Night events in the
4 district of St. Croix no later than December 2025, and appropriates \$300,000 for that purpose.

5 **BR24-1086/October 30, 2024/LMW**