GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 18, 2022
Press Contact
Richard Motta
340-474-2399
www.vi.gov
richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov

Governor Bryan Signs a Dozen Bills Into Law; Vetoes Revised "Special Interest" Bill Regarding Casino Licensing

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS —Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has signed into law a dozen measures sent up by the 34th Legislature, and has vetoed a revised version of a "special interest" bill previously vetoed that seeks to reduce a requirement on a Casino's existing license that it must have a banquet space for at least 400 persons.

In his transmittal letter to Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory, Governor Bryan said he vetoed Bill No. 34-0186 (formerly Bill No. 34-0168) because it is an attempt to establish an exemption for one casino owner in Downtown Christiansted and subverts a pending matter before the Casino Control Commission and the Virgin Islands Superior Court.

The bill sponsor's strong advocacy in the media for VIGL Operations, the casino owner, and VIGL's plans, which are to be affected by the legislation is strongly indicative of the bill being "special interest legislation," the Governor wrote.

Using legislation such as Bill Nos. 34-0168 and 34-0186 as special interest efforts to influence the outcome of a matter pending before the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands in favor of one party is not only a violation of the Revised Organic Act as a special interest bill but also is a violation of the Separation of Power Doctrine," Governor Bryan noted in his transmittal letter.

"As the Casino Control Commission is charged with regulating casino license applicants and holders, the Legislature should consider giving the Commission the authority to waive or modify conditions and add other conditions it deems appropriate to the applicant or license-holder," the Governor wrote.

Among the bills the Governor signed is a measure repealing the requirement that a woman take her husband's surname (Bill No. 34-0035); a bill expanding the definition of a hotelkeeper or innkeeper for purposes of persons required to remit hotel room taxes (Bill No. 34-0070); legislation amending the tenure of Assistant Attorneys General within the Virgin Islands Department of Justice (Bill No. 34-0107); and a measure relating to school truancy, to provide procedures for dealing with unexcused absences from school (Bill No. 34-0144).

The Governor also said he approved Bill No. 34-0173, which allows for the restoration of the 8% salary cuts to employees of the University of the Virgin Islands and also amends exemptions regarding the Gasoline Station Moratorium, but that he exercised his line item veto on a section of the measure.

"An additional 'blanket" exemption was added as a new Section 5 to Act 8442 without any governing parameters for its application. This additional 'blanket' exemption does not relate back to the Gasoline Station Moratorium and unreasonably forbids any department or agency from denying any license, permit or approval, regardless of whether the gas station meets all the other critical requirements for approval of said licenses or permits, such as the Certificate of Good Standing or the fire inspection, among others," Governor Bryan wrote.

Other Bills
Governor Bryan also signed:
Bill No. 34-0169, which approves the lease agreement between the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) and Antilles Gas for Parcels 3 and 19 in Sub Base on St. Thomas.
Bill No. 34-0172, which approves the lease agreement between the GVI and Hearts in Service Association for a parcel in Anna's Retreat on St. Thomas.
Bill No. 34-0177, which grants a use variance for a freight forwarding service on two plots in Clifton Hill on St. Croix.
Bill No. 34-0178, which grants a use variance for a convenience store and deli on a plot in Estate Profit on St. Croix.
Bill No. 34-0179, which rezones a parcel from Residential Low-Density to Business, Scattered in Estate Enighed on St. John.
Bill No. 34-0180, which grants a use variance for a restaurant and apartments on a parcel in Estate Beverhoudtsberg on St. John.
Bill No. 34-0181, which rezones a parcel from Residential Low-Density to Residential Medium-Density in Estate Contant on St. Thomas.

The Governor also acknowledged the Senate's Resolution 1885 (Bill No. 34-0185), which sanctions Senator Marvin Blyden for violating the standards of ethical conduct of the 34th Legislature.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory's people, infrastructure and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov

###