

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE,  
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS

10/23/2019-REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

**BILL NO. 33-0126**

**Thirty-Third Legislature of the Virgin Islands**

**August 13, 2019**

An Act amending title 3, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new section 27i establishing the Virgin Islands Office of Gun Violence Prevention under the Office of the Governor

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**PROPOSED BY:** Senator Myron D. Jackson

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

2           **SECTION 1.** Title 3, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code is amended by adding a  
3 new section 27i to read as follows:

4           **“§ 27i. Virgin Islands Office of Gun Violence Prevention**

5           (a) There is established within the Office of the Governor, the Virgin Islands Office  
6 of Gun Violence Prevention. The Office is tasked with formulating effective and innovative  
7 strategies designed to reduce and prevent gun violence in the Virgin Islands, and to make  
8 recommendations to the Legislature of the Virgin Islands for legislation to strengthen gun laws  
9 and for initiatives that provide recreational, vocational and economic opportunities for young  
10 adults in the Virgin Islands. These objectives shall be met by establishing strong alliances and

1 partnerships with the law enforcement community; social service agencies and organizations;  
2 non-profit and faith-based organizations; community leaders, including elected officials;  
3 concerned residents, victims, survivors, and violence interrupters; and private and public sector  
4 and local and federal government agencies and partners.

5 (b) Among the staff of the Virgin Islands Office of Gun Violence Prevention shall  
6 be an Executive Director, District Directors, Survivor Engagement Specialists, Community  
7 Engagement Coordinators, Analysts, an Office Manager, and Violence Interrupters. The  
8 Governor shall appoint the Executive Director, who shall report directly to the Governor.  
9 Other personnel shall be hired based on practices and procedures set forth in title 3, chapter 25  
10 and title 24, chapter 14 of this Code, and other practices and procedures of the Government of  
11 the Virgin Islands.

12 (c) The Office of Gun Violence Prevention shall:

13 (1) Collaborate and convene with: non-governmental agencies and  
14 wraparound service providers involved in gun violence prevention, intervention, and  
15 public safety; governmental agencies such as the Virgin Islands Police Department, the  
16 Virgin Islands Department of Labor, the Virgin Islands Department of Justice, the Virgin  
17 Islands Law Enforcement Planning Commission, and the Virgin Islands Department of  
18 Health, Division of Mental Health; and other entities that offer employment and dispute  
19 resolution programs for young adults;

20 (2) Help organize and take part in initiatives that bring awareness to the ill-  
21 effect of gun violence in the community, such as press conferences, marches, prayer  
22 vigils, town halls, community meetings, trainings, conferences, seminars, workshops,  
23 retreats and healing circles;

24 (3) Establish a resource line for referrals and counseling;

1           (4)       Liaise with the business community to assist the Office in developing  
2           and promoting its initiatives;

3           (5)       Liaise and work with other entities and persons who offer programs  
4           geared toward youth development, delinquency reduction, and rehabilitation, such as  
5           guidance counselors, mentorship programs, vocational programs, visual arts programs,  
6           pre-trial intervention programs, and re-entry programs;

7           (6)       Provide counseling and resources referrals to families;

8           (7)       Establish a means, either through a mobile unit or otherwise, to take  
9           services and resources into the neighborhoods and for use as an educational tool on youth  
10          safety;

11          (8)       Work to achieve and foster better relations between the law enforcement  
12          community and residents; and

13          (9)       Compile data on the incidents of gun injuries and deaths in the Virgin  
14          Islands and issue quarterly reports to entities that provide assistance to the Office, and  
15          issue an annual report prior to the Governor's annual State of the Territory address.

16          (d)       The Virgin Islands Police Department and all health care facilities that are under  
17          the jurisdiction of the V.I. Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation shall report  
18          all incidents of gun violence, and injuries or fatalities due to gun violence, to the Virgin Islands  
19          Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

20          (e)       As used in this section:

21               (1)       “Violence interrupter” means a culturally appropriate worker or former  
22               gang member who identifies and intervenes in gang-related conflicts using a variety of  
23               conflict mediation techniques to prevent imminent violence, change the norms around  
24               the need to use violence, and detect potential retaliatory violence.

1           (2)       “Wraparound service provider” means a service delivery provider who  
2 employs a comprehensive, holistic approach of responding to the needs of victims of gun  
3 violence through collaborative efforts and partnerships with agencies and organizations,  
4 designed to build constructive relationships and a support network for victims of gun  
5 violence.

6           (3)       “Survivor Engagement Specialist” means a person who engages with  
7 families who have lost a loved one due to gun violence, develops and implements  
8 survivor engagement and outreach efforts, coordinates survivor projects, events and  
9 activities, and coordinates legislative initiatives to empower survivors.

10          (4)       “Community Engagement Coordinator” means a person who  
11 implements and administers effective outreach programs or events and works with  
12 community members, including government and non-governmental agencies and  
13 organizations, to increase engagement in initiatives that support gun violence  
14 prevention.”

15         **SECTION 2.** (a) The sum of \$700,000 is appropriated from the General Fund of the  
16 Government of the Virgin Islands in the fiscal year ending October 31, 2020, for the initial  
17 funding of the Virgin Islands Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

18          (b)       The Office of the Governor shall include the Virgin Islands Office of Gun  
19 Violence Prevention in its annual budget in order to carry out the provisions of this Act.

### 20                         **Bill Summary**

21           This Bill amends title 3, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new section  
22 27i establishing the Virgin Islands Office of Gun Violence Prevention under the Office of the  
23 Governor. Section 1 of the Bill sets forth the duties and objectives of the Virgin Islands Office  
24 of Gun Violence Prevention and its employees, including the requirement that the Office

1 compile data on incidents of gun injuries and deaths as reported by the Virgin Islands Police  
2 Department and health care facilities, and issue quarterly and annual reports. Section 2 of the  
3 Bill appropriates \$700,000 for the initial funding of the Office.

4 **BR19-0183/August 12, 2019/SLR/Revised by EEM**