

Opinion: Bill 36-0144 Is an Unconstitutional and Racist Attack on the Second Amendment

This op-ed argues that Bill 36-0144 tramples the Second Amendment, punishes law-abiding citizens, and continues the racist legacy of disarming minorities, leaving working-class Virgin Islanders defenseless while criminals ignore gun restrictions.

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The Second Amendment is crystal clear: “the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.” Yet Bill No. 36-0144, now under consideration in the U.S. Virgin Islands, does exactly that. Gun Owners of America (GOA) stands firmly against this unconstitutional—and yes, racist—piece of legislation that targets the rights of ordinary, law-abiding citizens.

At hearings before the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety, Senator Clifford Joseph, Sr. and other backers tried to sell this bill as “responsible” and “life-saving.” They even claimed it respects the Constitution. But the truth is clear: this bill punishes citizens who follow the law, confiscates legally owned firearms and accessories, and shreds the very freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution.

And let’s call it what it is: racist. Gun control in America has always been rooted in discrimination—first used to keep freed slaves, immigrants, and other marginalized communities disarmed and vulnerable. Bill 36-0144 continues that ugly legacy by stripping working-class Virgin Islanders—overwhelmingly people of color—of their right to self-defense, while criminals roam free. When government makes it harder for minorities to protect themselves, it is not “public safety.” It is systemic discrimination.

As GOA’s Southeast Regional Director and a former law enforcement officer with 15 years of service, I’ve seen firsthand how criminals ignore gun laws. The only people burdened by these restrictions are those trying to live by the rules. Senator Joseph, Sr. calls this bill “a life-saving choice.” In reality, it is a death sentence for vulnerable families who will be left defenseless.

Even Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. admitted in January that the Virgin Islands’ restrictive gun policies “have totally failed.” Instead of learning from that failure, lawmakers are doubling down on policies that have already endangered their own communities.

The U.S. Virgin Islands may sit hundreds of miles from the mainland, but its people are no less American, and their rights are no less sacred. Bill No. 36-0144 is not only unconstitutional—it is discriminatory, dangerous, and rooted in the same racist traditions that gun control has always represented.

Gun Owners of America will never compromise. We will fight this bill and every other attempt to disarm the very communities that most need their rights protected. Because freedom doesn’t stop at the water’s edge, and the Second Amendment belongs to all Americans.

Submitted on Friday, Sept. 6 by By: Luis Valdes, Southeast Regional Director, Gun Owners of America