

3/30/2016-SPECIAL ORDERED

BILL NO. 31-0346

Thirty-first Legislature of the Virgin Islands

March 30, 2016

An Act amending title 1 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 11 commemorating the week of July 1st to July 7th as Freedom Week and amending title 24, chapter 1, section 4 to require employers to pay time and one half for work done on July 3

PROPOSED BY: Senator Terrence "Positive" Nelson, Neville James, Kurt A. Violet and Clifford F. Graham

1 **WHEREAS**, in 1833 Governor Peter Von Scholten, the then Governor of the Danish
2 West Indies, today the Virgin Islands of the United States, went to Denmark seeking new laws to
3 deal with the unfreed slave population; this coming on the heels of the freeing of the slaves in the
4 English West Indies; and

5 **WHEREAS**, Governor Peter Von Scholten was able to obtain an ordinance in 1834 that
6 allowed a slave to purchase his freedom even against the objection of his owner provided the
7 slave paid his designated full value; and

8 **WHEREAS**, on July 28, 1847 King Christian VIII of Denmark issued a decree
9 abolishing slavery for all "new born", but leaving slavery in place for another twelve years; and

10 **WHEREAS**, this decree did not sit well with many slaves who realized that they would
11 not live to see the day that they would be free; and

1 **WHEREAS**, determined to seek an earlier resolution to outlaw slavery, Moses “General
2 Buddhoe” Gottlieb, an educated master sugar boiler from La Grange and Admiral Martin King,
3 his lieutenant from a mid-island plantation, planned a strategy to organize the slaves to end the
4 oppressive system that kept them enslaved; and

5 **WHEREAS**, on July 2, 1848, a call went out to slaves on every plantation to come to
6 Fort Frederik in the town of Frederiksted where by midnight some thirty thousand slaves had
7 gathered; and

8 **WHEREAS**, fearing the worst, plantation owners and their children deserted their houses
9 and took to the boats and ships anchored in the harbor while some of the owners and the militia
10 barricaded themselves in the Fort, in churches and anywhere else that they considered safe; and

11 **WHEREAS**, on July 3, 1848, the slaves ripped up the whipping post and heaved it into
12 the sea, and a call was sent out for military assistance; and

13 **WHEREAS**, when the military assistance arrived they were confronted by so large a
14 crowd that they became petrified and took refuge behind the wall of the Fort; and

15 **WHEREAS**, upon arrival of the noon hour, Moses Gottlieb demanded freedom for all or
16 they would burn down the town of Frederiksted and the rest of St. Croix and the hour was
17 extended to 4:00 o’clock ; and

18 **WHEREAS**, minutes before 4:00 o’clock Governor Peter Von Scholten, who had been
19 travelling from St. Thomas arrived at Fort Frederik in the town of Frederiksted and proclaimed
20 “From this day onward, all unfree in the Danish West Indies are today free” and thus the people
21 of the Virgin Islands became free unto this day; Now, Therefore,

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

23 **SECTION 1.** Title 1 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 11, is amended by adding section 197a
24 that reads as follows:

1 “§197a The week containing the 3rd and 4th days in July of each year is observed as
 2 “Freedom week” throughout the Virgin Islands, in commemoration of the emancipation of the
 3 slaves in the territory of the Danish West Indies, now the Virgin Islands of the United States and
 4 the American Independence Struggle. In years in which July 3rd and July 4th fall in different
 5 weeks, the week containing July 3rd is observed as Freedom Week.”

6 **SECTION 2.** Employers, public or private, requiring employees to work on July 3rd and
 7 4th shall pay time and a half. Public ceremonies and programs recognizing and honoring Virgin
 8 Islands heroes shall be held throughout the territory and on Public Television Stations. The
 9 Governor shall make a proclamation on the day beginning the week of July 1st, of each year.

10 **BILL SUMMARY**

11 The bill amends title 1, chapter 11 of the Virgin Islands Code to designate the week
 12 containing the 3rd and 4th days of July of each year as Freedom Week.

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15 **BR15-0162/February 19, 2015/AA**

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