**BILL NO. 33-\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

**REGULAR SESSION**

**2020**

An Act renewing and extending the State of Emergency in the U.S. Virgin Islands based on the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**PROPOSED BY THE GOVERNOR**

**WHEREAS**, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States pursuant to Sections 201 and 301 of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. § 1601, *et. seq.* and consistent with Section 1135 of the Social Security Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. § 1320b-5), declared a national emergency that the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States constitutes a national emergency beginning January 20, 2020;

**WHEREAS**, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared the ongoing COVID-19 a pandemic of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant an emergency declaration for all states, tribes, territories, and the District of Columbia pursuant to Section 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5121-5207 (the ‘Stafford Act’);

**WHEREAS,** the undersigned issued Executive Order and Proclamation Declaring a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 – Coronavirus Pandemic dated March 13, 2020 to coordinate the Territory’s response and protective actions to address the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) public health emergency and to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of residents and visitors located in the Virgin Islands (“Declaration of a State of Emergency”) and have supplemented such Executive Order and Proclamation with additional Orders;

**WHEREAS**, the undersigned established a VI Task Force on COVID-19 Preparedness, Response and Mitigation to work with territorial, local and federal partners in responding to challenges posed by COVID-19;

**WHEREAS,** the undersigned designated the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Health as the Incident Commander to direct the territorial response and directed the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services and the Director of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency to provide any necessary support to the Incident Commander;

 **WHEREAS**, the DOH has organized a Public Health Incident Management Team to manage the public health impacts of COVID-19 in the Territory;

**WHEREAS**, on April 2, 2020, the President of the United States declared that a major disaster exists in the Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands based on COVID-19;

**WHEREAS**, the outbreak has infected over 10.3 million people and killed over 500,000 around the world, including more than 126,000 deaths in the U.S., according to a tally compiled by Johns Hopkins University from official government figures, though the true numbers are believed to be far higher

**WHEREAS**, to date, the Virgin Islands Department of Health (“DOH”) received confirmation from the Center for Disease Control (“CDC”) that ninety persons, including six deceased persons, have tested positive for COVID-19 and currently await results of tests conducted on additional individuals;

**WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic is projected to last through most of the summer of 2020 and may re-emerge in the fall of 2020 and will require continuing diligence in combating the pandemic;

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Title 23, Section 1005(d) of the Virgin Islands Code, the existing State of Emergency may not last longer than thirty (30) days unless renewed by the Governor and in order to extend the state of emergency beyond the first two 30-day periods, the Governor must submit legislation to the Legislature requesting an extension of the state of emergency;

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Title 23, Section 1005(d) of the Virgin Islands Code, the existing State of Emergency declared on March 13, 2020 as supplemented, renewed and extended was further extended until July 11, 2020 by Act No. 8293 as passed by the Thirty-Third Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands on May 7, 2020, and signed into law by the Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands on May 11, 2020;

**WHEREAS,** the need for the Territory of the United State Virgin Islands to remain in a State of Emergency to respond to and combat this COVID-19 pandemic for the safety of our people and our visitors is paramount and needs to comply with federal guidelines; Now therefore,

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

**SECTION 1.** Pursuant to Title 23, Section 1005(d) of the Virgin Islands Code, having received the request of the Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands to extend the State of Emergency in the US Virgin Islands, which request includes the specific reasons for the extension, the time-period of the extension, and a plan of action to address the conditions that necessitate the extension of the state of emergency, the Legislature of the Virgin Islands, hereby extends and renews the State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic from July 11, 2020 until September 9, 2020, unless, before the expiration of this renewal, the Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands finds that a state of emergency no longer exists and as a result, terminates the State of Emergency.

**BILL SUMMARY**

The purpose of this bill is to ratify the Governor’s extension of the State of Emergency in the Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.