



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **U.S. Virgin Islands Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report**

### *The Status of Civil Rights in the U.S. Virgin Islands*

The U.S. Virgin Islands Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a [report](#) following a series of public meetings and a collection of testimony provided by expert panelists. The report explores the current political and legal status of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the inequality suffered by the U.S. Citizens who reside there. It also contains an examination of the break in the long tradition of granting statehood to territories, and the reality of 21<sup>st</sup> century colonialism in the territories.

Primary concerns identified in the report include the lack of civil rights protections based on the selective application of the Constitution by a Congress that does not have to answer to the U.S. Citizens living in the Territories, who have no voting representation in the House of Representatives and no representation in the Senate. These U.S. Citizens lack the right to vote in the Presidential election, are denied access to critical government assistance programs, and even military veterans living in the Islands suffer from a lack of adequate healthcare by an under-funded Veterans Administration system.

Addressing the lack of self-determination in the Territories, Committee Chair Pamela Colon said, "It is contrary to the very notion of democracy itself and serves to create a second-tier citizenship in the United States *colonies*. At its core, this disenfranchisement renders those U.S. citizens living in the U.S.V.I. (and the other Territories) holding U.S. passports voiceless in a country that espouses the right to vote as *fundamental* and the basis for all authority given by the People to their government."

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 56 Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For information about the Commission, please visit [www.usccr.gov](http://www.usccr.gov) and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).