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PRESS RELEASE

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The Supreme Court of the Virgin Islands is pleased to announce that the Judicial Council of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit has released today its report on the Virgin Islands Supreme Court to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the House Committee on Natural Resources in accordance with 48 United States Code, Section 1613.

In a ceremony to commemorate the receipt of the five-year report on the Court's performance, the Honorable Theodore A. McKee, Chief Judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, accompanied by the Honorable D. Brooks Smith, Judge for the Third Circuit, who also chaired the review committee, personally appeared to deliver the findings. Judge Smith, in his presentation of the report stated that it was the unanimous decision of the Council after months of conducting research, reviewing all of the Virgin Islands Supreme Court opinions, careful consideration of the Court's Rules and Internal Operating Procedures, and meetings and interviews of the Justices themselves, other judges, the Governor, members of the Virgin Islands Legislature, the Delegate to Congress, other public officials and members of the Virgin Islands Bar Association, that in the first five years of exercising its judicial authority, the Supreme Court of the Virgin Islands "has developed sufficient institutional traditions to justify direct review by the Supreme Court of the United States, and recommends that Congress provide by statute that the Virgin Islands Supreme Court enjoy the same relationship with the Supreme Court of the United States as do the highest courts of the fifty states."

In his acceptance of the Council's Report, Chief Justice Hodge stated, that "it is not an exaggeration to say that this Court has come a very long way, and has accomplished much during its relatively short existence." Justice Hodge further emphasized, "although the Court has done much over the past five years, our journey is far from over. Regardless of whether the recommendations in this report are ultimately adopted by Congress, we will celebrate additional milestones, confront new challenges, and otherwise continue to grow as an institution."

Also participating in the ceremony were the Honorable Maria M. Cabret, Associate Justice, the Honorable John P. de Jongh, Jr., Governor, the Honorable Ronald E. Russell, President of the Twenty-Ninth Legislature, and the Honorable Donna M. Christian-Christensen, Delegate to the United States Congress.

The report, which can be found on the Court's website at www.visupremecourt.org under information and reports, details the study conducted by the Third Circuit Judicial Council Committee and describes the performance and progress made by the Virgin Islands Supreme Court.

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