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USVI CASINO CONTROL COMMISSION HOSTS IMGL GAMING LAW CONFERENCE

The United States Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission hosted the International Masters of Gaming Law annual Spring Conference on St. Thomas on March 29-31. The conference started off with a welcome from USVI Casino Control Commission Chairman Violet Anne Golden and a keynote address by USVI Governor Kenneth E. Mapp. Governor Mapp advised the conference audience that it is time for the USVI to expand its gaming operations beyond the current casino on St. Croix and explore initiation of Internet gaming in the USVI. Governor Mapp emphasized that he supports the USVI gaming industry and its expansion as an element of the USVI economy. In this regard, the USVI Attorney General issued an opinion in 2013 concluding that the USVI's previously enacted gambling law, which allows Internet-based gambling, does not conflict with federal rules. However, it is recognized that the previously adopted legislation requires tweaking in light of legal and regulatory developments regarding Internet gaming since the original enactment of the USVI gaming legislation in 2001. The USVI is also investigating the possibility of opening the USVI to sports betting.

The International Masters of Gaming Law Conference featured speakers from around the world discussing online and offshore gaming, fantasy sports, legalized sports wagering, global gaming reforms, lottery expansion efforts, compliance issues, FinCEN's AML protocols for casinos, and the increasing expansion of Internet gaming on a worldwide basis.

In addition to several IMGL master classes set for the iGaming Compliance Conference in Amsterdam (June 25) and G2E in Las Vegas (September 28), the IMGL will host its annual Fall Conference this year in Lima, Peru, on October 14–16 in conjunction with the International Association of Gaming Regulators.

USVI CASINO CONTROL COMMISSION CHAIRWOMAN CALLS FOR REGIONAL GAMBLING COOPERATION

At the International Masters of Gaming Law conference held on St. Thomas, USVI, last week, USVI Casino Commission Chairwoman Violet Anne Golden called for regional dialogue and cooperation amongst the Caribbean countries permitting gambling on their islands. Noting that amongst the Caribbean islands there are both regulated and unregulated gambling activities, Ms. Golden declared that it is in the best collective interests of the Caribbean countries to establish a regional gaming regulatory association focused on standardizing gaming regulations in the Caribbean. In particular, establishing some uniformity of the regulatory environment could encourage investment



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in new gaming facilities operating in line with the standards required and expected by the major United States and world casino operators and gaming equipment suppliers. The expansion of legal, well-regulated gaming on the Caribbean islands will bring with it expanded economic development, increased employment opportunities for the island populations, and increased revenues for government functions, all of which are of critical importance to the Caribbean nations. A precursor to such a cooperative Caribbean regulatory association may well be establishing an annual regional conference supported by a number of Caribbean nations focusing on Caribbean gaming and regulatory issues that encourages an open dialogue between Caribbean gaming regulators and Caribbean gaming operators and gaming equipment suppliers.

IMGL Past President Robert Stocker echoed Chairwoman Golden's call for regional cooperation during the "Changes in Offshore Gaming Regimes" panel at the IMGL conference, noting that the Caribbean countries permitting gaming operations need to get their houses in good order in anticipation of the eventual opening of Cuba to the United States general tourist trade. Stocker noted that it is only a matter of time before Cuba and the Cayman Islands, as well as the Atlantic island of Bermuda (which is in the preliminary stages of establishing casinos on the island), open their doors to casinos. These are other tourist-oriented jurisdictions seeking to lure tourist dollars to their islands. While in some cases such gaming expansion will in all likelihood be many years away from reality, the sooner the Caribbean islands that currently allow gaming get themselves into solid regulatory status in compliance with United States and international regulatory trends, the greater the likelihood of their being able to withstand increased competition from the opening of legal gaming in other competing tourist destinations.

