



Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance PT 2

Legislature USVI

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0:00:00 speaking about okay my apologies one second you want to break it out we need to break out this amount that you have here for personnel services we need to have what you currently are paying for personnel services excluding those vacant positions oh the vacant positions currently we have we have for unclassified vacant we have those that salaries total 143 000 800 classified vacant 400 i'm sorry 42 000 621 000. okay good and now uh just the fringe for those to accompany those if you give me a second i will add those up i don't have the fringe grouped yeah we we would need to get them broken out those vacant positions um for fiscal year 2026 when you say broken out you want it line by line like no you can position your aggregate amount for your vacant position the personal cost okay for your vacant position that you're you're proposing or you would recommend for 2026 the personnel cost the vacant positions the fringe benefits that will go along with those vacant positions for fiscal year 2026 that's what i'm asking are you clear no problem yes okay i heard you do you have that or do you want me to come back

0:02:06 i have the the personnel numbers which is what i just provided i just need to add the fringe one together i actually just in my line by line okay so this is just you go ahead and do that and then come back on the chairs time now uh my question is uh thank you so much uh for your answers uh my question now for your uh personnel have you received all of your allotment how much of your allotment you've received miss kwashi yeah not yes we have received our allotment and what is the amount you have received thus far have you received your third quarter uh yes 30 seconds total allotment received to to date i will get that for you um i submitted it to the post auditor um general funds to date 42 million fifty one thousand six hundred and twelve and 112 the indirect costs 360 000. okay and this indirect cost this is not necessarily time i'm mr chairman i'll just wrap up this indirect cause this is not necessarily from any federal monies just indirect costs that you charge uh different agency to perform services correct yes true mb okay all right i i don't have any further questions but i do uh look forward to hearing the response from the office of collective bargaining regarding the breakout with their vacant position

- 0:03:54 uh thank you very much senator joseph uh ocb you have the information ready i still need some time yes so the vacant positions the personnel portion it is 186 421 and fringe it is ninety thousand nine hundred forty one thank you thank you point of information senator thank you mr chair i just wanted to point out that it's in the post audit report on page six personnel listing is broken out for vacant positions salaries and fringe um by each position can i add something to that about the post audit report if you look at the bottom where it says hey at the same page six where it says unclassified vacant that should be classified and where it says classified vacant it should be unclassified the totals are just in the the totals are correct they're just in the wrong places uh and that's that's one of the reasons thank you very much uh senator part of you recognize for your testimony of this for your uh five minutes at this time thank you very much uh mr chair good afternoon to one and all good afternoon to the staff and management executive team at the office of collective bargaining as well as my old stamping ground the division of personnel i wanted to start off with the opposite collective bargaining um attorney spring it i wanted to ask you because when i look at your testimony and just the realities of being chief negotiator isn't it time for the structure of the office of collective bargaining to be changed i think you are it's like you're set up to failure to fail the i think the way the structure is at best
- 0:06:04 you can only tread water you have one person negotiating which is the chief you have 33 bargaining units you have 32 collective bargaining agreements 17 expired 15 current probably more than half of those that are current are going to expire any day you have 367 pending cases you managed to close nine percent from october 2024 to 2025 and i know your team and yourself you are competent individuals so it's no strike on you but i think it's the structure is really designed for failure it is when would it be possible for you to put a dent on these 367 pending cases and every day another one is added to the rules my question is isn't it time for us to revisit the structure as it currently exists and recommend some other system that will be more effective maybe having multiple persons who can negotiate so that i mean we don't constantly find ourselves behind the eight ball paying retroactive monies all of that contributes to where we are today jaspringet chief negotiator office of collective bargaining senator i'm open to reviewing the structure and taking suggestions on uh whether the structure should be changed a few years ago uh i believe it was 2023's budget hearing uh i raised this same issue uh since act 4440 was passed in 1980 a lot has changed about the landscape pertaining to collective bargaining in the territory uh senator you said that division of person is your stamping ground but don't forget ocb as well so so you're familiar with the
- 0:08:10 the structure as well as the uh how things were then uh there were less contracts the contracts were much smaller years ago i remember the contracts being the size of a of a of a booklet so half of a uh eight by eleven page now we have uh contracts that are over a hundred pages long there were about maybe a uh two handfuls of of unions back then of bargaining units now we have three times that three times that and the structure of ocb you're correct has not changed at that time when i when when i testified or my my assistant julia thomas testified on my behalf we recommended that it's time that the legislature also look at act 4440 and consider uh amendments that would allow for some increases uh pending negotiations for example that the governor could grant some type of base increase until negotiations can be completed because of course negotiations includes a lot of other things other than salaries um i have i the the only response i got to that was one suggestion that there be some type of deputy chief negotiators that would have to then get my approval on on on whatever negotiations they do but the reality is again if there is if i'm the final authority then there will be some um there will be some delay and with the number of bargaining units and the expectation by you know the the other parties of certain amounts that we may not have it may not have it takes time you know if i could say yes to every proposal maybe i'd finish one every day but um i like i said i'm open to that each time we we negotiate or each year
- 0:10:02 we have looked at um our structure and our procedures to see if we can change things um we've done so in some instances where the unions are open to changes and in some instances we have to continue as it is until we can we can um consider other options but i thank you for the question and the suggestion thank you attorney springett and we definitely have to get together to come up with some meaningful viable solutions as we just just gonna be keep doing the same thing over and over again and we can't expect anything different um if we don't make some changes at least take a risk so we'll we'll work together on this i wanted to ask you um director richardson about the size of government i know right now you mentioned in your testimony that we have 5 887 employees um i want to get and the average salary is 55 219 and i really appreciate the charts that you provided very useful information does the chief does the director of personnel are you actively or periodically engaged in assessing or determining whether or not that number that 5000 number whatever it is is a viable number to effectively do the work of government should it be higher should it be lower um you know based on what we're doing now is it effective uh thank you for that uh senator that's a kind of a loaded question um but i will say that you know right now that's one of the things that i'm working on as far as doing the updates to these job descriptions some of them were very old and antiquated and we're kind of bringing them up to um industry standards right now so as you can see we did the breakout there um also too um one of the things that i'm promoting to the governor the other agency heads is that covid was really the time for us to do a real restructuring of the government and with the

advancements that we've made in technology

0:12:16 and the changes that we've made to some of the functions and the automation now is the time to look and take a look at your staff the way you're organized and how you can utilize and make changes to the structure of your organizations based on how your functions have changed due to automation in addition to we're pushing um some introduction of ai we're currently using that within the division of personnel um i do know bit has a pilot co-pilot um pilot going on right now with some various agencies with the introduction of ai so that there now also eliminates some of the functions and roles and responsibilities so that is something that we're pushing for you to take a look within your own agency to see how you can upgrade and eliminate certain positions that may be redundant do you think you have the proper manpower to accomplish something like that or would that require some sort of like a workforce a comprehensive workforce analysis would that require some sort of external consultants it definitely would um i do not have this the staffing to do such a um on to take to take that on okay thank you very much for your response thank you for your flexibility mr chair uh thank you very much senator potter for your line of questions you know um some time back i had proposed legislation to allow for a one percent increase on anniversary automatically um you know pending uh negotiation occurring and almost run me out of town um in that respect but again because of the long-winded um where individuals are so delayed in getting to the negotiating table at least they had something to look forward to and on the anniversary automatically at one percent i mean it wasn't significant but it was something that at least um you know they could we could have definitely budget for um because we knew what the number would look like on an annual basis but again uh change is always hard to come by and like you say you know if you don't want if you're not willing to take that risk then this is very difficult coming to you

0:14:20 senator joseph on that point it's difficult for us to do that i wanted to ask you um director because i agree that we have done um you have done a good job in terms of the demographical breakout of um the workforce and this is um it's quite glaring that we have two to one in terms of the female versus male um there um which means that i mean a lot of where you can see it in the different departments in police department fire department and all those places where you're seeing that is no longer gender specific and that the females are really but isn't that some of that tied to the census as well um in terms of have you done a comparison between our census report um versus you know what you're seeing in those numbers um actually no we have not done a comparison and tell me at the high level when you when you have developed this demographical information what have that indicated to you what what obviously um you had a reason in doing this uh because obviously you wanted to see what was going on within government and those demographical information was critical but what was the indication derived from that breakout what's the lesson learned well first of all i i just want to say that you know from the first time when i first came to division of personnel i i noticed the amount of data that we're sitting on and that's the purpose of doing these charts is to be able to provide this type of data so that we can use it to make certain decisions moving forward um so i i we utilize that on a regular basis um just you know as it comes to recruitment um you know to to what we how we assist certain agencies so we utilize that data just overall on in pretty much everything that we do no the data is good i'm just saying i you know if there's some

0:16:14 some motive behind of now gathering that data and what do you do with it you know my how do you mind the data once you have it you know while we're using that but again it's for policy decisions policy but also comparison over the years and trends and projections uh senator joseph you had a point of information yes thank you so much mr chairman i wanted to just follow up on one question for ocb since i don't have the post-audit before me and we're just doing um some trust and verification kindly indicate for us uh the other services i see that there is a reduction in the amount that you were funded last year fiscal year by 57 694 dollars um tell me uh why why did you reduce that cost you having a reduction in the amount of uh other services that you utilize not necessarily not necessarily we are both of our offices are in need of copiers um our budget ceiling remain the same so we had to do a bit of a shift to be able to accommodate the cost for the new copiers in the budget hence the reduction in other services okay all right thank you so much for that explanation uh thank you very much senator joseph or senator vieta you recognize for your five minutes thank you mr chair i like the average salary by department that was done it really shows you what the various departments are making and i've been looking at it i was just kind of shocked that

0:18:03 sports park and recreation average salary 38 000 my father the lowest department in government the closest to them is um agriculture which is at 47 221 and then public works at 48 812. have you been able to determine how many employees are actually um making less than 35 000 the number yes uh roughly um one second so we're looking at over just a little bit more than 679 individuals um just a little bit over that um that's not inclusive of that 34 to 35 000 range so okay so the 679 is less than 34 34 or less correct 34 35 34. so you didn't run analysis of 35. the in that next range you have about 66 people in there okay and also i just want to add that you know i did uh we did call around to some of the other agencies um to try to get some of those numbers as well and when i say other agencies i'm talking like lottery port authority taxi cab and you're looking at about 353 individuals within those agencies that are making the 35 and under okay so overall

probably a thousand within government about 1053. okay thank you so much you're able to determine the financial impact um not not fully and yeah and the reason i want to say that is because you know the data that we used was pulled in mid-may we've processed a lot of salary uh changes since then but also too because we're running retro we have to activate your inactives so we can't really pull some definite information at this time okay you also have some contract

0:20:03 negotiation that is going to change the number of individuals under 35. correct like 9-1-1 operators and some of those others okay which um collective bargaining which union represents custodian workers and food service workers uh just bring it chief negotiator office of collective bargaining siu masters and they're presently in negotiation yes siu masters is scheduled for july oh they haven't come to the table yet no we started already we're we're resuming negotiations okay when did the contract expire so you expired one moment siu masters expired in september september 30th 2023 september 30th 2023 okay thank you so much now uh personnel you have a million i think it's a million dollar increase in personnel what is that increase how many vacant positions included there yeah yeah yeah your variance is one million ninety one thousand seven hundred twenty nine i'm looking at the post on it on page two the recommendation for personality is four thousand one and nine five forty five and in arcade nine sixteen it was three million seventeen thousand eight hundred sixteen is there a one million dollar increase there is not a one million dollar increase because this number does not include the gvi fellows

0:21:58 um information and it also did not okay so you're one second which number don't include the gvi fellows the three twenty twenty five oh that was okay those broken out as a separate line item yeah okay okay okay and the line item for the fellows was nine thirty one it was uh nine nine hundred and sixty four nine hundred and sixty four thousand eight eighty six okay so it's only really like a hundred thousand dollars increase correct yes yes senator okay and that would allow you to fill those vacant positions yes senator okay now i i saw the next part in your charts that um you had two thousand nine hundred and forty five referrals yes and that's a significant number yes but out uh those were referrals for interviews or four exactly what break it down so um one minute that would be referrals to the various agencies to conduct interviews yes okay and out of that two thousand nine hundred and forty five referrals 126 employees who hired new hires so it would not it would not only be the new hires but it could also be the rehires as well which was like our trap or transfers between um departments or within as well okay that would bring it up to 30 seconds 200 correct okay so that's um ten percent less than ten percent of individuals that apply for jobs that are actually um able to be unloaded onto the government uh what's the reason there just a lot of individuals not meaning qualifications what's it's a combination

0:23:59 of things because you also have individuals that are applying to multiple jobs as well okay and then you have of course like for example if i'd use a receptionist 2009-45 really could be like one thousand times because you're applying for two three different jobs okay um quickly mr ram i'm glad that you're reconciling that retro data i'm really glad that you're doing that because when you get that back up then individuals will be able to go on the website and see what they're actually owed and i don't think the last amount was reconciled so we really need to have factual data there because people are believing they're getting x amount and then we say well you're going to get 14 and then they look at the wrong amount they calculate 40 percent and they think the check is wrong so if we could get that really reconciled it'll save a lot and i don't know if it's possible to reconcile it with showing them how much you got how much you received before because a lot of times they're forgetting that they got a check and then they're saying i didn't get this i didn't get that so if you could really um be able to produce a template that shows the three four different retroactives they got the total that was old and now what is left back i think that would save all of us a tremendous amount of time and i i'm going to ask the question again if you got the information but before i accept i think department of finance did put out a press release a psa in reference to social security and medicare that was taken out of retirees checks and it's a short very short uh psa if one of you guys could find it and put it on the record for all the individuals that are asking the question and texting us uh so that um we could be provided with that information now looking in the system well what are the amounts that you found for the no pass and the pay governor lieutenant governor you said you're gonna look at it correct so i i want to reiterate that based on what the same numbers that i said on the 23rd

0:25:58 the total amount is the 201 1692 for the governor lieutenant governor 176 642 dollars and 55 cents okay and those are different numbers to what you said at the last meeting kind of last meeting we were calculating i think of 42 000 increased for the governor according to the compensation report which carried it up to 192 so this is actually a 51 692 increase and a 51 642 for the lieutenant governor well thank you for putting the information on the record and if i could just add add to that um based on the the um the compensation they did the first term so it salary went from 150 to the 192 088 and then the second term you added that five percent and that's how you got to that 201 692. okay um and the effective date i'm not going to actually effect wait i want to put on the record the effective date was changed to january 13th 2025.

- 0:27:11 any significance as to the 13th no because i know the report came down on august 13th so i'm just trying to see if there's any significance i'm not going to ask you about the other parts of the compensation report in which whether or not the report was valid in 90 days expired after the general election and there's also a portion of the same legislation that states that any increase would be after the next general election and the next general election would have been 26 based on a particular report so but i guess the court will figure out all of that as we move on so thank you so much for your answers thank you site of vla point of information senator james thank you thank you mr cheer earlier when um you said that the salaries were implemented does implemented mean that they are receiving those funds in their check correct did the and no one um refused the the raise not that i'm aware of thank you point of information senator frederick director richardson can you please let us know where they got the funding from so they it would come from the respective um office um vacancy savings or whatever they already had in their approved budget thank you very much and director richardson where they also paid retroactively for um since going back to january the 13th yes that the yes retroactive to january 13th 2025
- 0:29:03 but point of information senator de greff uh thank you um uh director he asked that question was any retro pay to the governor lieutenant governor specific you said no so the the nopa action is effective january 13 13 20 25 if in order to process the retro they would have had to have put in a miscellaneous i am not aware if that was done or not so how much retro that was my question were they paid yes and if so how much was the question i asked you said no so how much that would have to come from the department of finance if that was actually processed okay thank you thank you mr chair uh thank you very much my final question is um obviously we have seen a number of separation from um government to include resignation retirement um are you doing exit nope still are you doing uh exit interviews uh meant and the way out um we have provided a template for all hrs to use um as far as the exit interview um is concerned do you have a sense of what's the trend um conversation regarding individuals leaving government uh it it varies um uh you know some some people get other opportunities they get a uh offer for increase in salary um this you know it varies um over over the course of of the time that i've seen um even to maybe sometimes they're it's not a good fit the agency that they're in um one of the trends that i am seeing though is that we do have a lot of younger individuals who are coming into the government and are leaving before they're vested i mean that they're leaving like nine with nine years right right before that they hit the 10-year mark correct correct all right i'll give you um well let me go to chief negotiator at this time i'll give her 30 seconds to wrap up and then i'll come to you director riches
- 0:31:03 good day senators i thank you for the opportunity to present our budget in the amount of 1 million 263 391 dollars for fiscal year 2026. i appreciate the questions and the suggestions regarding the structure of our office uh ocb will continue to uh uh do everything possible to meet our mandate but we'll be open to any changes that could help to streamline and improve our service to the people and i thank you oh thank you very much our director richardson good afternoon good evening on behalf of the division of personnel and the brian roach administration i thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today um to defend our fy 2026 budget of over just over 63.3 million dollars as we continue to provide the services to the government of the virgin islands thank you uh thank you very much um we also look forward to uh the refresh of the information so that the post audit could complete and redo the uh the current um post audit report with the correct numbers um thank you once again to the office of collective bargaining as well as division of personnel we also had department of labor before us today public service commission i want to thank all my colleagues uh for their work today central staff my staff and everyone involved in today's hearing tomorrow's session uh so i look forward to seeing you tomorrow the committee of budget appropriations and finances hereby adjourned god bless

Bills and acts referred to

Matched by number against our own acts corpus. The number is what the recognition heard, so it may be wrong; where it resolved, the title is the one the Legislature gave the act.

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Act 4440