



Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance

Legislature USVI

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- 0:00:00 We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you.
- 0:01:30 Thank you. We'll be right back. Let's get started. [3 such phrases repeated 13 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:08:00 Thank you. We'll be right back. [2 such phrases repeated 65 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:41:00 a pleasant good morning virgin islands the committee of budget appropriations and finance for july 24 2026 is hereby called to order i want to say good morning to all present here in the legislative chambers and those listening and viewing today four agencies will present their fiscal year 2027 budget requests this morning the committee will hear from the office of the territorial public defender and legal services of the versions later on this afternoon we will welcome the public employees relations board and the versions labor management committee these agencies all have different missions and objective but to share the same goal of providing the best services they can provide to this community that they serve i expect a robust discussion today as we close out this fifth week of the fiscal year 2027 budget hearings. At this time, I want to remind my colleagues and the testifiers to please turn your cell phone off or turn them and mute as to not to interrupt today's proceedings. I ask the Madam Clerk to please read today's agenda into the record.
- 0:42:20 The Committee on Budget, Appropriation and Finance will meet on Friday, July 24th, 2026, 9 a.m. in the Fritz E. Lowe's Legislative Conference Room on St. Croix to receive testimony on the fiscal year 2027 budget. Block 1, Office of the Territorial Public Defender. Invited Testifier, Jumo Mead Esquire, Chief Territorial Public Defender. This concludes the reading of Block 1, Mr. Chair.
- 0:42:53 Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. We do have Tony Mead in the testifiers table. We'll go to you for a quick mic introduction as well as Team OPTD. O-T-P-D. Morning, Honorable Senator Noble Francis. Into the mic. Speak into the

mic. Morning, Honorable Senator Noble Francis and the rest. That's just your name and your assignment for now, and then we'll get everybody to introduce themselves before we start your test. My name is Jumumamid, the Chief of the Territorial Public Defender's Office.

0:43:35 Good morning, Renelle Stevens, Assistant Administrator. Good morning, Karen Isidore, Administrator. Good morning, Alexia Furlow, Office of the Territorial Public Defenders, Deputy Chief. Let's try that again, please. Good morning, Alexia L. Furlow, Deputy Chief, St. Thomas, St. John District. Good morning, Ronald Moorhead, CFO. Good morning to all. You may proceed with your testimony at this time. Yes, good morning again, Senators.

0:44:09 Thank you for inviting us. In April 2026, the OTPD submitted its anticipated budget request for fiscal year 2027 in the amount of \$6,956,220. This request is comparable with the year-2026 budget of \$6,696,220, of which \$1,133,220 was awarded. The OTPD bases its budget request on the continued need for additional legal and support staff, increasing case load, case complexity, modernization, digital evidence review, expert witness service, employee retention and staffing training, we trust that you will find all requests appropriate.

0:45:15 Of this body, the Virgin Islands Legislature created the Office of the Territory Public Defender 1973, in its enactment of Title V of the Virgin Islands Code, Section 3520 through 3528. Specifically, Title V, Virgin Islands Code, Section 3, I'm sorry, 3521A, establishes the OTPD for the purpose of representing indigent persons who are charged with criminal offenses. Section 203524A requires the OTPD to quote-unquote counsel and defend such clients at every stage of the proceeding against him and at any appeal or other remedies before or after conviction that he considers to be in the best interest of justice.

0:46:13 This means, therefore, that the OPD is required to represent every person who is charged with a criminal offense and brought before the Superior Court. This representation includes appeal to the Virgin Islands Supreme Court and to the United States Supreme Court, if possible. The OPD exists pursuant to a constitutional mandate issued by the Supreme Court in 1963 in a case style Gideon v. Wainwright. In that case, the Supreme Court ruled that the Sixth Amendment of the United States Constitution should provide effective assistance of counsel of counsel to everyone who is charged with a criminal offense, be it a felony or misdemeanor. As you aware, Senators, the Sixth Amendment of the United States Constitution applies to the Virgin Islands through Section III of the 1954 Revised Organic Act, which is the Virgin Islands' de facto constitution. Staffing an overview. The St. Croix District currently employs a total of 19 staff members including seven trial attorney one of whom is assigned to juvenile matters additional person includes the administrator chief financial officer director of information technology one investigator one paralegal who is bilingual one administrative assistant three legal secretaries two of whom are bilingual one fluent in Spanish the other in French Creole one receptionist and one custodian the district is currently seeking to fill one attorney vacancy the St. Thomas St.

0:48:09 John Water Island district currently employs a total of 18 staff members including five trial attorneys one appellate territorial public defender Additional personnel include the assistant administrator, one investigator, one paralegal, one network specialist, one administrative assistant, four legal secretaries, one receptionist, one messenger, and one custodian. The district is commonly seeking to fill one attorney vacancy.

0:48:48 Several OTPD personnel serve both districts due to the scope of their responsibilities, including the Chief Public Defender, the Financial Officer, Director of Information Technology, and the Appellate Attorney, and the two administrators, the Main Administrator and the Assistant. All OTPD employees are unclassified and members of the government employment retirement system. The office currently employs a total of 37 employees.

0:49:33 The OTPD is governed by an administrative board. Of course, it is an autonomous agency, but it is governed by the administrative board. The Board consists of five persons, the President of the Virgin Islands Bar Association or his or her designee, two appointees of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, one of whom must be a resident of St. Thomas, St. John Water Island, the other one, of course, of St. Croix, St. Croix Judicial District.

0:50:09 one appointee is is nominated by the governor of the virgin islands and the other is nominated by the president of the virgin islands legislature the terms of the members appointed by the governor and the president of the legislature are the same as the term of the person who appointed them of the two members appointed by the chief justice of the supreme court one shall serve a term of three years, and the other one shall serve a term of two years. The current board membership are as follows. Clive Rivers, Esquire, Chairman, Amos Carty, Esquire, no, Amos Carty Jr. Esquire, Daniel Cervales, Esquire, Mark Milligan, Esquire, and Key Walker. The OPD manages a diverse and complex caseload by providing holistic, client-centered representation to individuals facing criminal charges. Many of our clients also face significant challenges, including mental health needs, housing instability, limited educational opportunity. Our clients are the materially deprived and the politically dispossessed. Regardless of the circumstances, the OTPD remains committed to ensuring every client receives effective representation and the constitutional protection guaranteed by law.

- 0:51:49 Territory-wide, the OTP has 974 open cases as of June 30, 2026. The St. Quoy District has a total of 591 cases pending, 414 felony cases, two of which are homicide, 132 firearm cases, 67 misdemeanor cases, 9 juvenile martyrs, and 91 driving under the infants. Six appeals are pending in the St. Croix Division, three habeas corpus, one involuntary commitment, or clients by gender in the St. Croix area as follows, 494 males and a total of 97 females.
- 0:52:46 From January 1st, 2026 through December 30th, 2026, 154 new cases were appointed to the St. Croix District, 91 felony cases including two homicides and 22 firearm cases, 45 misdemeanor cases, six juvenile cases, 11 DUI cases, and one involuntary commitment. Attachment 1 illustrates the appointment for the St. Croix District. Of the 591 cases pending on St. Croix, 179 are active, yet to be resolved through trial, plea, or dismissal, and 412 matters have been resolved with the client's currently serving probation. There are 383 total cases pending in the St. Thomas, St. John, Water Island Judicial District as of June 30, 2026. 249 felony cases consisted of 8 homicide and 66 firearm cases, 66 misdemeanor cases, 19 juvenile martyrs, 25 DUI cases, 9 appellate cases, 1 involuntary commitment case, and 14 domestic violence show-cause cases.
- 0:54:18 The gender of the clients on St. Thomas is as follows. 310 males and a total of 73 females. A total of 177 new cases were appointed to the OTPD in St. St. John, Water Island District from January 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026. 86 felony cases including two homicides, 23 firearm cases, 53 misdemeanor cases, 10 DUI cases, 18 juvenile martyrs, and 10 domestic violence DV martyrs.
- 0:55:12 Those matters are contained in Attachment 2. Of the 383 total cases pending in the St. Thomas, St. John, Water Island District, 274 matters are active yet to be resolved through trial plea or dismissal, and 108 matters have been amicably resolved with the clients currently serving probation. Last year, I believe the body was concerned about the total number of cases in the St. Croix District. It was relatively more than the St. Thomas District. But the St. Croix District has made significant progress in managing its active case law tool, an assignment of two attorneys dedicated to courtroom matters.
- 0:55:59 While the district previously carried a high volume of active cases, these efforts have been improved significantly. The district overall caseloads are also impacted by the length of a probationary period imposed in many cases, which may extend for several years. As a result, resolved matters may continue to appear in OTPD's caseload number, while clients remain under court supervision. The caseload data reflects the significant volume and complexity of matters handled by the office, including felony, homicide, firearm, misdemeanors, juvenile, DUI, and other court-appointed cases. Despite these demands, OTPD continues to resolve cases while managing a substantial number of active matters requiring ongoing representation. The case in the OTPD reflects or is illustrative of the volume of matters in other jurisdictions.
- 0:57:12 In 2023, the National Public Defense Workload Study conducted an American Bar Association survey. Also joining the survey was the National Center of State Court and the RUN Corporation. The study concluded that public defenders nationwide would routinely carry caseload that exceeds reasonable capacity for providing constitutionally effective representation and recommend substantially increasing workload standards that reflect the actual time required to competently represent indigent clients. While the OTPD remains committed to fulfilling these constitutional required responsibilities, this caseload demand continues to place considerable strain on existing personnel.
- 0:58:09 continuing investment in attorneys and support staff is essential to ensure effective representation, management, manage increasing caseload, and preserve the integrity of the judicial system of the Virgin Islands. In this respect, the public defense is a demanding profession, and supporting employees' wellness is essential to maintaining effective and resilient workforce. A 2025 survey found that of the attorneys surveyed, one-third of the attorneys reported symptoms of depression, nearly two-thirds reported symptoms of anxiety, and approximately 40% reported mental health or substance use concerns.
- 0:59:04 highlighting the importance of addressing well-being within the legal profession. The OTPD continues to encourage staff to utilize wellness resources available through the Government of the Virgin Islands and external program, while promoting internal initiatives focused on mindfulness, self-care, and work-life balance. Supporting employees' wellness strengthens the office's ability to retain dedicated professionals and ensure providing effective legal representation to our community. Staff engagement and network remain important components of the OTPD, workplace culture. Employees from both districts participated in the 2026 Government of the Virgin Islands Battle of the Agencies with the St. Thomas, St. John, Water Island District placing 5th and the St. Coy District placing 7th out of 16 teams. In addition, the Cinco District OTPD, Pinocent Bowling Team earned first place in the government of the Virgin Islands Bowling League. These activities reflect teamwork and employee engagement that contribute to a strong and supportive workplace.
- 1:00:32 Modernization, technology, and office improvement. The OTPD continues to invest in modernization effort and strength operation efficiency, improve accountability, enhance security, and support the delivery of effective indigent defense service. These initiatives include improvement in case management technology, litigation support systems, cybersecurity

infrastructure, and office facilities. Together these investments ensure that the OTPD has the tools and involvement necessary to meet the going demand of the public defense. Defender Data Case Management System As reported last year, the OTPD continues to utilize the Defender Data Case Management System as its primary case management platform. The system supports the management of client and case information, conflict checks, reporting, and case tracking while providing reliable data to support operation, strategic planning, and legislative reporting. Defended data is used daily by attorneys and staff in both districts with ongoing effort to incorporate historical case data to further enhance reporting and long-term analysis.

- 1:02:13 Reduct. As reported again last year, the OTPD continues to utilize Reduct to efficiently organize, review, and analyze electronic discovery including body-borne camera footage, surveillance video, and electronic communication. The technology supports attorneys in managing large volumes of digital evidence and preparing complex cases for effective representation. IT migration and security. The OTPD Management Information System, MSI, division continues to strengthen the office technology infrastructure by improving security, reliability, and operational resilience. Recent improvements include upgraded fireball Modern network switches, domain controllers for both districts, enhanced video surveillance and electronic access control system, and business continuity and disaster recovery serves as servers to protect critical information and support continuity of operation.
- 1:03:31 Other facilities and modernization. The OTB continues the modernization, extend beyond technology, and include managing safe, functional, accessible, and professional work environment that support employees, clients, and delivery of effective legal service. As reported previously, the OTPD began renovation of its St. Croix District office to improve the functionality and efficiency of the workplace. Phase one of the renovation has been completed and includes the removal of the kid-old carpeting, installation of modern flooring, and construction of additional office space to accommodate the office-going team and caseload.
- 1:04:19 These improvements have enhanced the appearance, functionality, and overall working environment of the facility. The next phase of modernization in the St. Gore District will focus on continued maintenance and operational improvement necessary to preserve the building and support the need of the office. Priority areas include roof and air conditioning repair, paving of the parking lot, addressing limited employee parking space, and improving accessibility for clients and visitors in accordance with the ADA requirements. As the owner of the building, OTP, the OTPD also has the ongoing responsibilities relating to maintaining the facilities and ensuring it remains safe and a functional place for employees and clients.
- 1:05:16 In the St. Thomas-St. John Water Island Judicial District, the OTPD continues to seek a long-term facility solution to accommodate growing staff and reduce reliance on the lease office space. Secure a permanent facility would improve greater stability, allow for improvement, I'm sorry, strike that, allow for improved operational planning, enhance accessibility, and ensure that the office has a workplace that appropriately reflects its mission and the critical service it provides for the community. These modernization initiatives demonstrate the OTPD continued commitment to improving efficiency, strengthening security, and supporting employees and ensuring that both staff and clients have access to the resources necessary to fulfill the office's constitutional mandate.
- 1:06:17 Funding parity. The OPD requires that it be given the resources necessary to complete its mission. This means that the OTPD should get the resources that are necessary to begin with competitive compensation organization that allows the office to recruit, retain, and develop an experienced attorney, maintaining a stable and skilled workforce, reduces turnover, strengthens continuity of representation, and ensures the client receives effective advocacy. Poverty also extends beyond salary. While the prosecution may have access to government resources and specialized experts, public defender must ensure independent expert and litigation support to effectively challenge the evidence and protect the rights of their client. Adequate funding for expert witnesses and specialized services ensure that cases are decided based on the facts under law rather than the resources available to either side.
- 1:07:34 As criminal litigation continues to grow in complexity, the OTPD attorneys must also receive ongoing training in areas including homicide, white-collar crime, crimes against children, DUI, and drug offenses, DNA evidence, appellate practice, complex discovery, and emerging technologies. Continued investment in professional development ensures that the attorneys are prepared to meet evolving legal and scientific challenges. This year, budget requests focus on these essential needs. Retaining qualified attorneys, providing access to necessary expert and litigation resources, and supporting continued professional development. These investments allow the OTPD to fulfill its constitutional mission and provide effective representation to the people of the Virgin Islands. Before concluding and taking questions, I would like to briefly highlight the OTPD's accomplishment over the past years and outline goals for the years ahead.

- 1:09:02 The OTPD remains committed to strengthening indigent defense through investment in technology, professional development, employees' wellness, and community partnership. Continued training opportunities for attorneys, administrative personnel, and support staff ensure that employees have the tools and knowledge necessary to effectively serve clients and meet the evolving demands of criminal defense litigation. The OTPD continues to utilize technology solutions, including the Defender Data Case Management System and REDUC, which I previously discussed, to improve case management, streamline reporting, and efficiently manage large volumes of electronic discovery. This tool enhanced operational efficiency and supported trainees in effectively preparing and managing complex cases.
- 1:10:09 Recognizing that employees are the OTP the greatest asset, The office continues to prioritize staff wellness through partnership with the Division of Personnel, including Annual Health Screening and Welfare Initiative. The 2026 OTPD Health Fair Days were held on July 7th in the St. Croix District, and July 14th in the St. Thomas, St. John, Water Island District.
- 1:10:38 OTP continues partnership with the VI Justice Initiative through the Know Your Rights and Teen Intervention and Criminal Deterrence Project campaign. During the reported period, OTPD attorneys and staff volunteered to provide Know Your Rights representation to 319 students in the Department of Education in the St. Thomas, St. John Water Island District. The program reached 181 boys and 138 girls with a 91% rate of participation. 91% of the participants reported that they liked the representation. 91% indicated that they gained new information and 82% stated they were likely to apply what they learned at this time to their lifestyle. That information is contained in Attachment 5. There is no data or there is no data for the St. Croix District. It goes for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2026 and Fiscal Year 2027. As we look ahead, the Office of the Territorial Public Defender remains committed to fulfilling its constitutional mandate by strengthening public public defense service investing in our workplace and enhancing support for our clients and the community our strategic priorities for the remainder of 2026 and fiscal year 27 include continue recruiting and retaining qualified attorneys and professional support staff
- 1:12:37 to address vacancies and strength operation of both the st croix and the st thomas st john water Island districts. Provide ongoing specialized training opportunity for attorneys and staff to ensure they remain current on development in criminal law, forensic science, emerging technologies and best practices in public defense. Expand access to re-entry source resources by connecting eligible clients with organizations that provide criminal record expungement assistance, treatment resources, and other support services that promote successful reintegration into the community. Build and expand collaborative relationship with government agencies, community organizations, and service providers to increase access to educational opportunities, treatment, rehabilitation, and other supportive resources of our client. Invest in updated information and computer hardware, software, and operational systems to improve operational efficiency, enhance cybersecurity, and support the evolving technological need for our office.
- 1:14:01 Continued implementation implementing the long-term modernization plan for St. Croix, including EDA accessibility improvement, while pursuing funding opportunities and long-term solutions for permanent facility in the St. Thomas-St. John-Waterland district. These infrastructure priorities are essential to maintaining safe, functional, and accessible facilities and will continue to sustain legislative support. These priorities affect OTPD's commitment to ensure that every person represented by the office receives effective constitutional mandated representation while positioning the office to meet the evolving demand of modern technology. And I was remiss.
- 1:14:58 Before I conclude, let me thank the awesome staff of the OTPD office, which is our greatest resources. They have pursued their work responsibility with a sense of purpose in bringing effective assistance of counsel to indigent persons in our community. That is my representation, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Attorney Mead, for your testimony there. Before we proceed, I want to ask Madam Kirk to go ahead and call the roll call. Senator Marvin A. Blyden. Senator Blyden, present. Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff. Senator DeGraff, present.
- 1:15:51 Senator Ray Fonseca. Senator Fonseca, absent Senator Novel E. Francis Jr. I'm here Senator Francis Jr., present Senator Hubert L. Frederick Senator Frederick, present Senator Maurice C. James Senator James, absent Senator Kurt A. Valey Senator Valey, absent Mr. Chair, for present, three absent. Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. Do we have any correspondence to be read into the record at this time? Yes, Mr. Chair. You may proceed with reading those correspondence.
- 1:16:31 Letter dated July 24, 2026. Dear Chairman Francis Jr., please be advised that I will be unable to attend today's meeting of the Committee on Budget, Appropriation, and Finance, convening at 9 a.m. in the Fritz E. Lowe's Legislative Conference Room on St. Croix. Please have my absence recorded as excused. Respectfully submitted, Maurice James Esquire, Senator 36, Legislature of the Virgin Islands. Letter dated July 24, 2026.

- 1:17:09 Dear Chairman Francis, please accept my apologies for arriving late to today's meeting of the Committee on Budget, Appropriation, and Finance scheduled for July 24, 2026. I have a previously scheduled engagement that will delay my arrival. I appreciate your understanding of these circumstances and respectfully request that my late arrival be recorded as officially excused. Cordially, Senator Ray Fonseca, 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands. This concludes the reading of all the correspondence, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Madam Clerk.
- 1:17:50 You can mark both Senator Maurice James as well as Senator Ray Fonseca excused. excuse and we recognize senator fonseca when he arrives uh so attorney me i realize that you didn't put the governmental bowling league or winning the bowling league as one of your accomplishments i did i thought i did you did yeah as a matter of fact that's the only time i smile all right congratulations on that thank you um i didn't hear that part at all Let's get some actual numbers before we proceed with any specific questions.
- 1:18:30 And if you could give us the date of which those actuals represent for personnel, fringe, supplies, other services, and charges, as well as utilities. Good morning, Ronald Moorhead. The date effective was June 30th. June 30th. I'm sorry, you want the- I want you to list them, yes, yes.
- 1:19:18 Sorry. Personal services spent to date, \$2,314,204. Capital outlay, \$98,288. That personnel includes fringe? No, sorry. Personal services only. Okay, so let me have fringe. Total fringe, \$860,306.79. Supplies?
- 1:19:48 It might be listed in the post audit report, but I want to make sure that the public is aware of it as well. Total supplies, \$166,412.01. Out of services and charges, \$471,645.19. Utilities? 61,873.43. Are you part of the single payers utility? No, we are not. Capital projects?
- 1:20:34 Capital outlay, it was 98,289.99. Is that a number again, please? \$9,298,298.99. Outstanding vendor's payment. Effective today is only one. It would be for the St. Thomas, St. Croix, AC, approximately \$14,000. And that's within the 30-day, 60-day window.
- 1:21:07 It's correct. Correct. uh very well um so what would the primary cost of the drivers for your fy 2027 budget what are you seeing as the primary cost of the drivers primary cost would be we are requesting a salary increase for the staff of the employees staff for the office and what percent increase is that uh we don't have a percentage we have a number a group 700 000 is what we're looking for of \$100,000. Salaries and fringe.
- 1:21:46 What are the challenges in regards to filling out vacancies? What's happening with that? Is there a question for you? Yes, sir. One of the biggest problems is the salary. Get closer to the mic. One of the major problems is the salary. As you're aware, the practice of law is not only adversarial, but it is extremely competitive. There are entities, governmental and private, which compete for attorneys. So our attorneys, since I came on board, which was January 26, 2026, we have lost approximately three attorneys because other entities have offered them salaries of up to \$30,000, \$40,000 more than we're paying them. them so we we thought it was appropriate in order to to continue providing effective representation to our indigent clients that we need to increase our attorney's salary and in addition to having them get better training as a matter of fact there's one attorney who constantly tells me that But I've been offered a job for \$30,000 more, but I prefer to stay here because my conviction is to represent an Indian person. But can I get a little increase in my salary? Because when I go to the market, even though my conviction is to represent an Indian person, the reality of the marketplace dictates otherwise. All right, so based on the proposal that you have sent forth, in terms of those salary increases, that will hopefully level the playing field? Hopefully. And help us to retain our excellent staff attorneys.
- 1:23:34 How's the morale at the office? Oh, excellent. Except sometimes when it comes to salary discussion. But we have put programs in place because we realize that a happy employee is a productive employee. So we have various programs. When I met them, as I said, I came on January 26th, they're programs that really boost the morale of the employees. Very well. I'll open up to recognize the presence of Senator VLA, Madam Clerk, and the order. Thus far, we have Senator Blyden, Senator Frederick, Senator DeGraff, Senator VLA there. So Senator Blyden, you recognize for your five minutes.
- 1:24:21 Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Good morning to my colleagues, listening, viewing audiences, staff, central staff. Good morning. Chief Mead and your supporting team, they were you. And thank you so much for that testimony. And thank you for the work you do on behalf of our people. Let me ask you, though, in respect to this, I'm all here, let me ask you a good morning. Go to the post, I'll tell you the report, page 6. In respect to professional service contracts. Page 6. I'm sorry.
- 1:25:06 page six, your expert with disease, you have expertise so far \$16,379. How much do you have budgeted for that category? I know you said it's as needed, but how much do you have budgeted for that category? Because we know how important of a role those individuals play. Okay, that \$16,000 is only for, that's only one expert, but we do budget every year \$160,000 for experts and professional services. Is it an adequate amount?

- 1:25:50 It has been, but if too many murder cases move forward, then we might have to make an adjustment. Okay, go to page, very well, go to page four. In respect to your expenses, what's your expenses to date? Because it's showing here the total expenses to date is expenditures is \$3.9 million, \$4 million. But your request for \$27 is \$7 million. So that's \$3 million different, basically. How much have you expanded so far to date? but that is correct the 3.9 million is correct but that is of June 30th I know but we only have 68 days left do you believe you're gonna um expand all of your arm we do believe we're gonna spend the majority because most of it will be payroll and fringe I'll crown them number again and get back to you okay um let's go to page page two Two, you say, well, this is for the chief, because you say you collaborate with community organizations. I know you do work with Justice Initiative, et cetera. What other group do you do work with, collaborate with?
- 1:27:12 Well, that's the only set group that we work with, who are from time to time other organizations may ask us to participate in programs, which we gladly do. Let me ask you, though, in respect to your vacancies, because you have seven vacant positions, correct? Seven vacancies. You have 44 employees, but you have 38 active. 37 active, really. Your vacancies, right? You have four assistant public defender that vacant, correct? Potential that vacant. And we have... Speak to me. Ms. Islo, do you wish to address that?
- 1:27:59 Yeah. The administrative. Currently, we have five vacancies. We have two Assistant Territorial Public Defender on the St. Thomas District, one funded, one unfunded, one Intervention Outreach Coordinator, and on the St. Thomas District, we have one Assistant Territorial Public Defender and one Intervention Outreach Coordinator. so you did get the um one intervention or we coordinated um position fill or they're still um vacant still vacant how long have they been vacant because that's a very um important important piece of the pie in terms of your case load because I'm going there next talk to me how long have it been um one minute well it's been vacant since I came on board however it will be it will be satisfied immediately if not sooner okay so it's in the process it's in the process we've developed the specs and everything well I'm happy to hear that and finally before my time is called on page four of the testimony um you spoke to 974 open cases of June 30th territory-wide sink 30 seconds sequoia has 591 cases pending 414 felony cases 132 firearm cases nine juvenile matters etc 91 diy and then um from January of this year to June 30th you have 154 new cases to the sinkroy district 91 felony two homicides 22 firearm cases 45 misdemeanor etc And in St. Thomas, this check, you have 383 cases pending and 177 new cases. So that's why I understand what you stated in respect to the attorney, athletic attorneys and attorneys being hard to get.
- 1:29:59 I get that. What are you doing in respect to the, when it comes to, for instance, UVA graduation, et cetera, seeing how you can recruit those new individuals to actually take some of that load off of those cases, get them in that field at an early time, where generally they can get their feet wet, et cetera. What are you doing innovatively to really see how you can onboard individuals because it impacts your caseload, and your caseload is pretty high. Speak to me about that, please.
- 1:30:27 Well, what we have done is we have contacted HBCUs, the law school, the placement office to have attorneys apply for position. We've also advertised in the print media and electronic media of the Virgin Islands. So we can't really take someone from the high school because you have to have a lot of... I didn't say high school, I said UBI. Well, UBI doesn't have a lot of school. I know, but legal assistance, et cetera.
- 1:30:58 Okay, well, yeah. But what we really need is staff attorneys. So we mostly contact the HBCUs, Howard, the best law school in the world, Texas Southern, my law school, other HBCUs to get persons. And we've been successful so far. We have a number of resumes that we're going over. So we anticipate those positions will be filled shortly. And in closing, I understand what you're saying, but the way I think, honestly, you need three more attorneys.
- 1:31:30 But if you can have some individual assisting those attorneys, With the skill set, it will actually assist also in advancing a caseload. That's where I'm coming from. So that's all I'm saying. Be innovative and see what you can do because the numbers are growing. But thank you again for your service and what you do. Thank you so much. Thank you, Senator Blyton. Thank you very much, Senator Blyton, for your line of questions. The chair will now recognize Senator Hubert Frederick. You're recognized for your five minutes.
- 1:31:58 Good morning. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. A pleasant good morning, colleagues. another beautiful Friday testifiers welcome listening viewing audience my office office of Hubert Frederick and central staff Chief Mead welcome to our house thank you I wanted to talk to you in general real quick let's look at your budget as of June 30th looking at the numbers I see you're on track to not spend all this money um your burn rate is about 441 415 a month to date as of June 30th you're telling me you went through 3.9 million based on my calculation you'll have about 835 000 left over plus you're asking for five hundred and sixty four thousand dollars in addition Where are we with this? There's only three more months left in the fiscal year. Well, we don't have the money in hand because we get monthly allotments. Correct. We can only spend what we have.

- 1:33:12 As we get the money allotted, then we will update it as needed. But you're asking for \$564,000 more in your budget. Yeah, we do need to increase the salaries of some of the employees for 2027. Okay. At the end of this year, though, based on the last allotment you'll get received, you're going to be still over what you actually expended. But we do keep the money that is not expended for the next year. For salaries? No, for operational expense.
- 1:33:55 Okay. In reference to the St. Thomas office, we're still renting. The last time you came last year, finding a place was key. You're spending roughly \$150,000 a year in rent over there. Is there no other location, no other property that the Virgin Islands government owns that you could occupy, that you could renovate to get from underpaying that kind of rent? We have identified, we prefer to own rather than renting, only so we have identified a property that we are actively looking at purchasing that property.
- 1:34:39 If it's owned by the Burjan's government, it doesn't really matter, right? You don't have to pay any rent, really. I know, but we prefer to own. We are an autonomous agency, just like we own our premises on St. Croix. We are desirous of doing the same on St. Thomas. So we have identified one property. Do you have a contract on it? Pardon me? Do you have a contract on it? No, not yet, because the price was way up. They have come down a little. We are about to negotiate with them to enter into a contract to purchase. So that is our objective.
- 1:35:19 And how large is this property compared to what you're currently sitting in? It is extremely large. I think it has two floors. It's two floors? It's extremely large, yeah. So you'll be able to lease part of it out? Yes. To offset your costs? Yes, like we do on St. Corey. Okay. All right. Best of luck, but I hope it's done sooner rather than later because every year is costing us more, right? Yeah, I agree. So in order for you to recruit the best, the brightest, and pay them a good fee, you need to also have a facility to house these individuals, right? Yeah, very attractive facility. Okay, good. So we've got to work on that. Yes. I'm going to hold you to it next year, guys willing. If I'm here next year. All right.
- 1:36:08 I wanted to touch bases on some of the successes you've had as an agency. You don't talk about how many cases you've been successful at. You give a lot of numbers. What's your success rate on average? One minute. Per district. Per district? You didn't do, you know, yeah, like per incident, per district. It would be nice to know what kind of success rate you have. Very reasonable question, Senator. I don't have that information now, but I can get it to you.
- 1:36:45 I know since I've been on board, we've had one jury trial, and we were successful. No, we have two. So we have a 50% rate. We lost one, and we won one. Thirty seconds. In your testimony, you spoke about cyber security, staying kind of vendor for that. But, you know, we have BIT, the Bureau of Information Technology, which they help a lot of agencies out. I know you have to spend money on stuff like that.
- 1:37:17 It would be cost-efficient if you could utilize some of their expertise and not having to pay because cybersecurity is expensive. Anything having to do with technology. Everyone comes in here, Mr. Chair, if I could complete. They come in here and they tell us about how much they are investing in technology. The problem is if we centralize a lot of our services, each agency doesn't have to pay for the same thing over and over and over again. Have you utilized BIT in any of your services whatsoever?
- 1:37:51 I believe so, but let me say this. Because of the sensitive nature of our client information, we probably should have a separate IT system Mr. Mitchell is the information technology director you care to address that question from Senator Hi, good afternoon, good morning everyone sorry, Peter Mitchell, director of information technology I do have conversations with BIT. We use them for email services. We've also talked to them about, well, Microsoft 365, I should say the whole suite. And we're also talking to them about newer technologies such as Zero Trust and other things that we're interested in doing as well.
- 1:38:49 Because I see you guys are paying for those subscriptions separately. Are you talking about for the end point? Yes. Okay. And that could be commingled and you could save some money right there. I will definitely reach out to them and try to engage regarding the end points. Chief Mead, let's save some money. Thank you very much for your responses. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Senator Frederick. The Chair will now recognize Senator DeGraff. You recognize for your five minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
- 1:39:21 Good morning, colleagues. Good morning. testifiers of your listening and present chief me morning your honor esquire know you from school days probably you keep doing what you're doing thank you to you and your team for what you do invaluable service to the people of the community uh you know i i love to hear about raises and stuff so what i need you to do right now is go ahead and give who you need to give the raises to use the 700 000 you have it in your budget right now based on my base on your numbers that you gave us your total you're going to come to by june 30th which you have it in the post-salary report uh three million nine seventy two seven forty you divide it by nine nine months and you multiply it by 12, you're going to come up with \$5,296,987. That's how you're going to spend before this is out.

- 1:40:22 And you have \$6.1 for your budget. \$700,000 in it, you have an excess of \$100 and change. Now, with that excess where you spoke about, you see it goes over from one year to the next? Yes, it does. Okay, so how much did you bring over from \$25? approximately like 200 000. you have the money your budget to give the raise give them the raises we will look at authorization so by september 38 they're gonna have the raises correct point in you have the money you have no excuse and i say with all the respect so i could put a smile on my face a raise is coming okay so yeah uh because purely based and what he asks what you have now you have it covered okay so just in doing the numbers we could clearly see it that you have it um and then what I was wondering is year in year out you just took over you provide a valuable service now would you come in do you want to put on your flavor or what would be your flavor to put none to this valuable service are provided to the people in the territory going forward? Because you could just continue and walk in the shoes, everybody else walking. What are you looking to bring to the table? Well, I'm evaluating all of the programs.
- 1:41:50 I'm including the way we represent clients. And, you know, I have had a significant period of time that I did from a defense work before I went on the bench. So I'm going to look at the program and whatever I believe would be invaluable. i'm gonna bring it into our program but six months is hardly sufficient time correct to evaluate everything but i am working on that okay good and and and first and foremost include your your team of course of course you can't take everybody else and you've been doing it you're doing it but take care of your team for us and then we go from there so a happy employee is a productive employees exactly so just to close out for uh what my colleagues are and i just like to ask it because uh what is the morale of your team presently in your six months in my opinion it's excellent excellent okay wait a excellent because 700 000 they just heard they ain't gonna get raised but now they're gonna get it's excellent now we bring it up to excellent from very good to excellent so like i say based on the calculations you have the money with excess in the 6.1 not the 6.9 where you're trying to get 6.1 and then when you evaluate and make your um assessments going forward if then it comes to needing a dollar figure for programs or whatever then that's what we can look at later but right now we give you your same budget 27 it will cover the raises that you're asking for with the excess and the addition of that 200 000 i'm sure you probably already used but thank you for the time mr chair uh thank you very much senator uh the graph uh before we go on to senator vla uh in terms of your modernization
- 1:43:42 efforts i saw that you did uh phase one of the office renovation on um st croix what was the funding source that you use to support that that improvement ronald moorhead general fund and obviously you still have roof repair to do on that building oh that was done as well we still have a major roof repair to do you have roof repair you have a parking lot ada accessibility upgrades what is the estimate cost and timeline for completing these remaining projects we haven't started to request any pricing yet but like for the parking lot a previous like two years ago the paving alone was like fifty thousand dollars so that was passed so we haven't started to do anything yet so the seven hundred thousand dollars that you have identified is solely for salaries or does that involve any of these capital project retrofits?
- 1:44:43 No, no, solely for salaries and fringe. We have not included the modernization of phase two in this budget? No, we have not. Mr. Bailey, you recognize for your, you know, this is budget process. This is the time to ask for consideration of what you're proposing to do. I'll die. All right. Senator Bailey, recognize for your five minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
- 1:45:10 Good morning to the people out of Virgin Islands. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning to the testifiers. I was driving, coming here and listening to the testimony. I thought I was tuning in to the wrong legislature because somehow the voice sounded like the former judge. I called somebody. I said, what are really going on? The judge back? They said, yes, I said, you've got to be kidding They said, yes, I'm looking at it I sent one of my staff to peep inside to see if it was you Hello Welcome back Thank you In reference to, I heard a discussion in reference to the pay for your attorney So I turned quickly to the person I listened to see exactly what the pay is What are you proposing in terms of increase?
- 1:46:03 It was, I think, a cost. It was a set figure, like approximately \$14,000, because we are wanting to have the starting salary rate out of \$110,000 for the attorney coming in. Okay. And then we adjust the scale down. accordingly so you're you're thinking like a 10 across the board for the attorneys yes for the attorneys correct okay so those uh more senior attorneys will go to like 149 right and then correct okay and then the chief would go to what he'll go up by 14 000. 14 000 so like 181. It's like a tricky issue for us to be able to solve, because what's really happening is like ping-pong. You take care of one entity, and then the attorneys and the next entity that we're not taking care of, they go to that entity.
- 1:47:13 So it's whether or not you have overall, like you look at the Attorney General Office, what is the average pay of their seasoned attorneys, et cetera, and whether or not there would be some type of parity between both entities or else you would have attorneys and attorney general office trying to become public defender because they pay so much better. So colleagues, we've got to look at it overall. We've got to look at each of these entities or else you're going to have that effect where you're losing employees. We lose employees from DPNR to go to work to ODR. And then we have a void there. So it's how do we create a balancing act in order to make this work. The figures that my colleague said, that is what we're getting when you do the math. So it would appear that you would have a carryover figure for the next fiscal year.

- 1:48:11 So in being prudent, what we're trying to do is to calculate or subtract a carryover figure from what you need to be solvent for the next fiscal year. So we can easily see what it is, and you can increase it here if it needs to be increased. And then the next year then would be when we have to provide a full amount, but we'd be providing what we need now minus what your carryover figure is. And then we need to really look at what's coming behind legal services, A.G. and all of that, we've got to equalize because all entities are having issues in terms of finding individuals to represent. The caseload is extremely high. Yes. And your budgetary numbers are pretty good.
- 1:49:04 But the caseload is what worries me, and I'm like, how do in the Virgin Islands overall, And this isn't just your office alone, your judiciary, the AG, and the police department. We just have cases that just linger forever. Two, three, four years, and they're not resolved. And then you hear that there's a homicide, and the person was arrested two years before for a gun charge. They were awaiting trial three years before. And I'm thinking overall, as a government, do you have any ideas as to how we can resolve those type of issues? You have 900 outstanding cases? That's a lot.
- 1:49:49 Well, Senator, if you look at the 48 contiguous states, Alaska and Hawaii and the other insular territories, you will encounter the same problem. it's inherent in the justice system that cases take a while to be resolved. Okay, but let me give you one little different thing and then I'm going to run out of time. Our homicide rate is way greater than those other areas. Per capita? Per capita. Per hundred thousand, yeah. Per capita. And a lot of those individuals that are falling victim to homicide has outstanding cases or outstanding charge against them.
- 1:50:40 So I'm just thinking overall, how do we fix that while you're waiting? You're doing your job. Maybe you're doing your job too good, but what you're doing, your job. But how do we fix that overall that we're able to resolve cases? And these individuals that were caught up before could literally change the way that they're living so we don't continue to. Okay, just a cycle, you know. So they're reading the same persons over and over, three, four charges against them. This charge is dismissed, this one or that, and this cycle continues on. So I'm just putting that out there so that we could begin to think about how we're going to have some discussion. I saw a good thing. I saw that you have this, that you participate in this in-school suspension program at St. Thomas. Anyone here has participated in that that could speak to it? Yes. Tell me. So that, Alexia Furlow, Deputy Chief St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands Justice Initiative, the Virgin Islands Justice Initiative goes to different schools.
- 1:51:47 The students who are in in-school suspension come in and we speak with them. High school? High school and some middle schools. We speak with them, explain their rights, answer questions they have regarding the legal world. Okay. And I call you, Judge May, you before have had students come into your courtroom. Not students who are awaiting trial, but students who were continuously getting into problems in the school. And your brother, I remember Pantene was there one time. I was there and had a discussion with the students about changing the behavior. Because we really got to think about how we're going to change the next generation of behavior. And I always tell people this story because I remember the last word that you told some of those students.
- 1:52:39 And I think we need to do it more. And you told them, you can't tell them, no, okay, they're on a different side. But at that point, you told them, you want me to be talking to you today. Because if you have to come before me and I have to speak to you again when you're officially in this court, you're not going to like the result. And that result led to those students. How do we get back to that? We're instead of waiting. I mean, as a principal, you could look at a cumulative folder and you know who has the potential to cause an issue. It is how you're able to stop those potential students, high-risk students from getting into issues that's going to solve the issues that we have. So how can you implement a program, not for in-school suspension, but where you target those high-risk individuals, those that are missing a lot of days, those that are getting into a lot of fights.
- 1:53:24 And through your office, you're able to design a program where you're, like a scared street program, you know, trying to get them to do the right thing. What are your feelings on that? Oh, the attorney for sending them a smile and telling me which he was also wearing it. Tough question. It's a macro problem, and it would take a macro solution. It's from leadership, including senators, governor, parents. I think our parents are too permissive. We have caught up in this Eurocentric way, where our children have so much rights. and, you know, parents are hesitant to discipline children or talk to them.
- 1:54:10 And I think it's a macro problem, so we start from people like you, politicians, executive, parents, but parents bring a vital role because your first contact is your parents. But it's a macro problem, and it's going to take some thinking and some extreme positive action to resolve it. Mr. Chair, can you let the attorney say namaste? You say namaste? Yes. Okay. Both of them are crucial or not?
- 1:54:44 Or you? I don't think I have anything in addition to that. I'm aware of some programs in different areas where they deal with the youth at risk in terms of mentorship. But whether or not that's something the Public Defender's Office would be

open to doing, I'm not quite sure. I know we have a lot of demand already, so I can't speak so much to that.

1:55:18 Okay, okay. But you can convey, I'm sorry, one program which is structured toward that is the Rising Star Steel Orchestra and the Superior Court, Justice Hodge, implemented that program for at-risk youth. So when the court comes, you can give them some money to continue the program. Why don't we take it from your budget, I'll give it to them. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Senator Bailey, and I think this discussion is vital and ripe for further discussion.

1:55:54 you know when we talk about breaking the school to prison pipeline and i agree that this is a macro discussion um you know we have had where you know psychologists and sociologists have looked at this particular issue in terms of the um the crime and its impact on this community and you know you spoke about it going back to parents and those type of things but for me i always see where you know it's critical that we don't allow and we need restorative justice within the education system you know so that we don't allow our youngsters to get into that paradigm on their first contact you know uh rather than getting them into this you pick them up they get into the criminal justice system juvenile justice juvenile delinquency end up in yrc and those places and just spiral out to control you know we have to be able to remedy some of these things within the school and it don't happen overnight you know it starts where there's triggers and observation that we should be making and that's why it's so important for us to have the iep's done uh because they start acting out and our our students are really under a lot of stress they're very much exposed you know within their community a lot of times you know what we see is is the fallout that have occurred over a number of years of build up a lot of trauma and impact on these individuals that then you know manifest itself um in the school environment you know so So we really have to attack it within that environment, restore justice there, and then try to get them the necessary help. And that's why I've been so at creating this behavioral health, mental health, and being a strong advocate for that. Because if we don't address it at that ground floor, then by the time the elevator gets up, it's much more difficult for us to address it. So I love the discussion. You know, we just lost Joe Ponteen, who was very instrumental.

1:57:49 You know, we have had many times with him, Judge Willock, yourself, you know, where you really have gone into these schools and be able to talk to these youngsters and the importance of these issues. And those are the fibers. Mentorship, you know, those are the things that we really lack in this community. Each one of us just take on one. I think we could have, you know, some impact. So, you know, the one with pointing fingers, they're pointing right back at us in terms of our responsibility in addressing this particular problem. But it takes our hands on deck, and everybody needs to be involved in it.

1:58:26 Senator, point of information, Senator DeGraff. Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I just wanted to weigh in on it because, again, too, I have been · I'm a senator. i've been police been military you know and we we are just talking about wage increases for and we only spoke about the attorneys at the level i'm a person with a high school diploma very proud of it the bottom line is it seems to me a lot of times that we don't include the people who came from the bottom. I started in the government making \$2.35. I said, oh, I'm proud of it. I always say the issue still remains that when we are at this level now, the average person cannot relate to us at this level. They got to relate to the people who are at the bottom. So when you talk about the increase for the attorneys, yes, they are the persons there, but there's that foundation, what we don't include you know i i have been in a community i i have coached i have refereed and different things they want to see somebody who could relate to them then you take them to the limit that's the one element we should not forget when we sit down to the table we're going to sit down to the table at the top of we're going to drink the blue water versus the dead getting a bucket of water out your system and drinking that water that's why i grew up drinking but i'm saying I think that's what we miss at Virgin Islands.

1:59:59 We put ourselves in a realm of per capita in the United States. And it's a totally different scale that we're on. So I think when we go forward in addressing what our community needs, we've got to involve them children who figure they don't have a future, and they say, hey, sit down to this table with us, give us your ideas. And then we go from there. We are our level, our age group. We went to school together. our age group i'm 64 years old proud of it but i'm saying we got involved that 18 19 year old 13 14 year old and let them know you have a future but it don't start out where you're going to start out at the senator you're going to start out at the top salary you got to walk your way up 2035 send the hour in 1979, never miss a day of work, retired in 2013, 20 years plus without Carlin's sake.

2:00:57 Those are the values that I think we miss in here in the Virgin Islands. You know, the sir, ma'am, mister, excuse me, please, thank you, all them things went out the window. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Senator DeGraff, Senator Kenneth Gittins, you're recognized for your five minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. You didn't think by now, from 1979 to now, he don't forget how much time you were absent? Good morning to all. How are you doing, Chief? You good? You look cool, man. Always. All right. You know, going to the discussion that you all just had, I continue to say that in order for us to take back control of the streets, we must first take back control of our homes.

- 2:01:50 I truly believe in that. So I embrace when you spoke about parental involvement and them being the first. And they're the ones that has to take full control of their homes and start to control what our children are looking at on television and all these video games that's taking over the world today. And I'm surprised that the good majority leader didn't tell you when you throw your little support for the Rising Stars Steel Orchestra.
- 2:02:28 I'm surprised that he didn't tell you that we just passed legislation increasing traffic fines that now directs revenues from those increased traffic fines, not only to the Rising Stars Steel Orchestra, but also to the Police Athletic League. So they will be getting more funding. We've got to get our officers doing some more enforcement as well. All right? So I've been looking at your testimony, and I saw where you identified recruitment and retention as one of your strategic priorities. What are the primary reasons that you find for some of your attorneys leaving the office aren't you on par at least with pay of those attorneys at the eg's office and even to the um u.s attorney's office not the u.s attorney's office maybe not the u.s attorneys but at least the attorney general's office the attorney general office to a certain extent however the primary reason for leaving is the pay For your office? For our office. As I said, I came on January 26th, and we have lost three attorneys. So where are they leaving to go? We have lost four. Private.
- 2:03:56 Private. Yeah, private and one retire. So we have lost four. O.C. private. So you feel that they're making more money in the private sector, or is it other factors that is causing them to leave the office? Well, they've spoken to me, and I have no reason to doubt the veracity of their representation, and it is because of the salary. So how many have left since you're on board? Three. Well, four. One retired. And you've had an opportunity to do like an exit interview with them on a one-on-one? Yes, and they've come and spoken with me personally.
- 2:04:44 And I've indicated, you know, I love the office. I love representing indigent persons, but the marketplace reality dictates otherwise. So besides money, what's the other factor? The other factor is money. That's money. That's kind of sad, though. It is. Because at some point, we've got to believe in what we're doing and love what we're doing. And I agree. But when you go to the marketplace and you see the prices, you know, that dictates otherwise. So let's move on there because sadly money is always a factor.
- 2:05:23 But you also spoke to experts and digital evidence, where you testified that digital evidence, including the body cam footage, surveillance video, and electronic communications, is being increasingly important. How much did your office spend on actual digital evidence review and expert services during fiscal year 2026? Ronald Moorhead, we did enter a contract for \$10,000 annually for one software. Say that again? We did enter a contract for \$10,000 annually for the reduct software. For the who software? Reduct. Reduct. All right. How has that worked out?
- 2:06:29 Lexia Furlough, Deputy Chiefs, Hank Thomas, St. John, Water Island. It has worked out. It's beneficial, especially when preparing for trials and suppression hearings. So how many of these cases during the past year actually required the use of outside witnesses, expert witnesses, that is? How many experts we actually had?
- 2:07:00 Cases, yeah. Well, I think we only retained one. However, there was much more need that we could have used experts for. So that's for the St. Thomas, St. John District. All right. Chief, where's your St. Croix District Deputy? She's in court, Your Honor. I'm sorry. No, not Your Honor. I ain't getting anything yet. Well, you know, since our office is in such high demand, as I'm speaking to you, we've probably been appointed to 10 more cases. So the St. Croix Deputy Chief is in court. And she apologizes for not being here. I don't think she apologized. I think she's glad to be in court today.
- 2:07:44 No, no, she apologized to me. Now, you stated in your testimony, too, that you intend to modernize the computer hardware, software, and whatnot. What have you identified specifically for your specific needs in upgrades, the plans for fiscal year 27? Since I'm technologically not too bright, I defer to the Director of Technology.
- 2:08:17 Good morning again. Peter Mitchell, Director of Information Technology. We've identified several areas that needed attention, only based on what's going on in the real world. Cyber security, as we know, is something major as it relates to the entire world being affected by it. So we're looking at zero trust technology. We're also trying to find increased software that we could use to enhance the safety of the data that we house, because we house a lot of data, right?
- 2:08:55 So have you conducted a full assessment and presented that to the chief? I did have some information that I provided to him, yes, on the expression. 30 seconds. I'm sure you have some aged stuff there that you want to get rid of. so this is a time for you to get your assessment uh to the chief uh before i close out we've had some uh conversations before and i noticed that you also testified about the possibility of obtaining a permanent office facility and saint thomas have you met with your financial team and all the realtors to see where we're at and acquiring that property on St. Thomas, that building? Yeah, we were at some cursory discussions.
- 2:09:53 We know that the price has gone down significantly. And it has gone down, so I expect you to move aggressively on this because these things ain't going to wait. If you give us some money. right but i mean are you having the conversations with them i've been talking with asking you to do that i've put in a bill draft request already to assist your office but you

have some things to do on your end and then we will see what we could do on our end well understood and then looking at the if i may close off here mr chairman um yes with regards to the st croix office um you also testified about the ada compliance where are we on uh getting that building i see my good friend just came in she should come into the well now so i could ask all those questions for the st croix district but uh welcome the uh tell me about the upgrades for the st croix building uh ada compliance because currently you don't have a uh elevating your building on st quay correct yeah that's true and it's what was a challenge to to go up those steps what's for the record let's be clear what's true no that we do not have you do not have the facility and we have been discussing where we're going to place the elevator because you know the configuration of the building so no no fault of yours you came there you met it but um colleagues this is where we have to lead by example this is a government-owned building we will be mandating or we do mandate that other people make sure that they are ada compliant They would have probably never gotten an occupancy permit had they not have all these things in place. So I'm asking you as the chief to work aggressively on making that building ADA compliant so that we could put an elevator shaft somewhere on that building.

- 2:12:08 I've been doing that. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Senator Gittins. Chief, real quickly, are you collecting any revenues? Do you have any opportunity to collect any revenue? I think you're able to rent out a space or anything like that? Any revenues coming in? We have two lessees. We have at least two spaces, and we have- Yeah, let's get the revenues for fiscal year 26, please. I don't have the actual collected to date, but we do collect \$39,000 per year. \$39,000? Yeah, and everybody is current to date.
- 2:12:53 They're calculated. And you have a CD or some bank account as well? Savings account, a CD? We do have a checking account. Checking account. What's the balance in that? And what was the last audit of that account? The current balance is \$394,452.
- 2:13:25 \$394. \$452. \$452. And what was the last audit or reconciliation of that account? On the 30th of this year? There's a report generated under that? Yes. Any other burning questions from my colleagues? Hearing none, I'll give you a 30-second wrap-up.
- 2:13:58 Well, we respectfully request that this honorable body grant our budgetary request, so that we can continue the work of providing effective assistance of counsel to indigent persons. Thank you very much.
- 2:14:24 Definitely, you perform a vital and very important. service to this community we appreciate the work that's being done there we didn't talk a lot about the individuals that have been in detention for quite some time that's something else that we will circle back I have a discussion about because we're very concerned about you know people being in detention now for the last five years in some instances you know that matter really needs to bring come to some closure one way shape or form so that's a discussion we'll perhaps try to schedule offline or in the committee for for us to be, Homeland Security, Public Safety, and Justice for us to be able to try to bring some resolution to those matters.
- 2:15:03 But again, thank you for the work that's being done there, and we truly appreciate it. Your request seems to be reasonable, and we definitely consider it during our budget markup. Thank you for inviting us. All right. The Committee of Budget, Appropriations, and Finance will stand in recess at this time. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- 2:18:27 Thank you. We'll be right back. [2 such phrases repeated 19 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 2:27:57 Thank you. Thank you.
- 2:28:57 Thank you. I'll see you next time. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- 2:31:27 Thank you. [1 such phrases repeated 9 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 2:35:57 Thank you. We'll be right back. [2 such phrases repeated 48 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 2:59:57 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
- 3:02:27 Thank you. We'll be right back. [2 such phrases repeated 28 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 3:16:27 Thank you. We'll be right back. [2 such phrases repeated 20 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 3:26:27 Thank you. [1 such phrases repeated 14 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

- 3:33:27 The Committee of Budget, Appropriations, and Finance is back in record and out of recess. At this time, Madam Clerk, please call up the second items on today's agenda. Block 2, Legal Services of the Virgin Islands, invited testifier Shelby King Gotti, Esquire, Executive Director. This concludes the reading of Block 2, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Madam Clerk.
- 3:34:08 And Ms. Shelby King is seated at the testifier's table and we'll go to her to give her testimony. I just want to apologize, first of all, to Legal Services. Unfortunately, we were called into an emergency meeting, and as a result of that, we had an hour delay. But thank you for your patience, and we'll get going. And at this time, if you just identified yourself, and then we'll begin your testimony. Good afternoon, Senators.
- 3:34:38 I am Shelby King-Gaddy, the Executive Director for Legal Services of the Virgin Islands. accompanying me here at the table is attorney Damian Sanders, who is our litigation director and managing attorney for the St. Croix office. I would also like to acknowledge, even though he's not testifying or sitting here at our table, is a young man who is working with us this summer. He is a fellow, a second year law student. His name is Eric Jones. He could join us, having come up and have I've got a real experience at the Legislature.
- 3:35:27 Go very well. Thank you. I'll just do a mic check for this real quick. Eric. Here's your name. I'll put your name on the record. Real quickly, follow our stenographer. Good afternoon. Damien, D-A-M-I-O-N, M Sanders, S-A-N-D-E-R-S. Thank you. You may proceed with your testimony. Thank you, and good afternoon again. I am, again, Shelby King-Gaddy, the Executive Director and CEO of Legal Services of the Virgin Islands. Everybody knows us as Legal Services.
- 3:36:01 And as I've stated before, I'm accompanied by Attorney Damien Sanders, who is our territory-wide litigation director, and he's the managing attorney of our St. Croix office. As you know, every year we do look forward to the opportunity to appear before this committee to present to you and all the taxpayers the evidence of our fiscally responsible stewardship over the funds that have been entrusted to us by the Virgin Islands government. Legal Services of the Virgin Islands continues to be a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars as the results of our annual audit again this year and has always been an unqualified or what's known as a clean audit. Legal Services, like all the legal aid entities in the United States, is underfunded and it's underfunded to meet the growing demand for our assistance.
- 3:36:48 For fiscal year 2026, the governor's budget included \$2,007,700 for legal services, and our request for fiscal year 2027 was exactly the same, \$2,007,700. The amount, however, that was included in the governor's fiscal year 2027 budget for legal services was quite a bit less. It was listed only as a million dollars. Between March of 2025 and June of 2026, Legal Services did not receive any allotments from the BI government even though that amount had been approved. We did receive a lump sum payment in June of 2026, which represented past due quarterly allotments of funds that would have brought us through the first quarter of fiscal year 2026 or through December of 2025.
- 3:37:52 And we are extremely grateful that we received the funds, especially given the circumstances. And during these times, Legal Services has been fortunate that this shortfall of \$1,003,850 was able to be covered by other short-term special grant funds, but those special grant funds are no longer available. Therefore, we are again requesting the same amount of \$2,700 for fiscal year 2027. And we're here to support that amount, which is the same amount that's been approved for the past two fiscal years. And while the amount that's included in the governor's recommended budget for legal services is less than that amount, than the amount we are requesting, we are adamant that the amount requested will allow us to maintain the status quo at our present level of service delivery while maintaining and properly staffing to reduce potential burnout and loss of our attorney staff.
- 3:39:03 I know you've heard from another number of organizations about loss of attorney staff, and we'll get to that. But since 2018, Legal Services has been in a continuous rebuilding posture to replace the experienced attorney resources that were lost after the hurricanes of 2017 while simultaneously growing to meet the needs of the community. Over the past two years, Legal Services has lost five attorneys, primarily due to attorneys seeking higher salaries and government attorney positions. All of these attorneys have come from the mainland with varying levels of experience, and presently, the total number of legal services attorneys are four, with three in St. Croix, not including the executive director, and one in St. Thomas.
- 3:39:46 When we began fiscal year 2026, legal services was seeking to fill two attorney vacancies. Subsequently, one additional attorney position was vacated, and now three vacancies exist. Nevertheless, as you will see from our statistics, there is a consistent increase in the number of persons served and cases handled. In order to meet the demand, Legal Services has continued to reimagine, restructure, and realign job functions. In addition to the Executive Director also serving as Managing Attorney for the St. Thomas Office, Legal Services combined the St. Croix managing attorney position with the territory-wide litigation director position, and while using technology to allow cases to be distributed and handled by

available attorney staff in either district. With the technology we have in place at Legal Services, intake interviews and limited representation matters can be handled without regard to which district the client actually resides in.

3:40:45 More importantly, the grant's compliance manager position has been combined with the communications coordinator position, and it allows legal services to shift some of the grant reporting and compliance requirements from the attorneys who are project directors, and that allows them more time to engage in providing legal assistance and community outreach. We are still in search of a managing attorney and a staff attorney for the St. Thomas office, right now we're looking to fill one staff attorney position in St. Croix. Legal services uses technology extensively to streamline our delivery model and to accommodate teleworking or remote working when necessary to that end we're in the process of completing a technology assessment to ascertain whether we are using our technology in the most efficient manner and whether our technology is adequate to achieve the goals based upon our plan of growth. The realignment of job functions, the grants compliance manager, will also be able to assimilate data necessary for grant writing, strategic planning, and creating the development plan.

3:41:52 Legal Services will seek to update our strategic plan in FY 2027, and we're in the process of creating a resource development plan appropriate for our organization. Please understand that resources include staffing as well as funds that are necessary to sustain the organization for meeting the needs of our community. A part of that plan is to develop a pipeline for new hires from law schools. That's why we have our summer fellow here with us today, second-year law student. We're trying to create those opportunities and encourage law students to come to the Virgin Islands and work for legal services.

3:42:29 The Senior Medicare Patrol Program was initially implemented in 2018 to assist Medicare beneficiaries and families and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, the errors in Medicare reporting and abuse. And as we have a rapidly increasing senior population who receive other legal assistance from legal services, this program augments those services. The S&P outreach to seniors that includes estate planning has served to increase the numbers of clients requiring legal assistance. And while we initially hired a project director to coordinate the S&P efforts, the position was expanded to be the outreach coordinator for all of our programs.

3:43:10 Again, another opportunity for us to realign some of our positions. We're now in the fourth year of the new five-year grant for the S&P project that began on June 1, 2023, and that program has been a huge success, and we expect to renew or try to renew that grant. Also, through the S&P program in collaboration with the University of the Virgin Islands, since 2022, we've been able to train 79 seniors who have successfully attained the necessary basic computer skills and knowledge. Use of the internet and social media. That's resulting in the issuance of over 132 certificates of completion, and this allows seniors to engage in the telehealth appointments now offered by healthcare professionals.

3:43:57 It allows them to continue to eliminate the social isolation that was initially experienced during the pandemic. While we are cognizant of the government's financial challenges and the reduction of our federal grants, both LSC has reduced amounts, our veterans grant is no longer there, both VOCA and VAWA grants have also been decreased, the requested funds will only allow us to maintain the status quo with proper staffing. We're not growing. We're just trying to meet the demand, and we need to properly staff.

3:44:33 But simultaneously, we're continuing to seek and secure other sources of funding to meet the extraordinary costs associated with providing services to our community. And as I've said many times before, the U.S. Constitution guarantees a lawyer when someone is accused of a crime, but there's no constitutional right to an attorney when someone faces a civil action. So, for example, unless you can pay for legal assistance, you pretty much are on your own to try to rectify unsafe housing that you're renting, to challenge a wrongful discharge from your job, or to obtain a protective court order against an abusive spouse, or fight for your military service, fight for your custody of your children or secure veterans' benefits. This is very challenging to navigate the legal system on your own. So having legal assistance is crucial to protecting the liberty and justice for all upon which our nation was founded. And legal services of the Virgin Islands is the equal justice advocate in the territory, and our visionary theme for carrying out the mission is equal access to justice anytime, anywhere.

3:45:41 Our mission statement is as follows, to access justice, protect rights, educate people in poverty, in order that they will be empowered to move forward and towards self-sufficiency. We are a non-governmental 501c3, not-for-profit corporation, and our primary purpose is to provide high-quality civil legal assistance free of charge to persons of low income, the elderly and victims of domestic violence, as well as other disadvantaged individuals in the territory.

3:46:10 We really are a public interest law firm, which must adhere to all of the same professional responsibility and ethics rules and codes as any other law firm. So legal services has provided this high quality civil legal services to the client community territory-wide for 57 years. Legal services is governed by right now a 10-member volunteer board of trustees

its management staff is very efficient creative and effective its attorney advocates and legal support staff who have over 40 years in combined legal practice experience have an excellent reputation in the bar, with the courts, and in the community for providing high-quality civil legal assistance to eligible clients. Over the past year, legal services has seen an increase in the number of evictions, guardianships, and domestic violence.

3 : 47 : 04 These matters are in addition to the range of issues typically experienced by persons living in poverty, circumstances like employment matters, and a wide range of other family law-related matters. But a lot of these matters create housing instability, and since 2023, we developed an enhanced eviction prevention services program. We obtained financial assistance and began to provide housing stability legal services under the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. And while that special grant funding has terminated, legal services continues to provide the necessary legal assistance as a priority. Legal services is well into the final year of the updated strategic plan that charts the course for the next two years for us.

3 : 47 : 46 Given a number of scenarios, the strategic plan should outline a course that is currently being followed, and that allows us to reimagine a service delivery model that maximizes our resources. We employ the best tools available for providing effective, efficient civil legal assistance in accordance with our mission. And as a part of our strategic planning process, a formal comprehensive needs assessment was conducted, and we affirmed that there are still many unmet legal needs in our community. Since we cannot serve all of the clients' unmet civil legal needs, based on the results of the needs assessment, we set program priorities.

3 : 48 : 27 What that means is oftentimes we have to triage and decide what things happen first. I've given you a list of the findings for our community needs. They're in housing, health, safety, family, the elderly and disabled, economic opportunities, consumer issues, education, and transportation. But our reimagined service delivery system model resulted from our strategic planning process that was done a few years ago. It was based on the visionary theme of providing equal access to justice anytime, anywhere.

3 : 48 : 58 Legal services does have a variety of intake methods, procedures, and policies. It includes in-person intakes, telephone intakes, online intakes, and after the intake is completed in real time, the clients are contacted by an attorney, typically within one business day. And it eliminates the need for scheduling appointments and having an initial consultation, which could happen much later. The accessibility has also been significantly expanded with our mobile justice units. Those are designed to operate as mobile offices, taking attorneys into remote locations of the community to provide on-site legal assistance. The MJUs, as we call them, are at pre-scheduled locations in the community each week in both St. Croix and St. Thomas, the St. Thomas-St. John districts, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And while we operate the MJUs to provide service in the community. Our physical facilities are also used to meet with clients, with stakeholders, along with performing our administrative duties. In St. Croix, we have temporarily relocated the staff in some leased space near Sunny Isle, where we undertake · we're undertaking a project to complete major repairs to our building at 3017 Orange Grove. It's under a mitigation and repair program that's funded right now by fema and i say right now because we don't know the future of that mr chairman at this time i would like to ask if damien attorney damien sanders could give you a summary presentation and an overview of the cases and other matters that we handle as you know our attorneys don't just practice law but we do community education We're members of a number of community boards, and in addition to going out and doing the legal work in the courts, at our offices, on the mobile justice units.

3 : 50 : 48 Some people don't know it, but we also make home visits and hospital visits for those who can't reach our offices. Good afternoon, Senators. Good afternoon to the community at large. Can you hear me? Sorry. Just again, thank you to everyone, the senators here, senators in St. Thomas and the community at large who's observing our testimony today. As litigation director and managing attorney in St. Croix, I have the pleasure of handling much of our casework. During the full year of 2025, legal services continued to conduct in-home and hospital visits for senior citizens and or other infirm persons that needed on-site legal assistance. The organization handled more matters in 2025 than we did in 2024, and our intakes occur daily on a rolling basis. Without appointment, people can come in anytime they want, and we will meet with them either by phone, in person, online, or at our mobile justice units, which are out in the community periodically. We've increased community education and outreach to the territory's most vulnerable citizens through our senior Medicare patrol.

3 : 52 : 07 We definitely focus on seniors, and seniors are welcome to come use our services. Additionally, the organization has made substantial progress to increase the number of community stakeholders and partners with whom we've participated with in collaborative activities. I have a brief comparison of our numbers, which I'll just go through very quickly. We noticed that our numbers increased, both intakes and cases closed, from 2025 to 2024. It wasn't a market increase, but there wasn't a noticeable increase. We didn't notice much change in our practice. There were marginal shifts in housing. The number of housing cases decreased marginally, and the number of family law cases increased in 2025 over the same

period in 2024.

- 3:53:02 The majority of our clients, if you look at the next chart, are primarily seniors. and the age group from 26 to 45. So we do focus on seniors. The Senior Medicare Patrol brings a lot of seniors into our organization and serves as a conduit for us. Legal services acts as a general repository for legal problems in the territory, so we get referrals oftentimes from legislators, from the court system, and from the community at large as well as our partners, and that's where I think we see a lot of our 26- to 45-year-old group. And so far as level of service, predominantly we do advice and counsel and brief service, but if you look also, there's some ticks up there for contested decisions, so we do represent folks in court very frequently and have some solid results there. That really sums it up. Our practice continues to thrive. We're looking, obviously, to expand in ways that we can, given our resources. I've listed some basic stories, successes that we've had. I won't get into those, and I will give the floor back to the Senate.
- 3:54:18 Thank you. Thank you very much. We usually look forward to those stories, but the essence of time, we'll certainly read them. I think this is pretty straightforward. budget i am a little bit concerned how about your reporting that you know you had not received your allotments in a timely fashion um what was the discussion with the office of management and budget in respect to that um the times that either our chief financial officer at the time or myself had conversations those were always it's coming and like i said We don't have a lot of control over what's going on, so we typically will move money around and use grant funds that come from other sources.
- 3:55:12 Where we are and how we make up for it, we're not sure. We don't have an answer. We've not gotten an answer. What happened to your CFO? He retired? He left the service. We now have a new CFO. So she's serving an interim on a contract basis until we can determine that we want to either engage her permanently or seek service from someone else. So who's fulfilling that role right now? You're the one that's managing the funding?
- 3:55:48 No, we do have an interim CFO. She's just off-island because when we hired her, she had already previously scheduled this time to be with her family. I think she's dealing with some estate matters with her family. But she's been with us since the prior CFO left. How much attorneys do you currently have on staff? I have four, not including myself. And I say not including myself only because I still have been taking cases. Not typical role for the executive director, but we have four, three in St. Croix and one in St. Thomas. And one.
- 3:56:28 What would be adequate in a perfect world for you to be able to, based on your needs and your representation from your clients, what would be adequate? Right now, we're looking to hire at least one additional attorney in St. Croix, and I believe we had two positions open for St. Thomas. I know sometime back we had provided some funding to kind of level the playing field with the salaries of the attorneys, obviously not to the level of the Attorney General's office, but certainly to at least stop the bleeding somewhat.
- 3:57:12 Have that still been impacted by your inability to retain these attorneys? Actually, it hasn't. Um, government attorneys make quite a bit more, whether you're in the Attorney General's Office or the Public Defender's Office or DPNR or Education, government attorneys operating under a collective bargaining agreement typically make a lot more than the attorneys for legal services. And we've lost, over the last couple of years, most of the attorneys we've lost have gone to government positions outside of legal services what are your challenges right now what is your void in terms of finances we need the entire amount we requested the the entire amount of two million seven thousand seven hundred as I said you know we've kept our budget the same for the last three years and what we've done is we've tried to to fill the gap with other funding the funding that we had is no longer going to be available it's no longer available right now i should say all right um i was morale at the office i was morale um we're trying to keep it we're trying to keep it together um it seems to be it seems to be okay and i just say okay we try to do some things to keep the employees interested, invested in what we do, and to the extent that we can do bonuses or do special days, we try to do what we can. The morale is okay, but my employees are
- 3:58:53 overworked right now. What's your total staffing outside of just the attorneys? I know you mentioned four attorneys, but what's your total staffing? We have typically in my accounting department we would have the CFO and two other positions and one of those just recently became vacant and we have four legal support staff, two in St. Thomas, two in St. Croix we have the senior Medicare patrol director of our communications and grants compliance manager and we have my assistant who also works as a liaison to the board so total positions Oh, so besides your CFO, you have a director of finance and administration? That's the same position. That's the same position as CFO? Correct.
- 4:00:15 In legal services worlds, they call them director of finance and administration. And you also have a, so I guess that would be very chemical, you have an interim director of finance. That's the person that we hired on a contract basis to fill the position. all right i'll open up to my colleagues uh now for a round of questions and we you'll be recognized for a four minute round at the blighting you're recognized for your performance thank you mr chair good afternoon again to my

colleagues good afternoon attorney galley and your supporting team there with you and thank you so much for your testimony i want to first start by saying thank you for what you do you know for most vulnerable I usually visit your office a lot.

4:01:06 I send a lot of people there, and they get their assistance they need, and I really want to thank you publicly for what you and your team does. Let me start with the Post-Active Report, page 8. There are three federal grants, the basic field grant for \$200,648, the Victim of Crime Act, \$168,000, and the Violence Against Women Act, \$74,000. When did these grants expire? There's no expiration date. And when did you receive them? These grants, these are the grants that we get from LEPC, and the Victims of Crime Act grant will expire on September 30, 2026.

4:01:54 Okay. And then the VAWA grant, I believe that one also will expire on September 30, 2026. But that grant did not come in until January of 2026, when it typically would have come in in October of 2025. What type of work do you do for that grant, though, in particular, specifically? Those are the grants where we work with victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. Okay, very well. So let's go to page three of the post-author report.

4:02:29 Because I know you mentioned in respect to attorneys, you say you would like, in a real world, you would like to have how much more attorney? Three. At this present time? Three? Three. three and you have you say you're hoping to have been on two awaiting two pro bono attorneys pro bono no no pro bono attorneys no pro bono i was looking at post after report on page three okay um i'm not sure where you see pro bono attorneys it was stated that you guys stated the awaiting of onboarding of pro bono attorneys which mean more than one at the top of the page on our initiative status, but nonetheless, that's fine. You say you're not picking on any. Okay. So the reason why I ask that question because your caseload is stated here in the post-Eletters report that in 2026 fiscal year, legal services recorded 348 intakes compared compared to 1,726 intakes in 2025, so that's a big, big, big difference, so I need to know what's going on in that space.

4:03:48 I'm going to explain it right now, and I've spoken with the young lady who worked with us from post-audit. These numbers are not the correct numbers. 348 intakes were intakes that we reported through March. If you look down below, it's not 2026, January 1 through March 31, 2026. The number of intakes that we have thus far through June, well, I mean, say through June, are 907. That's January to June, 907. 722 in St. Croix, and I believe it's 185 in St. Thomas.

4:04:31 Budget numbers are still down, correct, based on those numbers? Those are intakes only. Our numbers are not really down when you look at intakes. Yeah, you have five more months left. Okay, very well. And on page four, let me ask you in respect to your funding, right? It stated that, the post office has stated that 83%, which is \$1,663,000 of appropriation has been pending as of June 30, 2026. And the remaining balance of 17% of the appropriations and the unallotted funds represent 75% of the appropriations.

4:05:17 So my question to you is, you have obligated \$1.5 million, right? You extended \$1.6 million, and your balance is \$344,000. Do you believe you will expand all of those funds before the end of this fiscal year? It is our goal as we are in the process of trying to hire right now. So you're depending on you hiring individuals to assure that you expand those funds? Hiring some of the individuals and some of our other costs are still there.

4:05:47 But how long have those positions been open? Are you sure you're able to fill those roles? Because it's important that you do be careful. If you don't, we're going to have to make some adjustments. I believe so. I believe we can hire. Very well. Because, like I say, you play a very critical role here in the territory. So I hope you do. Okay? And thank you so much for your testimony and your responses. You're welcome. uh thank you very much senator blight and i also want to recognize the presence of non-committee member senator clifford joseph before we go on to the next senator um i know you mentioned that in your vala and voca our grants have been reduced can you speak to how that have impacted service or services a couple of things those grants also used to provide some opportunities for us to train attorneys um not just train attorneys but train anyone who had impact or had um constant contact with victims of domestic violence we have had to use fun other funds from our other budget sources in order to make sure that our people are still trained they're still sensitized to being able to provide the services so while it has impacted us as i've said before all of our funding When it doesn't come in, we don't stop doing the work. We don't stop doing what we do. We find it from our other grant sources, which may not be the best way to do it, but that's an important part of our business.

4:07:21 What have been the communication with the LEPC in regards to those grants? I think they are looking at some, from the conversations that we've had, they're looking at some changes that have occurred in terms of the mandates that have come from the federal providers of those funds and that's one of the reasons that training funds were removed um and the amount of funds that we have that have been reduced partially is because they won't fund the vacant positions in anticipation of us getting the staff they just reduce the grant and i understand that but when people come in we've got to serve them uh senator frederick you're recognized for your four minutes thank you very much mr chair president uh good afternoon now uh colleagues um testifiers listening to you in audience my office the office of hubert frederick and central

staff uh ed Gotti King Gotti good day first off let me just say congratulations on your single audit that's awesome it's always good to see organizations 50 c3 501 c3 with a clean audit that means you know you're doing what you're supposed to do and no material findings were found. So that's good. I want to ask you, how soon are you going to pay the CPA for completing the audit, though?

4:09:01 Because I see we still owe them \$19,000, and it's for the exact year. You've got a clean audit. You don't want to mess that up. We typically get a clean audit from this particular auditor. And right now we're just simply waiting for them to file the 990, and then we're done. because our fee includes not only the audit, but the \$9.90. Okay, that was pretty good. If you turn to page one of our post-audit report, right down in the middle it talks about the LSVI. It's a nonprofit organization that received funding from 10 sources. I saw five listed in the background, page eight. what's the other five that i'm missing um i believe some of that information is not up to date um we do receive of course federal and local government funding now federal government is going to be boca valwa um we we received last year erap and um we received legal services corporation funding and we received the veterans administration funding and so this kind of lumped together as federal all of that's federal we do not receive any united way money and for the first time we received um well i shouldn't say the first time interest on lawyers trust account funds are are now coming in, and that's it.

4:10:41 Have you had discussion with your 15-member board in reference to ways that you could start raising funds for the organization? Because that is really their charge. I know the governor is recommending a half your appropriation, but that's really their job to come up with the additional money. Well, it is an interesting question. We have had in our recent board retreats a discussion about creating a development plan. And for us, it's really about how we retain attorneys as more than just fundraising. The Territory is not a good place for raising funds for legal entities. Legal aid can't get pro bono attorneys, much less get law firms to donate significant amounts of money to legal aid. One minute. So our fundraising has really been more about finding grant sources.

4:11:38 And our board does have that on their agenda. They do have part of the strategic plan, and they do have in their responsibility this year to prepare what's called a development plan. Okay, so they didn't have one before? No. Okay. The first strategic plan we had was after I became the executive director, which was 2018, and the plan was done in 2020. So on page 3 of the post-audit report, there's capital outlays of \$184,618.

4:12:19 What's that about? Those outlays had to do with us preparing our buildings. Our buildings were damaged during the 2017 hurricanes, and we've been doing things kind of trying to hold on. When we moved into the lease space that we have in Sunny Isle, we had to do some things to retrofit it in order to meet our needs. But that was for this year, right? Through June of this year, last month, you spent that much money on fixing up the space? Both St. Thomas and St. Croix. St. Croix, okay. How much was St. Croix?

4:13:02 I don't know the difference between. I don't know the amounts for each. Okay. Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity. I'm not going to exceed my time. Thank you very much for your responses. Thank you very much, Senator Frederick. I think the graph you recognize for your four minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, colleagues. Good afternoon. As far as Attorney Gotti, Edie, thank you for the services that you and your staff provide. Much appreciated.

4:13:37 What is your total tax? How much is it you're asking? You're asking for the budget. \$2,7,700. Okay, so \$2,7,700. \$700. That's the same thing you asked for? Correct. The last two years. Okay. And so I guess nobody in line for any wage increases or anything? Any wage increases that we have. Right now, we have positions that haven't been filled. And so we're just... How many vacancies do you have?

4:14:16 We have four that we need to fill. What was the cost of those vacancies? Because I think you had five before. I still have five. What we've done, and this is, I guess I should explain that. What we've done is, Attorney Sanders used to be just the litigation director. We had a separate managing attorney. And in order to meet the needs of the community, in order to continue to function, we have put together some of our functions and asked people to do multiple jobs. And right now he's doing those. I don't want to lose that position because at some point we really need to do that again and separate those two so but in terms of ideal world as senator francis asked in order for us to to do what we can do to meet the needs of the community right now i'd need to fill three attorney positions and one administrative support position so it'd be the three plus one four and then the four plus the one where you say you have so a total of five vacancies correct five overall Okay, and the cost for those five vacancies, I know before, what was the cost you have for those five vacancies?

4:15:24 The amount requested? Correct. 47. I don't have a calculator, but I think we're very close to my half a million dollars. Okay, because I know before there were five vacant positions totaling \$335,419, but they weren't all for the three and four and the three and one, but your total last year for the 26 budget was \$335,419 for five vacancies. So I guess that would still be the number.

- 4:16:05 And I'm asking that because I'm saying you're asking for the same amount of money from the general fund. We aren't looking at any increases in terms of what you're looking for going forward. No, the salaries that you see are salaries that were increased. Right. So the acts still for the five vacant positions totaling \$335,000, \$419,000. So then that would be the same amount. Correct. Okay. Okay. okay your when is your fiscal year or what is January to December January is okay okay so right now there's a difference with you okay one minute uh so your your total expenditures to date are what the total overall number I have here one million six sixty three three fifty okay one million six sixty three three fifty and um now does does your budget have where the end of the year it rolls over any monies roll over to the next budget any any um 30 seconds any balance of monies left that you don't spend all your budget does it roll over to your next budget Well, typically, the grantors that we have, we have to send the money back if we don't spend it.
- 4:17:30 So LEPC, if we don't spend the money, we have to send it back. Okay. With LSC, there's very little carryover that we can do because they're only giving us \$200,000 every year. So our federal grants typically require that we return the funds because our grants, When we get funding for LEPC, they are reimbursement grants, which means we have to put out the money first, and then they give it back to us. Okay, so you don't have no access to a loan?
- 4:18:02 So we get an appropriation of the amounts that I showed you here that we were approved for, but if we don't spend it out of our coffers first, and we don't get reimbursed for it, then that amount of, I'm going to say, appropriation or allocation disappears. okay so your LSC I'll wrap up Mr. Chair your LSC grant is for for 26 budget is for 362 000. LEPC no the um the LEPC is for 429 992.
- 4:18:37 the LEPC so you said the one for the the the LSC or the LEPC you said so the legal services corporation fund 362 your law enforcement planning commission with um VOCA and VAWA 429 those have gone down I'm not sure where we're no no I'm looking at uh the previous post-started report from for actually for this year's budget not for 27 budget I'm looking at your your current budget now so the monies that you have received from LEPC how much money did you receive from LEPC. The money that we're into with LEPC right now? Correct. I believe those are the two grants that are listed in the post audit report on page. Right, and then you also have the HHS. And we don't have that, you're talking about SMP, it's 114,000. Right, so I'm just trying And you figure out, did you receive those that I mentioned, the \$3,426? \$168,056 for VOCA.
- 4:19:48 We bill quarterly. Okay. So we haven't gotten all of those funds. That grant will terminate on September 30, 2026. That's VOCA. VAWA, and that grant picked up October 1, 2025, VOCA, and it will go through September 30, 2026. Okay, so don't abuse my time. What I was basically getting at is that because of your fiscal year being January to December and the government's fiscal year being October to September, you have a crossover of funding that would be able to still sustain you through to December. Correct. Because then you would be picking up our budget ends September and begins again. Correct. Now, do you ever see a void in between the September fiscal year budget to your December fiscal year budget in terms of the appropriations that you get?
- 4:20:52 not in terms of the appropriations actual receipt of funds is a different matter right the receipt of funds so so then you have to rely on your grant correct money is what I was getting at so in terms of um do we need to adjust how the if anything the allotments because of your fiscal year um so it doesn't basically I've asked, it doesn't leave you in the red doing it, or does it?
- 4:21:22 We would be okay if we got them timely. Okay, okay, so. We've planned it that way. Okay, thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Like I said, we're just trying to get that because of the two different fiscal years, how we could address and make it more convenient. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator DeGraff. How do you measure efficiency? What mechanism, what skill do you use to determine whether or not you're being effective and efficient? Based on the · there are a couple of different things.
- 4:22:00 The first part is from the time the client comes in or we have an intake to we can produce what it is they have requested. Those are the things that we call our brief services or our advice and counsel. So we try to meet clients or talk to them within one day of receiving that intake. An attorney contacts them to see what it is they need. That's being efficient. If we can't get to them for several days, our efficiency isn't there. With respect to cases where we're going to court, our efficiency is, we can't really measure that as much, only because we're at the mercy of the court.
- 4:22:38 But what we do in measuring our efficiency in handling cases has to do with just that, how fast we can turn around and produce results for our clients. With respect to how we operate internally, is that we are, because we are a 501c3, we are extremely, I don't want to say frugal, but frugal to a large extent and how it is that we utilize supplies, how it is that we have our space, and how many attorneys that we send out to do things. Our attorneys have multiple jobs. They're not just practicing law. Our attorneys are project directors.

- 4:23:23 They're doing community education. They're doing outreach. And like I said, we send our attorneys out to do home visits and hospital visits. So how we measure it is how fast we're getting the result that the client needs. And we are responsive, trust me. If somebody comes in and they've got an emergency, they need a power of attorney because they need to take a senior or someone else off-island. Our attorneys are also notaries, and they go out to the home. So if you had to give the legal service a grade, what would that be? No, I'd absolutely give my staff an A. A plus. Thank you. Senator Viola, you recognize for your four minutes.
- 4:24:12 Thank you, Mr. Chair. In reference to your budget, I'm looking at the post salary report, page 4. You have only thus far received \$501,925 in your general fund allotment? That we have not received? That you have received? For FY2026, that's correct. Okay. So you're up until what month have you received thus far?
- 4:24:52 You're missing allotment? Have you been getting your regular allotment every single month? No, no, we're not. And we, as I indicated earlier, we had not, until June of 2026, we had not received any funds from the local government since March of 2025. We were that far behind. Say that again, since March of 2025. Correct. Since March of 2025 to June of 26? Correct.
- 4:25:24 So when we got the lump sum in June of 2026, it only brought us current up through December of 2025. So how much did you receive in June of 26? 1.5. 1.5 million? Correct. And that only brought you up until December? Of 2025, that's correct.
- 4:25:54 Okay. But December using your calendar year or using the fiscal year? I'm using the government's fiscal year. So we got the quarter of October, November, December is the only quarter we got in the FY2026 budget. Okay, which would be the \$500,000 or \$1,000 you have here? Correct, because that's how much it is every quarter. So you're owed \$1 million now? Correct. And then \$500,000 more for? Correct. Okay. And have you been in contact with OMB?
- 4:26:37 We have only had conversations as we've been waiting and waiting and waiting to get funds, but we haven't talked about how we're going to end up this year. So what have you been running on? Reserves? We've been running on other grant funds that came from other grantors. When is that going to expire? They already did. So you're running on fumes? We're running on fumes, and we're using other grant sources. Yes.
- 4:27:08 This is an issue. So we had some special grant funds that came from ERAP. And those funds, I think we closed out with them, I think it was May of 2026. Okay, so the recommendation from fiscal year 27 from OMB is \$1 million to you? Correct, which is a major concern and problem for us.
- 4:27:43 We would like to have our approval for the exact same amount that we have requested for the last two years. Did they give you a justification as to why your budget was reduced by 50 percent? 30 seconds? No, we just got our post-audit report last night. So you didn't realize that your recommendation was in the end? I saw that, which is why my testimony reflected it. but I had not had any conversations with anybody about it because we hadn't seen a post-audit report, so I didn't know. Okay.
- 4:28:16 And it's your testimony that you would like to receive the same amount that you received? That is correct. Time. Okay, last question. When you gave the breakdown of cases, you said 722 St. Croix, 189 St. Thomas. Correct. That's a huge disparity between islands. Well, a lot of it has to do with the fact that I only have one attorney in St. Thomas. Okay. So the numbers are not a true reflection as to the need? As to the community need. I believe that's correct. And a lot of it has to do with the fact that we have one attorney in St. Thomas right now, and our attorneys in St. Croix are trying to pick up what we can to help St. Thomas. but we don't do as much outreach in St. Thomas as we do in St. Croix. Oh, you do a lot more outreach in St. Croix. That is correct.
- 4:29:12 Okay, so you naturally get a lot more cases because you are with us in the community. That is correct. Okay, thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator Vialli. Senator Ray-Franceca, you recognize for your five minutes. thank you thank you thank you mr chair um pleasant good afternoon colleagues and all the viewing and listening audience um director shelby king gady i want to follow up on that um the legal representation on saint thomas um your testimony is you have one attorney That is correct.
- 4:29:55 How many do you have on St. Croix? Right now, we have three attorneys in St. Croix, not including myself. Okay. So you mentioned you have three vacant attorneys and one vacant managing attorney. Is that correct? Those are the vacancies, yes. But are any of those vacancies for St. Thomas District? Absolutely. The managing attorney position is for St. Thomas, as well as the staff attorney position is for St. Thomas.
- 4:30:33 Okay, good. So do you utilize the court electronic filing system to file some of your cases, work on some of the workload? All of them. and do you provide virtual legal assistance to your clients absolutely okay good um you know i've been looking um at your presentation here i see the majority of your clients i believe the majority are senior citizens

that was that was testimony that you give and you know um i have to congratulate you on all of the good work you do and also um attorney damien sanders i know you do important work for the community um let me ask you um since you haven't received an allotment from march of 2025 till june um do you does the organization have certificates of deposits or some investments that you utilize to subsidize and provide funding in the meantime? Yes, Senator. What we do is when we get funds that are granted to us directly, we immediately put them where they can be invested until they are used. But again, we can't really count on the funds until the grant period that represents those funds has closed out.

4:32:06 and then we either have to return the funds or we have to show how they were spent so we do have a amount of money that we have in reserve to repair our buildings especially if it turns out that we are not going to be able to get the FEMA funding that we're relying on right now okay and and how much is that amount of money you have in reserves leave it may be close to I believe it's close to two million two million okay um so I want to follow up on that one minute so does any of your funds come from federal grants yes I know the answer um so do any of those funds require a local match any of our grant funds yeah they require a little match absolutely um with the and the match is is not one-to-one in most cases but we have a percentage that we have to meet in order to produce the grant results or the project project results okay just just from my understanding because i i'm not clear on this one but you receive funds from the local government but do you also receive funding from department of human services or that's included in the local government well actually um we provide services to seniors that are 60 years and above based upon us expecting to receive funds from human services but we have not received funds from human services in quite some time

4:33:53 and in the past it's only been about 60 000 maybe 75 000 one year and that time typically not included with what comes from the the vi government it's a separate amount but we have not received that in quite some number of years mr chief i can just have one final question please no problem Yes. So is it your testimony is that Human Services owes you about \$60,000 more or less for the services for the seniors? Human Services owes us for about three years, \$60,000, between \$60,000 and \$75,000. Okay, so that's about \$180,000 to \$2,000. How about the United Way and Veterans Administration? What have you received from those two agencies? we don't receive united way funds and have not first i'm not sure how many years not since i've been executive director um and that's been since 2018. the veterans administration funds that was a one-time grant and it that grant has turned out it has expired but we don't have those funds i know the valuable services that this organization provides to the community and thank you kindly mr chair for the time thank you so much senator francisca before i go to senator joseph attorney god he said three years you have not received funding from human services that is correct what's been done to um are sure that you receive those funds because like i said you play a critical role we've had um i i think it has just been changed in administrators and um just you're talking about three years i understand and we've had those you know we've made contact it just has not happened i think i i'm not sure how to explain it we

4:36:00 haven't gotten the funds and but we don't stop providing the services which is we provide services for seniors 60 years and above without regard to income, which is not the way our organization was formed and the mandate that we're supposed to meet with Legal Services Corporation. And they have a very crucial need for those services, correct? Correct. Okay, let me ask you in respect to your needs assessment. We have a list of several areas.

4:36:35 It started with housing, then health, safety, basics. Family, elderly and disabled, economic opportunity, security, consumer issues, education, then transportation. Of all those needs, were they listed based on a number in terms of what the most general across the board? And I should be clear, when we have our priorities listed, it's not that one is greater than the other.

4:37:09 Our priorities are these are the areas where we will provide services. We have people who come to us and ask for things outside of those areas, and we can't do it, and we basically tell them it's outside of the priorities unless there's an emergency. So how have you reinvented your intake processes, process policies, and procedures You have to address many of the legal needs and overcome some of the challenges faced by the community. What we've done is legal services used to be appointment only.

4:37:41 And what we've done is we take the intakes by telephone, online, in person, at our mobile justice units. And if we have clients who need our services immediately, we respond. as i said as well we do home visits we do hospital visits we have tried to meet the community where they are with respect to how it is that they can get what they need one of the things that we have found in our community as we have a number of people who are in need of a guardian is that we've been in situations where we've actually had to expend some of the funds to pay for the services of those required visitors or doctors in order to get the assessment in order for the guardianship to go forward, but we don't have enough funds to do that for every guardianship that comes through our doors, but to the extent that we can, we have accommodated that.

- 4:38:43 So we've tried to figure out ways to have our staff adjust and do other jobs. We've had to figure out how to do our job differently, but we're not just lawyers, Whereas, as it seems, you know, we do a holistic approach, which means to some degree we are also social workers. I understand exactly what you're talking about, but we appreciate what you do. Senator Clifford Joseph, you recognize for your five minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to folks from Legal Services. On page three of the post-editor report, you recognize, say you had a, do you have any pro bono participation at this point? Yes. We still have roughly 13 attorneys that have agreed to take on pro bono cases for us. However, not all of them have cases. Okay.
- 4:39:44 And not all of them are in a position to take cases when we call. Primarily, the cases that we send out to pro bono attorneys are probate cases. Okay. And that's a heavy lift. And pro bono is probably a misnomer because I don't believe we have any attorneys that are taking cases pro bono. They take them as what we call low bono. We pay them something. Okay. Well, I mean, I just know that, yeah, I mean, it would have been nice if it were increasing, but that's why I asked the question, because I wanted to know if we still have those generous, real generous. But, I mean, in today's world, everything is super expensive, so when I saw a pro bono, I said, let me ask, how was that working out? It didn't. We got a grant to try to see if we could change the culture or try to see if there was a way that we could get attorneys to become more apt to do pro bono, and it didn't really work. I mean, we did some training, gave free CLEs, and for attorneys, CLEs are like gold.
- 4:40:52 You've got to have CLEs in order to keep your license current. And they got the training, they got the CLEs, but they didn't sign up to take cases. And, okay, thank you for that response. And Legal Services has grant funding from several different organizations. How is that working out? And how are you making sure you're in compliance with these grants? That's why both our project directors, which are our attorneys, and we have a grants compliance manager. We keep everything on a schedule because we have reporting that is not just at the end of the grant period, but we have periodic reporting on all of our grants, and we have certain requirements under each grant. And anything special you're doing to make sure that you could acquire additional federal funding? Yeah, in that 28th hour I have at night, after the 24-hour day is done, I'm always in search of new grant funds. Okay, so as to date... Sources, I should say. So as to date, we have nothing that we lost by grant. Grants have termed out or expired.
- 4:42:01 I haven't been denied any grants that we've applied for, and we are grateful for that. But trying to find a grant is not an easy process. Okay, but when you do have these fundings, you have the attorneys available to get some of the work done. We produce the services and do it. Okay. Thank you for that response. And I saw you have a jump in training from \$16,569 to \$39,045. One minute. \$45,000.
- 4:42:34 On the training. So how is this working out for us? Again, our training is required in a number of areas in order for our attorneys to be prepared. I mean, we have attorneys right now, one attorney is out right now learning how to handle cases. I mean, litigation, we do domestic violence training. Our attorneys go out. All I really need to know is to make sure that with this jump, you have seen the improvement in the work that you're performing.
- 4:43:07 Especially since our staff has taken on extra duties. Good. And for the public, could you at least cover the areas that Legal Services handles? I mean, I know you spoke about the age because I have had inquiries in my office questioning that they had land laws dispute. And then when they called the office and said, you guys don't handle this, so could you just for the general public make it clear what services do you provide? And I know you already mentioned the age, so you could just mention it.
- 4:43:46 Okay, so let's start with legal services is the provider of services to persons who meet certain income levels those are eligibility and for persons who are 60 years and above we don't consider the income from there we're looking at different types of cases and the different types of cases are things like everything from evictions foreclosures employment whether it's wrongful discharge, unemployment, we do custody, we do a divorce, we do guardianships, we do...
- 4:44:30 Discriminations? I'm sorry? Discriminations? We don't do the discrimination because the Department of Labor will take that on. Okay, good. I just wanted to know. You didn't mention it, I'm just asking. Yeah, yeah. And then we do things that are not necessarily cases that are wills, powers of attorney. We do estate planning, if you will. We take on probates. We typically send those out to our low bono attorneys.
- 4:44:58 Okay. Thank you for your response. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Senator Joseph, for that line of questions. Executive Director Mr. Gotti, in regards to challenges, what would you describe as the greatest challenges confronting the LSVI at this time? And going into the FY27 budget, then, how do you believe the budget aligns to address those challenges? I think there's two things.
- 4:45:37 The one is obviously staffing. Staffing is our major concern right now. And staffing is not just providing our attorneys, but also our attorneys to have the available time and the resources in order to go out and do some of the work that is

required of us. I mentioned before that there is a huge jump in guardianships in the territory. And guardianships require a lot more than just preparing a petition and going to court. It means that you've got to monitor an entire process of a doctor doing an evaluation, a visitor going out, and then presenting that to the court so that they would be more than willing to assign the guardianship.

4:46:20 In the territory for us, we don't have a department within health or human services that will automatically do these types of evaluations. And if our clients can't pay for them, they can't get the guardianship. So that's the weight that happens in our community, which then creates another void for us and our attorneys. So our biggest need is for personnel, but personnel in terms of personnel who know not only how to practice law, but also how to navigate those other scenarios. Our budget sets it up so that our attorneys can do just that, but we've got to train them in order how to do more than just practice law. And our support staff, I can't say enough about them because they know exactly what's going on in the community and how to meet the need as well. Then finally, I guess our other need is how it is that we can create what I'm going to call a pipeline of getting people here in the territory to take the roles that we have at Legal Services.

4:47:27 uh do you have a waiting list do i have a waiting list of clients that's waiting to to receive services i don't know that we have a waiting list we don't create waiting lists what happens for us is that the intake well i guess i guess let me ask the question uh i guess another way uh do you believe that there is clients that is denied services as a result of not having sufficient staffing or the availability of counsel? I won't say denied services.

4:48:00 It might be the level of service. In other words, we can't take every case to court because I don't have the adequate resources for my attorneys to be in every court case. So we might do something less than going to court. We might have to help them prepare their documents. We might have to do their mediation. We might have to do something less than taking on the full representation that a lot of our clients desire. So, yes, in some respects, but it's not a denial of services. That has never been our position. And so the only things where there's a denial are things that are not part of our priorities.

4:48:40 And you have a national affiliation, correct, and the Legal Services have a national affiliation? Legal Services Corporation. Right. All right. Have you received any funding, or are you anticipating any funding from the cooperation in FY27? Yes. We have already submitted our request, and we usually submit those in June, and we find out in December what we get, because, again, we're on a calendar year, fiscal year, And it's based on census information in terms of what the poverty numbers are for the territory where we serve. And I say territory, little t, territory.

4:49:24 So it's been the same amount for the last several years, roughly around \$220,000. And we expect it to come in the same because another census will not occur. till 2030. Are you back in your building? No. You're still not back in your building? No, we're in Sunny Isle, which also I have to say, for St. Croix, that probably has caused our numbers to increase as well because we're on a bus line. And I think the legal services sign has neon lighting.

4:50:06 I'm only kidding, but it sounds like it's neon lighting because I think people see our sign and they show up at our doors. So we have a constant flow of traffic, but we're right there in Sunny Isles, and that's where we've been situated since July of 2023. We are in the process. We did get approved for FEMA funding, but we all probably know how that goes. and so we don't know when the project is going to be completed, which is why our lease obligations, we've been doing it 24 months at a time because we're hoping to get back in our building soon. Have the project started at least?

4:50:44 No, we're still in the A&E stage. Still in the A&E stage. I've not even gotten a scope of work to send out for RFPs, so that gives you an idea about where we are. And it's both our St. Thomas and our St. Croix facilities. All right, so I think I'll allow you to close up at this time. So if we were in a perfect world, what do you believe your three acts will be, you know, so that we could make sure that we're moving the needle and being able to provide more? And, of course, you already gave yourself an A+.

4:51:24 I don't know how much more room you have for improvement, but to be able to deliver and maximize your clientele. My first ask is that the requested funding in the amount of \$2,007,700 would be approved for FY 2027. The second ask is that we get the remaining allotments from the approval for FY2026. And the third ask is that, not even for legal services but for our territory, that we figure out a way to do the services better for seniors as it pertains to guardianships. It's really not just seniors, it's the persons who are in need of mental health services in the territory. The guardianships come about, not just for seniors, but persons who are suffering from mental illness, and their family members need to be able to assist them. And right now, unless they have the money to pay for what's necessary for evaluations and to pay the visitors, they can't even get past the court process. So we don't just ask for ourselves. We're asking for our community.

4:52:53 So that guardianship will then allow you to be able to petition, I mean, obviously be able to petition the courts so that legal services will be able to have guardianship. So these are more or less like ward of the state? I wouldn't say wards of the state. This is where a family member wants to take care of their other family member who is no longer able to take

care of themselves. And so that family member comes to us. We prepare a petition to go to court for them to be named as the guardian over that individual. In order for them to get the guardianship, there has to be a doctor's evaluation that says they're in need of a guardian. That doctor then has to come. For the most part, they have to provide some testimony.

4:53:38 So doctors want to be compensated for their time. And there's also what's called a visitor. visitor. These are all things that are required by the statute. And so when a visitor goes out, a visitor basically kind of goes out and makes sure that that person is definitely in need of a guardian. The court does appoint, I'm going to say, an attorney for the ward so that there's somebody looking out for their legal rights. But those two things, the visitor and the doctor, are costly they can run up to a thousand dollars for a person trying to get a guardianship for their loved one and a lot of our clients can't afford that so what happens is those people who are now going to be wards but we they want to become they want to be wards of their loved ones they don't have a guardian so that becomes the weight of the community so that's why i asked for our community. The mental health needs in our community are extensive. And right now, people who are trying to become guardians to take care of their loved ones are in a bind because they don't have the financial backing to be able to do what the statute requires.

4:54:53 Either we do it through our government agencies, through Department of Human Services or Department of Health, and people shouldn't have to pay for it, or we have the burden on the society that people who are uncared for well thank you that's another um that's another discussion no just another area that we are focusing on because i'm very much trying to wrap my head around this this whole behavioral health component and and certainly that's that's another another aspect of it that we need to give some thought to as well so i'll i'll kind of um call and pick your brain and and share with you how we can make that we're happy to do it happy to do it um so in closing i just make those three asks that we get the funding we requested for fy 2027 we get the remaining allotments for fy 2026 and that we look to how we can help our community in one of the places where we have the greatest need i want to thank you for coming before us today i think that your request is reasonable and it will be considered during our budget markup period and thank you for all the work you continue to do and your stick-to-itiveness in this endeavor Because I know that it becomes a daunting task at times, and you start to question yourself on these matters. Because it takes a toll on you. These public service people don't understand. It really takes a toll on you after a period of time, especially when you're meeting all of these revolving doors and closed doors and everything else there.

4:56:27 So I appreciate the work that you're doing. Thank you. The Committee of Budget Appropriations, welcome aboard, young man. I mean, I know that you're here. You know, I wish you good luck on your future in respect to going back to school, finishing up, and hopefully one day come back to the Virgin Islands to make it happen. All right? The Committee of Budget Appropriations and Finance stands at recess for five minutes. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you.

5:17:05 Thank you. back in record and madam clerk please call up the third and final items on today agenda please black tree public employees relations relations board invited testifier perina jacobs fellman chair person virgin islands labor management committee invited invited testifier yara Tutin, Executive Director. Yara Tutain, Executive Director. This concludes the reading of the agenda and Block 3, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. At this time, we do have the testifiers seated at the testifiers table. We'll start off in the St. Croix District and then we'll go over to St. Thomas. Can you just introduce yourself, please? Just an introduction of your name. Jessica Phil Jones, Executive Director of the PIRB.

5:18:32 Douglas Juergens, Legal Counsel for PIRB. Rodolick Williams, Bradshaw, Chief Financial Officer. Thomas, Mr. Tyne. Media, let's try that again, please. Mr. Thomas?

5:19:04 Jeta Tutain, Labor Management Committee Office, the Executive Director. Afternoon. Mr. Gumbs? Good afternoon. Joseph Gumbs, Co-Chair of Labor, Virgin Islands Labor Management Committee. Thank you. At this time, you recognize your testimony, Ms. Folgers. Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Honorable Chair of the Committee on Budget Appropriation. Finance, Senator Novell E. Francis Jr., members of the Committee on Finance, senators of the 36th Legislature, other presenters, the viewing and listening audience. My name is Jessica Filgens. I am the Executive Director of the Public Employees Relations Board, also known as PIRB. I join you today to provide a detailed overview of PIRB's fiscal year 2026 budget and accomplishments, also to present our budgetary needs for fiscal year 2027.

- 5:20:01 Joining me today is our Chief Financial Officer, Ms. Roderlick Williams-Bradshaw, and our legal counsel, Mr. Douglas Juergens. Please allow me, on behalf of Perp Chair, Karina Jacob Feldman, who could not present with us today to extend recognition to board members, Mr. Rodney Moorhead and Mrs. Annie Day Henry. Herb thanks you for your many years of service and commitment. A special recognition to the late Frederick Joseph, who was truly a value member on our board. His significant contributions as an expert in labor relations was an asset, not only to the perp, but to the people of the Virgin Islands. May he rest in peace. To our hardworking, loyal, and devoted staff, thank you for all your contributions, recommendations, and your dedication to the PERB agency. Without you, PERB's accomplishments would not be possible.
- 5:21:08 The PERB was established on August 31st, 1980, through an act of Act 44, pursuant to Act 4440. The PERB shall be comprised of five members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the legislature. Two of the members shall have experience with involvement in labor. Two shall have experience with involvement in management. And the fifth member shall serve as the chairman to the PERB. The act also requires that not less than two members represent the District of St. Croix and not less than two members represent the District of St. Thomas and St. John. There must be a quorum for the PERB to move forward with decisions on pending cases, which by law must be executed within a certain time frame. It should be noted that all board members' terms are expired. The PERB is in need of board members. A full board allows the PERB to continuously move forward with cases and avoid backlog. In accordance with Act 4440 of the 13 legislature of the Virgin Islands, the Act, the mission of the PERB is to administer the provisions of the Act to provide for an orderly and constructive relationship between public employers and their employees.
- 5:22:33 Through enabling legislation, the PIRB has jurisdiction and the authority to handle certain types of cases filed by employees of the government of the Virgin Islands. Given these laws, the PIRB is mandated to function as an impartial administrative agency where the board members serve as fact finders and make decisions about cases based solely on the law, public policies, and precedents. The PERB does not give advice or advocate on behalf of anyone. When PERB's decisions are appealed, PERB's legal counsel defends PERB's ruling in the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands.
- 5:23:17 PERB constantly observes how changes in employment and laws affect the workplace, employment, policies, procedures, and legislation. Our response to these changes is to evaluate, assess, and make the necessary adjustments. These adjustments play an important role on how our budget is developed. PERB is budgeted for 12 positions, 10 positions on St. Croix and 2 on St. Thomas. We are diligently working to fill four vacancies.
- 5:23:50 I will now provide a brief overview of per fiscal year 2026 expenditures. As of June 30th, 2026, personnel services totaled \$395,522. Fringe benefits totaled \$186,455. Supplies totaled \$24,579. Utilities total \$7,371.
- 5:24:23 Other services and charges total \$234,338, which covers professional services, communication, security system services, travel, training, rental machines, and insurance. Capital outlay, \$20,079, which covers purchases that demand immediate and full funding, which brings us to a total of \$868,344. I will now show PERB's fiscal year 2026 accomplishments. PERB has onboarded legal counsel. PERB has had 11 board meetings that were held.
- 5:25:05 Caseload statistics are as follows. 33 total number of cases filed today, 19 cases closed, 119 cases pending, 18 cases pending at the Superior Court, 100 arbitration panels issued, and zero appeal forwarded to mediation. The agency has continued the agreement with the approved hearing officers, which are listed in our presentation. PIRB has outsourced additional stenography services as needed. Salary increases were awarded. PIRB has renewed its lease agreement with St. Thomas property, the Niskey Center, St. Thomas. Other noteworthy accomplishments.
- 5:25:53 The furniture in the St. Thomas reception area was purchased and replaced. ergonomic office chairs was purchased and distributed to employees on St. Croix and St. Thomas security improvements the network video recorder was that was broken on St. Croix was replaced on St. Thomas a network video recorder system with two cameras was installed two of three one screen systems was purchased and set up for the St. Croix and St. Thomas conference room purchase of the third system for the training room was postponed due to change in priorities. As a semi-autonomous quasi-judicial agency that regulates labor management relations between our government employers their employees and union representatives training of our board staff managers employees and union reps is crucial. It ensures that our decision makers are aware of changes keep in compliance with the law's rules, and effectively manage the cases. In addition, it allows PERP staff to maintain their credentials and keep current with certifications, licensures, and requisite courses. Training and conferences completed and scheduled for fiscal year 2026. National Association of Hearing Officials, conferences and online webinars, Labor and Employment Relation Association Conferences, National Employment Law Institute Virtual Conference, Labor Employment Advanced Practices, National Court Reporting Association Conference and Expo, National Association of Administrative Law Judiciary Labor Law and Labor Arbitration Training, National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators Professional Development Software Soft Skill Training Developing Your Own Emotional Intelligence

- 5:27:58 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Staying Calm in High Stress Conversations Workplace Investigations A Comprehensive Guide Business Grammar and Proof Reading Note, PERB also participates in organizational trainings provided by Division of Personnel, BIT, and other entities. Our recommended budget for FY 2027. A breakdown of our fiscal year 2027 budget is as follows.
- 5:28:33 Personnel services accounts for a total of \$814,500. Fringe benefits total \$375,243. Supplies total \$46,100. Other services and charges total \$388,200. Utilities total \$16,000. Capital outlay, total \$46,867, for a total of \$1,686,910. Our plans for fiscal year 2027 are as follows. Higher security services, reduced caseloads, personnel and recruitment, increase board meetings slash executive sessions, propose training for new board members and new employees, move forward with training initiatives, purchase case management system software for digital file system, replace training room furnitures and equipment. In summary, Honorable Chair, it is important to remind this body and the viewing and listening audience that the Public Employees Relations Board is the only agency that is tasked with addressing and resolving complaints, conflicts, and grievances in labor-related matters directly affecting government employees. The Public Employees Relations Board's goal may change from year to year in response to administrative priorities and operational needs.
- 5:30:20 However, its core mission remains unchanged to facilitate resolution and ensure that all matters are addressed in a timely and effective manner. The PERB's continued success is established with consistency, defensibility of board decisions, and procedural integrity. To support the PERB's efforts, adequate funding is essential for contractual agreements, rental buildings, maintenance, upgrades, procurement, travel, training, and overall agency operation. The above goals will be achieved within the recommended budget proposed for fiscal year 2027. PERB will continue to meet its statutory duties. PERB understands its mission and how the decisions we make affect the lives of government employees. We remain steadfast and continue to bring resolve. We humbly thank you for the opportunity to present before this body our budgetary needs for fiscal year 2027. We stand ready and available to answer any questions you may have.
- 5:31:35 Thank you very much, Ms. President, for your testimony. Next, we'll go to Mr. Tyne. for her testimony. Good afternoon, Chairman Honorable Novell E. Francis Jr., and other distinguished members of the Finance Committee of the 36th Legislature. I am Judah Tutank, Executive Director of the Virgin Isles Labor Management Committee. It is my privilege to appear before you today to present an overview of our committee and to respectfully request our consideration of our budget, our proposed budget.
- 5:32:12 My presentation will highlight the history and the purpose of the VILMC as an agency, as an agency labor management committee, followed by a brief review of our fiscal year 2027 budget recommendation. I would like to recognize Mr. Joseph Gumbs, who will be providing an additional presentation to the Finance Committee on our accomplishments for 2026 and goals for 2027. The Virgin Islands Labor Management Committee, also known as the VILMC, is a compromise of 10 members, 5 representing labor, 5 representing management.
- 5:32:54 Currently, we have two vacant spots available on the management side. Our management representatives include Joseph Rensford, co-chair, management, Ronald Tutank, committee member, Violet Wilkins, committee member, Labor Representative Joseph Gumbs, Co-Chair, Carol Armstrong, Vice-Co-Chair, Hillary Jean-Baptiste, Committee Member, Classier Industrious Committee Member, and Geraldine Walters-Bunkham, Committee Member. The Committee operates under the Article of Incorporation and Bylaws. The role of the executive director. As the executive director, my responsibilities include implementing committee recommendations, coordinating workshops and seminars, and preparing proposals in support of our goals.
- 5:33:55 These efforts are guided by a strategic operation plan developed in consultation with experts from the Government of the Virgin Islands, Labor Organization, the Federal Mediation Council, better known as the FMCS, American Arbitration Association, and private sector professionals. Our mission and activities, the BILMC play an active role in the public sector collective bargaining and was established to strengthen labor management relations in improving working conditions and enhancing the quality of work life for employees across the u.s virgin islands some of the committee's key objectives includes developing educational programs that enhance labor management communication identifying and resolving issues that affect labor relations encouraging collaboration and trust between employees and management a brief historical background the VI labor management committee is a territory wide initiative direct dedicated to strengthening employees involvement in management making this decision making with it off with a focus of improving the overall environment the concept of the vlmc was introduced to the virgin irelands in 1982 by the federal mediation mediation and conciliation services which sought to promote collaboration between labor and management in a non-adversial setting at the national level fmcs actively organized similar committees to strengthen labor management relations. In 1986, the Virgin Islands formally established the VILMC as a non-profit organization. The term labor encompasses both unionized and non-unionized employees within government agencies. In 2023, the FMCS recognized

- 5:36:07 the Virgin Islands Labor Management Committee as the longest continuing functioning labor management committee internationally as is a significant milestone under the territory's commitment to cooperative workplace solutions the vlmc programs are designated and equipped to employees with skills and tools needed to engage effectively in agency group dynamics these initiatives are especially vital in organizations where adversarial relationships previously existed helping to build trust and cooperation between labor and management at its core the vlmc values the expertise and experience of employees as essential to solving workplace challenges and enhancing service delivery moreover it's its champion employees consult consultation in decision-making processes ensuring their voices are heard before final decisions are made the focus of the vlmc is fostering engagement between labor and management by developing agencies' specific labor management committees. These committees address and recommend solutions to workplace challenges that will not directly cover under the collective bargaining agreement have a significant impact in the workplace. We are focusing on employees' retention, organizational culture, and collaborative problem-solving.
- 5:37:51 These are priorities in the Virgin Islands, which shift in government administration, retirement, reassignment, and appointments of new agency leaders, continually reshaping workplace dynamic. To support these efforts, the VILMC offers dispute resolution services in grievance mediation facilitation and interest-based program solving. to help agencies' internal challenges before they escalate. The committee also delivers customized training focusing on team building, communication, conflict resolution, and leadership development to strengthen agency effectiveness.
- 5:38:39 The VILMC will continue implementing in-house supervisors, managers, employees, and union workshops to encourage open dialogue, shared accountability, and collaborative development solution. These sessions build a culture where labor and management can work together to improve operation, enhance employee morale, and deliver high quality public services. Consistent cooperation between labor and management is a proven driver of organizational efficiency and workplace stability. With the requested budget, the VLMC will expand its capacity to support agencies through structured collaboration, training initiatives, proactive disputes, resolution, ensuring that government operations remain effective, responsive, and resilient. Our budget request for fiscal year 2027 is \$285,000, which allocates as follows.
- 5:39:51 \$147,000 for personnel covers compensation for two full-time employees and one part-time employee. \$5,000 for capital outlays include procurement of equipment and assets essential to program operations. \$11,000 for fringe benefits supports required benefits associated with personnel. \$10,000 for office supplies and \$112,000 for other services and charges.
- 5:40:24 This allocation supports professional services for workshops and training sessions, network and communication, office space, rental and utility costs, inter-island travel, and continued education for employees and committee members. Honorable Senators, on behalf of the VI Labor Management Committee, I would express our sincere appreciation for the opportunity to present the budget before the committee. At this time, I would like to invite Mr. Joseph Gumbs to share our accomplishments for fiscal year 2026 and our outlying goals for fiscal year 2027.
- 5:41:13 You may proceed. Good afternoon, Senate Chair, Honorable Novel Francis Jr., and esteemed senators of the 36th legislature, distinguished testifiers, colleagues, and members of the listening and viewing audience. My name is Joseph Gumbs, and I serve as the Labor Co-Chair of the Virgin Islands Labor Management Committee. It is with deep respect and a shared commitment to strengthening labor management relations that I gratefully accept the invitation to testify before your committee today.
- 5:42:03 VILMC is Operational Goals and Objectives. Goal number one, foster and maintain healthy, fulfilling work environments across the government agencies by expanding the opportunities for employees to participate in meaningful and decision-making, workplace improvement, and organizational cultural initiatives. Goal number two, design and implement training and development programs that strengthen communication, productivity, and continuous learning and labor management relations. These programs will support both labor and management in investigating and evolving workplace expectations. Goal number three, assist agencies in identifying, addressing, and resolving issues that affect organizational effectiveness, employees' morale, and the overall health of labor management relationship within the workplace.
- 5:43:18 Goal number four, produce and distribute the motivator, a monthly newsletter that highlights best practices and labor management collaboration, showcasing agency success and promote ongoing dialogue, transparency, and engagement across the public sector. Goal number five, implement a VI youth outreach through high school workshops focused on work ethics, customer service skills, and an introduction to fundamentals of an agency labor management committee. These interactive student-led workshops build essential life skills, including communication, self-awareness, respect, compassion, gratitude, integrity, collaboration, courage, resilience, and leadership. Objectives and strategies.

- 5:44:24 The agency labor management committee meetings and workshops are designed to foster collaboration in a non-adversarial environment, ultimately enhancing labor relations across the agency. These forums provide a structured space for problem-solving through the open exchange of information and ideas, hoping to define key issues and work toward effective resolutions. They also serve as platforms for developing leadership and communication skills, discouraging unproductive behaviors and contract administration, Promoting constructive conflict management, reducing workplace tension amongst all parties.
- 5:45:21 A, increasing utilizations of the ALMC. To encourage engagement and strengthen the ALMC framework, VILMC will support the organization and substantial ability of ALMC's across agencies. Offer orientation sessions and targeted training. Provide issue-specific assistance to address workplace challenges. Circulate the Motivator newsletter to reinforce engagement and communication. Sponsor training programs for all management and non-management employees.
- 5:46:08 Host an annual general meeting for all agency labor management committees. Expected outcomes. Increase in the number of active and functioning ALMCs. Higher participation from managers, supervisors, employees, and unions. Greater interest in training related to contract administration and grievance resolution problem solving. Improving the nature of labor management relationships. Unsolved issues often single deeper concerns about communication, leadership, or workplace culture. Labor management relationships typically fall into one of three categories. Conflict management does not recognize or meaningfully engage with union representation. Restraint. Interaction is limited and strained or inconsistent. Accommodation. Both parties engage in productive solution-focused dialogue. VILMC's strategic focus is to move towards accommodation characterized by mutual respect, open communication, long-term collaboration. Early Intervention, and Productive Issue Resolution.
- 5:47:51 For Fiscal Year 2027, the VILMC anticipates the following goals. We will continue to provide effective training programs to build a base of knowledge for management, union, and other interested parties. to provide the skills to deal more effectively and efficiently in resolving grievances with their agency labor management committees. As such, the following programs are available during fiscal year 2026. Organizing, reorganizing agency labor management committees in each agency, the master collective bargaining agreement in the vi government requires that agencies organize agency lmc's the administrative hearing process customer service in the vi workplace diversity in the vi workplace contract administration grievance handling and so forth.
- 5:49:10 Ever specified training as deemed appropriate and by request, we will continue to offer the use of the LMC's conference room to the government of the VI agencies for meeting training and mediations and arbitrations. Workshops. In an ongoing effort to conduct training in the VILMC, the followings are presented for consideration of additional fiscal year 2026 funding. Updating the VILMC's information brochure to provide additional information including frequently asked questions, training programs, and other pertinent information. Overall, in an ongoing effort to work within its budgetary constraints during fiscal year 2026, LMC will continue to effectively schedule training courses.
- 5:50:15 VI-LMC members and FMCS commissioners will continue to present while providing cost savings to the government, agencies, and unions. The ILMC will simultaneously schedule more trainings on both islands and continue to provide essential training programs. Honorable Senators, on behalf of the Virgin Islands Labor Management Committee, I extend our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to present our accomplishments for fiscal year 2026 and share our strategic goals for fiscal year 2027. At this time, Ms. Tutain and I welcome any questions and stand ready to provide further insight. Thank you for allowing me your time.
- 5:51:08 Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thumbs as well as Ms. Tutain for your testimony there. Just a few questions before I open up to my colleagues for a minute round. Mr. Tain, how many board members currently within the PERP? I'm sorry. Pilgens, Pilgens, I'm sorry. Yes. We have three board members currently. Three board members? Three, yes. Who are they?
- 5:51:39 Who are they? Perina Jacob-Fellman, Rodney Moorhead, and Annie Day-Henry. Annie Day-Henry. When was the, how many board meetings were held this year? 11. 11? And Mr. Tain or Lieutenant Gumbs, in regards to the Labor Management Committee, how many government agencies now have LMC's within their agencies? We right now have 14. I'm sorry? 14 14 agencies yes and are those semi-autonomous agencies or just central government central government none within the semi-autonomous agencies central government not as yet, no Ms. Filgens, what financial challenges do you have at this time?
- 5:52:46 At this particular time, we do not have any financial challenges. No financial challenges. You have received all of your allotments. Everything is up to date. A little late. Speak into the mic, please. Some of them were a little late, but they got there in time for us to do what we needed to do. And the same for you, Mr. Tyne. What financial challenges are you

experiencing at this time? At this time, we are up to date. We were experiencing financial receiving allotments, but we are up to date now. Any outstanding payment to vendors?

5:53:20 Not at this time. Diligence? Yes, we have \$6,741.50 in outstanding payments at this time. Any of those 60 days or 90 days? Can I address this to our CFO? Sure. Please put your name on the record. Rodelick Williams, Bradshaw? No. Very well, so all of those are up to date on just pending, I guess, 30-day payment? Yes.

5:53:52 Okay, at this time I'll open it up to my colleagues for a four-minute round. Senator Blighton, you recognize. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to the testifiers, both PERB and Labor Union, and thank you, the Labor Management Committee. And thank you so much for your testimonies, Ms. Philman and Ms. Two-Time. Let me ask you, Ms. Philman, though, because you all stated that you only have \$6,000 in outstanding vendor payments. Is any of that WAPA?

5:54:28 Because I see you have at least \$1,600. We have a few. \$1,600. So all of those are accurate? \$441.771 and \$388? For the one on Power Authority? What WAPA are you talking about? Yes. \$570.97, \$497.88, and \$722.82. And what's the plan to pay them and get up to date? They're pending right now, payment.

5:54:56 Okay, very well. And you have a vacant? They were for June, by the way. Okay. Amen. Okay, very well. and you have a vacant board position of vacancy? We have two vacancies for the board. How long have they been vacant? For a while. For a while. Several years. There were many years vacant.

5:55:28 So what is being done to fill those vacancies? The chairman has reached out to the governor, we're still waiting very well let me ask Ms. two times in respect to because in a testimony you spoke a lot about training what type of training do you do and how often do you do those training and what have you seen as a result of those training among the rank and files?

5:56:09 Well, again, the training is provided to improve the relationship and also the knowledge of both the managers and the union members when it comes to the collective bargaining agreement. So we do training when it comes to collective bargaining agreements. We do training when it comes in regards to management. solutions and dealing with employees we have some training some additional trainings coming up within the next couple months and it's basically to make both labor and management aware of the collective bargaining agreements their rights and also the expectations based on the collective bargaining agreement and the performance of their duties and in respect to those trainings have there been pretty good turnout in terms of involvement or attendance yes most definitely we offer critiques at the end of the training session and which gives the participants the opportunity to let us know that the information was hopeful to them and did they receive it well and was it uh properly brought across to them and we always receive high feedback when it comes to these uh when they do this submission as to what did they think of our performance okay very well thank you for that let's get back to perp ms philman let me ask you in respect to um your stenography services and your outsourcing how much how much um have you Say, have you paid for last year for that type of service?

5:57:54 And how much have you paid this year to date? One minute. I would like to refer this question to the CFO, please. Sure. If you may. And what else? Thank you. I'll have to get back to you with that information. Okay, very well. Well, while you're looking for that, let me ask you, in respect to your caseload, that's important. And you have 33 total cases filed to date, 19 cases closed, 119 cases pending, 18 cases pending at the Superior Court, and 100 arbitration panel issues, zero appeal. So arbitration, I know that arbitration has the process of loan, correct?

5:58:49 You have 100 of those. Arbitration? Yes. You're on to 19 cases that's pending. Time. In terms of the caseload, how much cases did you start with for this fiscal year? I would like to refer this question to the legal counsel, please. Sure. So how much cases did we begin with at the beginning of this season? Because you have 119 cases pending, right?

5:59:18 How much cases did you start with? How many cases did we start with? Good Lord. Well, for the fiscal year, 119 cases. So we had 88 cases for the 2005, 2025. So I don't have a number for that, Senator. Okay, to the Chair, if you can give us that information, I'll be appreciative, okay? Yes, we will. Thank you so much. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, for the time. Thank you very much. Yep, you ready, Ms. CFO?

5:59:53 Radley Williams-Ratchdaugh, CFO. Scenography services for FY2026 thus far has been \$1,468. All right, thank you. Thank you. The chair will now recognize Senator Huber. Frederick, you're recognized for your four minutes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Pleasant. Good afternoon, colleagues, testifiers, listening and viewing audience, my office, the office of Huber, Frederick, and central staff. Pleasant. Good afternoon, Executive Director Filgens. How are you doing? Fine. How are you, Senator?

6:00:30 Also, let me make sure I catch both Executive Director, Executive Director Turtine. Good afternoon. How are you? good afternoon yeah um let me start with over here i'm saying croix so executive director of philgens let's um talk about the um the positions you're trying to fill you said you're trying to fill four of them yes what what district st croix three on st croix

and one on St. Thomas three where's your heaviest caseload Our heaviest caseload is on St. Croix. St. Croix.

6:01:12 I was looking at some of the courses that was provided, how to deal with difficult people. I thought that was very interesting. What is that course about? Well, um, it helps you to understand how to de-escalate things before it gets to a point where there's no control before it comes to perb, yes, basically, but if you do that then you know you won't get a job, so which is interesting, yeah, I think the whole we all need it as a territory, so I'm making fun of it, but it's it's well needed when I served as deputy commissioner of health I dealt with the same challenges and I'm glad that we're still doing that I just wish it would actually reduce the caseload, yeah, so it's still challenging, I see, um, quick question, I looked at the uh per diem that was shown, well, what do you pay on per diem for board members, \$75 a day per day and how often do they meet on average, they meet various times because even though there's not a board meeting there's on telephone conversations they have to come in and sign documents they may have to do an executive meeting via zoom so it may vary it can go from seven days to 14 days per month, sometimes 21 days. The \$75 is for even telephone meetings?

6:03:14 Yes. Okay. Interesting. It was like one of the second or third highest expenditures I saw. It's like \$81,000, somewhere around here? No. Board stipends from October to June 2026, \$12,225. Nope, nope, nope. Let's see. I saw that somewhere. You may be looking at rollover from 2025. Rollover, okay.

6:03:51 One minute. It caught my attention. I'm like, well, what is that? Okay. Yes. Okay, great. So pretty much the biggest cost statement for you guys would be trying to resolve these cases through arbitration? Not necessarily. Not necessarily. I will have legal counsel pick up that. Okay. I bit my tongue earlier today.

6:04:24 Introduce yourself again. Whether or not a ghost arbitration depends upon the type of complaint it is. And the collective bargaining agreement interfaces there. The person has grievances that they file with the government agency. And then at the end of that grievance period, under the collective bargaining agreement, they will demand arbitration. And then we provide a list of arbitrators that we maintain in the office, maybe 50 or 60 of them in their resumes. and we give them seven to choose from, and they usually do that. That expedites the whole process, so it's less expensive for you if they accept that.

6:05:06 Right. PIRB is not personally involved with the arbitration process. It's between the parties because of their collective bargaining agreement. They select, we qualify the arbitrators and report to them that it's qualified to do that. Thank you very much. Mr. Chair, one final question, if I must, if I can. Mr. Chair, can I wrap it up? Thank you very much, Senator Frederick. I was asking, requesting one more question. Of course.

6:05:39 Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Well, I almost got cut off. Mr. Tan, real quick, so I could ask you a couple quick questions. Your training two dealt with the same issues. I saw customer service training dealing with the Bureau of Motor Vehicle twice. They came in here yesterday. That was awesome, their presentation. I see why they're performing so well because you're giving them the good training, And how to deal with difficult people, which I can't imagine motor vehicles dealing with difficult people. Yes, we actually have a series of training going on with the Bureau.

6:06:28 And the next training for them is how to deal with difficult people. So they are getting the use of our trainings. Yeah, see, they're very proactive in getting their employees trained. Thank you very much. My time is running out, so I can't really ask much. Thank you very much for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Senator Frederick. Senator Fonseki, recognize your point of information?

6:06:57 Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to follow up on that question with the per diem. Okay, so you have how many board members that received the per diem total? Two board members. Okay, so it's \$75 per day, and that would also, I'm trying to find out if they do a telephone consultation, how long does the consultation have to be for it to equal the \$75 per day? Would it be five minutes and it'd be \$75, or it has to be 10 hours? These are extended conversations related to cases, administrative issues. So if you call the board member for 10 minutes, that would be a \$75 per diem? Depends on what it's about. We can call a board member and we wouldn't pay for that time. It just depends on what type of call it is. Well, my point is, is if you're calling for a perb matter and you spend 10 minutes on the phone, would that qualify as a \$75 per day per diem? I would think so. It's a personal time. We're disturbing them from their personal time.

6:08:31 Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you. Next, the chair will recognize Senator Dwayne DeGraff. You're recognized for your four minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon colleagues, good afternoon testifiers, all of you listening and present. Perb, how many employees do you have? We presently have six.

6:08:58 Six employees. They were GS employees? No, no, Senator. And they're not unionized? No. Okay, okay. Exempt. All the positions are exempt. How many vacancies? We have four vacancies at this moment. Four vacancies. Okay, so what is your ask for 27, 2027? We actually didn't ask for anything. We were managing to stick with the same budget we had last year. This was the recommended budget. Okay, \$1,686,000? Yes. Okay, okay.

- 6:09:32 How many PIRV has the attorneys who address some of the cases? We just hired our legal counsel, which is Douglas Jurgen, attorney Jurgen. Okay, because, again, our PIRB is a very important entity in the territory, but I don't know if it's been functioning, but I guess because you're waiting on an attorney. Yes, it practically stops when we don't have an attorney. Okay, is one attorney sufficient to handle the caseload?
- 6:10:02 We're evaluating that now. we were just talking about bringing on part-time legal counsel to assist. Okay. Thank you. LMC, again, to LMC and Perb, I thank you for what you do for our persons in our territory because, again, it's a very substantial, you know, I'm always asking my wage increases and unionize members and stuff, so, you know, thank you for that. LMC, what is your axe for today? 285 000. 285 uh is is that that 85 000 increases for what it's for um training it's for raises salary raises and um what's the name okay you're gonna stick with raises so since you mentioned raises who yes this time i didn't mention it but but thank you for it again um so finally you guys getting raises um what what percentage rate increases it you're getting um good question i don't remember the percentage but i'm gonna i put in for for the executive assistant to be moved from \$45,000 to \$46,000, and myself from \$70,000 to \$85,000. Okay. Give your assistant a little more. And the custodian worker as well. Okay, so for LMC also, you have 501c3.
- 6:11:46 How do you obtain other monies besides the general fund? How much monies have you received besides the general fund? We only receive money from the general fund. Okay, so it's a 501c3? Yes. Okay, and you maintain that status and good standard in lieutenant governor's office? Yes, we do. Okay. We have the good standard. Okay, okay, good. And finally, in closing, I would like to ask in terms of LMC, I see you have other services and charges, some of the 85,000 goes toward the other services and charges?
- 6:12:31 Yes. What part of it? Yes, it goes towards rental, travel. Okay. How? Rental, travel. Professional services, which is the workshops that we're offering, and inter-Ireland travel. Into Ireland. Okay. And for PIRB, again, with having your one attorney, was PIRB always set up there with one attorney addressing St. Thomas and St. Croix, the two districts? Yes, yes, Senator.
- 6:13:04 Okay, and again, that's a lot of work. A heavy dose of work. So, okay, so for having the one attorney, have you put any other services around that attorney to assist him in moving forward? Right now, new kid on the block, hit the pavement, run in St. Thomas and St. Croix. 30 seconds. Have you put, established around him a support service crew that will help him, you know, to take on this task? Yes, he has a legal assistant, and he has a legal administrative supervisor that assists him.
- 6:13:49 Okay, a legal administrative supervisor? Yes. Okay, and a legal assistant? Yes. Did they exist before? Yes. Okay, so have they received any wage increases? Yes. Good. That's what I'm making sure. It's in progress. Time. You just let the cat out the bag. We were trying to surprise them. Wait, wait, wait. If you don't mind, wrap up now, Mr. Chair. I'm going to surprise them right now because I don't like to go base on it's in the workings. When are the staff going to receive their wage increases? As soon as it's approved in the system. It's in the system right now.
- 6:14:30 Okay, and what percentage is your wage increase? 3% for most of them. we have two positions that we had to reevaluate because the wages were too low and we addressed that and fixed that okay thank you thank you for the time mr chair uh thank you very much uh senator de graaf um executive director fulgence in regards to the cases as being lodged with the perp do you see any particular trend in um in terms of the the cases are being filed any similarities and and the i would like to pass on that question to a legal counsel because he sees it every day you have the question legal counsel yes sir the uh almost the prevalent cases being filed is unfair labor practice and that's generally against the the union for failing to represent the employee, but then about half and half with the discrimination and the 530s, the terminations.
- 6:15:40 And how long traditionally or usually it takes to process a complaint of a ULPC and Fair Labor Practice case? It's hard to tell. It could be a matter of speaking to the parties and saying, you know, look, and the party may move out of state, quit his job, and no longer interested in pursuing the union. I would say average is less than a year, but I'm just throwing a number out there, but it just depends upon the facts of it. And you have in process about 119 cases?
- 6:16:13 Yes, sir. Do you find out to be significant? It is, it keeps you busy, keeps you busy. The process of going through a PERB with a case involves informal hearings and formal hearings and depositions, and, you know, it could be quite involved in communicating back and forth. I have not only the paralegal here on St. Croix, but also other staff in St. Croix are very knowledgeable about PERB procedures themselves. How many of those 119 cases involve individuals that are currently out of work?
- 6:16:48 Out of work? I wouldn't know. You wouldn't know. We would have to get back to you on that. Can you please? Because I'm interested to know that these individuals may very well be pending a decision. Yeah, I think that that is critical for us to understand. Yes, Senator. Senator Vila, you recognize for your four minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Jones, which of the two positions you had to reevaluate and bump the salary? The legal assistant and the scanning archivist. Okay. And

those positions are filled? Yes, they are. They're presently filled. Okay. But you're having issues holding on to the individual, so you re-evaluated the salary? It looked like that, for one.

6:17:35 Okay. Because of the surmountable work that that individual has to entail, especially when we're without legal counsel, Some of the things that she can do without legal counsel, it's just her alone. Okay, so the salary that's reflected in a post audit, report page 10. We will send the update to you. Okay, that is not what it is. You're going to update that?

6:18:03 No, no. Okay. We're just presently waiting for approval on the PRF. So the bottom line figure, right now the total is \$814,500,000. That changes to what? The total number for salaries is what? We can get back to you on that, okay? We will get back to you on that. Okay, that is going to affect your budget a little. We need to know exactly because that's going to affect your overall number.

6:18:42 The two vacant positions, those are the two positions that you said are hard to fill? Or you haven't received approval to bring them on? No. What happened, they were filled, but the two people left for career reasons. Okay. And that's recently? Recently. Just recently. Okay. So now you have to fill those two? Yes. Okay. In reference to your spend, I'm seeing that you spent... As of June 30th, 2026, for personnel, you spent \$395,522, and that is for nine months.

6:19:25 So at that figure, with those two vacant positions, I'm projecting that you're going to spend \$527,362 to finish out the year. If I missed a payday in the calculation that hasn't come in yet in your numbers, then it might raise no more than \$600,000, but you are allocating \$825,353 for personnel. So you're going to have some vacancy savings in the personnel category.

6:19:59 Yes, we will. We did have another position, but we no longer will be funding that position. we're going to reevaluate and see what is needed most okay your your budget whatever remains over does it remain with a general funnel it's a carryover amount for you we don't we no longer um expand until you no longer have the carryover no we no longer okay i also saw that the fringe is going to come up to I think 248,000 and it was 360,000 so I'm projecting although you have a small budget that you're not going to expend about 300 plus thousand dollars that was allocated to you that would remain with the general fund. Yes it will. Okay so colleagues that um you We could keep that in mind as we move along to see exactly what we want to do. Since that is it for me, I had no issues with the Labor Management Council. Budget is very small. It's straightforward. The only change is the increase in salaries for the two position.

6:21:21 Yes. And for travel. And you went ahead and calculated what is going to be the fringe for those two positions? Yes, I did. Okay. And the number that is listed in the post-addict report, that's what it's going to be? Yes, that's correct. Okay.

6:21:53 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you so much. Thank you very much, Senator Bieles. Senator Fonseca, you recognize for your four minutes. Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Che, and good afternoon, colleagues, all listening, viewing audience. Okay, I wanted to ask, PERB, when there's a dispute between the union and the government it goes to per for a resolution right that's that's how i understand it yes senator okay so let me ask you um how many agencies right now you have a dispute with between the union and the government is the do we have any with the nurses with the teachers or the vi police officers are there any of those that right now they have a dispute where the union and the government can't agree okay misunderstood your question um the perp does not get involved in union business um if there's a dispute i know that okay i know that the perp is the one that um basically you um make the final decision when there is a dispute, you are independent agency, is that correct?

6:23:19 Yes, we're independent. If a person files, we have to docket it and then we'll find out if we have jurisdiction to do something about it. Yes. Okay, so being that you're independent, my question is, is there any case now before PERB where the nurses' union and the government disagree on a contract issue, the police union on a contract issue, or the teachers' union. Are any of those three pending a decision?

6:23:55 Those things go to collective bargaining, the Office of Collective Bargaining. No, I'm asking for a yes or no answer. No, not that I know of. Okay, I noticed that the rental, the rental on St. Thomas is \$66,000 and on St. Croix is \$57,000. I know you have that conference room, you need a big space, but have you ever looked to see if there's any government vacant spaces that PERB can utilize, unused space? Is that possible?

6:24:41 i am sure it's possible senator i'm i'm the new kid on the block i just got here so i need time to assess and see what's going on around me for things like that um that kind of takes time um rental in saint thomas um the space is limited it seems very limited so to accommodate what we actually need it's going to take some real research and at this particular time i don't have time to do that okay but well you you can save a hundred and twenty three thousand dollars one minute total budget one million six hundred eighty six thousand so that's that would be a substantial um savings i wanted to go um to one other question so how many collective bargaining agreements total now have expired do you have that number no no i do not most of them are expired uh i will refer that to our legal counsel the collective bargaining agreements by and large have a provision in there that they run from one year to another from one date to another day then they have a

provision that says that at the end of that it will continue on a day-to-day basis so we don't we really don't have any unexpired collective bargaining agreements but again i urge you to look to the office of collective bargaining who manages those matters okay and and that's my final question so i want to know are the perp decisions being implemented by the office of collective bargaining and the chief negotiator how are they cooperating with your decision are they implementing them or there's an impasse let me know decisions that perv make is by the perv board not by the office of collective bargaining

6:26:35 in reference to cases time no but that's not my question my question is is the decisions um that's made by the the arbitrator are they being implemented i want to see if there's good cooperation because it's the dispute is resolved through the arbitrator's decision whether they favor the union or the government how is the cooperation with now implementing those decisions are there any disputes arbitrator's decisions are enforceable in the territorial court and it's final i beg your pardon it's final or they have a option to go to the court well the decision is final in this there's there's a myriad of ways that you can attack an arbitrator's decision none of which are whether or not the decision is the right decision because they have binding arbitration in the collective bargaining agreements mainly that the appeal would involve the arbitrator's appointment the arbitrator's authority etc okay thank you for your leniency mr chair uh thank you very much senator fronsecia before we go to senator clifford joseph for his around um executive director to tyne i wanted to ask you how how do we balance the discussion or reconcile the move for um uh increase to 85 for one and just 1 000 for the other how how did you arrive at that the 85 came from not having a race since 2018 where the admin is the um administrator assistant had a raise two years ago

6:28:30 okay so once you move her then she'll be um on par with with other uh individuals within her her scope as well yes Very well. I'll recognize Senator Clifford-Joseph at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon to everyone in the chambers. Good afternoon to the central staff. Good afternoon to my colleagues. Good afternoon to you here from the probe.

6:29:06 Good afternoon, Senator. um so as of today you said your vendor payments are up to date yes senator okay good and what is being done to fill the other positions that the other vacant board members on the purple there is nothing the perp can do at this point it's up to the governor now if you have a conversation with the governor letting them know that you need these position filled correspondent was sent to the governor and every year we testify we let them know that the positions are expired and also that we need board members as i testified today okay and um so how many members you have presently we have three presently we need two more okay good and how are the vacancies for the information technology manager and fiscal officers affecting the financial oversight of the cyber security it's affecting it um we we just got the prs for them so we're we're really diligently um trying to fill those positions it's um it's difficult because the workload is heavier to make up for those that are not there and you just get a prf so uh we she actually so we can move forward with interviews and things like an advertisement okay so you didn't advertise it yes we did in the papers for fiscal officers we haven't gotten any hits yet oh wow Grants, you guys never tried applying for any grants?

6:30:57 No, we have not. Any plans of? Probably in the future. When you get this fiscal person on, do you think it's possible to? Yes, it's a possibility. Good enough. And for the labor management? The question for you guys are, I didn't see that you have any outstanding, are you sharing space or everything is included in your rent? Everything is included in our rent.

6:31:30 Okay, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank everyone for the response. I don't have any more questions. You're welcome. Thank you very much. Senator Clifford Joseph. From Mr. Tsutain again, I wanted to ask you as well, in terms of your conversation with the various agencies, I think you mentioned that you have 14 LMC's within the various agencies. What is the conversation? What is the ask, besides training, how are they asking to ensure that the LMC continue to function as per your mission?

6:32:13 They ask more for guidance when it comes to the agency LMC's when they have certain issues because at times members would like to bring open grievance cases to the floor, which they cannot discuss at the time. But we try to meet, we try to have conversations of where we can come in and help them with their issues. And how do you believe you can improve on those numbers?

6:32:52 I think there was, in terms of the additional central government agencies that's not part of the LMC, What do you believe needs to happen to be, because you would agree that, well, of course, you would agree that the LMC has been an effective tool in resolving a lot of the grievance issues, concerns at the department's level. What do you believe it needs to have those other agencies come aboard with the establishing LMC? For me, I think it's more reaching the agency head and showing them how the agency LMC can be a benefit to the agency.

6:33:38 We have tried through HR, and it sometimes just stops there. But getting to the agency head, I think we'll have more of a better dialect of why the agency LMC is needed. Is that something you intend to undertake during the next fiscal year?

Yes, it's listed on one of our goals to get to those who have not yet organized. And if I could ask Lieutenant Gumbs, how participatory are the agencies that's involved with the LMC?

6:34:13 Are you able to evaluate and determine the efficiency and effectiveness of those LMC's? Well, basically, it's the enthusiasm and the willingness for them to accept the information that we disseminate to them. They want things to work better, especially, I would notice, on the labor side. They want to get resolution.

6:34:43 I consider us the ounce of prevention compared to PERB, which is like the pound of cure. We want to resolve these issues prior to them having to file unfair labor practices, demands for arbitration. If these matters could be resolved at an earlier stage, then that deletes them for having to take on all these additional cases. And also, it builds a better working relationship. As you remember back in our days when we had our Labor Management Committee when you were the commissioner and I was the president for the LESU. It makes things much easier, and also, when we could get these matters resolved by people realizing what their function is, because a lot of times people are put in supervisory positions, but they don't have the understanding of the contract, how does it work, how to implement it, that this knowledge makes it much easier for the labor relations to improve within the different agencies.

6:35:47 right right yeah definitely i think that lmc is an effective tool uh to to bring some uh semblance of order there and have both management and labor you know working uh collectively to address some of these grievances before we get to the perp level um in those instances uh so i i think i don't know if there's any other burning questions from my colleagues we're good all right i'll give you 30 seconds to do our wrap-up Ms. Filgens and then we go to um executive director uh in closing i respectfully thanks this board for their time active listening and questions uh that the perv would use this constructively as a guide for our future improvements thank you thank you thank you very much and thank you for the work that you do and i know that you're limited in terms of board members and and employees and everything but you know continue to put your best effort because you know our employees our government employees are really um is the that capital our human capital is critical in us being able to you know ensure that we have proper customer service that they're working in the optimal levels without this level of frustration and stress about you know whatever grievances issue or concerns that they may have executive director at the time I would like to thank all senators for the opportunity to present our budget and share the vision and guides of our work.

6:37:16 Your continued support has allowed us to strengthen collaboration, build inclusive and high-functioning teams, and foster professional environment that serve the people of the Virgin Islands. And to sustain this progress, we respectfully request the additional \$85,000 to have these programs develop and ready to deliver. Thank you. Thank you very much, Executive Director, and again, I want to commend you. 14 is almost 50% halfway through. Those agencies keep plugging away at it, and I think it's very beneficial to have the LMC within their respective agencies, so continue driving that home, and thank you, Lieutenant Gumbs, for the training that you continue to provide and being that guiding light to support that endeavor. That concludes this hearing process. We'll definitely take into consideration all of the suggestions and recommendations that have been made during our budget markup. I want to thank you for coming before us today. I want to thank the central staff, my colleagues, my staff. Today's Friday, and we've been having some long days, And I'm sure the central staff will be able to at least leave at a reasonable time today.

6:38:33 So thank you for all your work. And thank you to Pulse Audit as well. And, you know, I think we have a week off next week. We don't have much hearings next week, so enjoy. And I'll see you early August where we have a whole week of hearings beginning August 3rd. The Committee of Budget Appropriations and Finance, again, is hereby adjourned. God bless. Have a great weekend. Thank you.

People named in this transcript

SUSPECTED, and a finding aid only. Names were matched by machine against the spellings used across all 426 of our transcripts, and the title is the one used in the room. Being named here is NOT evidence that a person attended or spoke · only that the name was said. Speech recognition mishears names, so a spelling may be wrong even where no alternative is offered.

9x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**
heard in this transcript as: DeGraff, Dwayne M. DeGraff

9x **Senator Hubert Frederick**
heard in this transcript as: Frederick, Hubert L. Frederick

9x **Senator Novelle Francis**
the surname alone also matches: Novel E. Francis Jr.; Navelle Francis Jr.

heard in this transcript as: Francis, Francis Jr, Honorable Novell E. Francis Jr., Noble Francis, Novel E. Francis Jr, Novell E. Francis Jr

7x

Senator Marvin Blyden

heard in this transcript as: Blyden, Blyton, Marvin A. Blyden

7x

Senator Ray Fonseca

heard in this transcript as: Fonseca, Fonseki

4x

Senator Kurt VLA

heard in this transcript as: VLA, Vila

4x

Senator Marise C. James

the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr

heard in this transcript as: James, Maurice C. James, Maurice James

3x

Senator Clifford Joseph

3x

Senator Kenneth L. Gittens

heard in this transcript as: Gittins, Kenneth Gittins

3x

Senator Kurt Violet

heard in this transcript as: Kurt A. Valey, Valey

2x

Senator Carla Joseph

the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph

heard in this transcript as: Joseph

2x

Senator Kurt Viola

heard in this transcript as: Viola

2x

Senator Marvin A. Blighton

heard in this transcript as: Blighton

2x

Justice Reese Hodge

heard in this transcript as: Hodge

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