



# Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection

Legislature USVI

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- 0:00:00 We'll be right back. Thank you. Transcription by CastingWords [3 such phrases repeated 15 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:07:30 We'll be right back. Thank you. I love you. [3 such phrases repeated 62 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:38:30 Thank you. Let's get started. We'll be right back. Thank you. Good morning.
- 0:40:45 Good morning. The committee, the meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 29, 2026 for the Committee on Government Operation Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection has been called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to today's meeting. I'd like to welcome you to the Best Committee, Government, Operation, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, which I have the honor to chair alongside my esteemed colleague, Vice Chair, Senator Novel E. Francis, Jr. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to my dedicated team, my colleagues in the 36th Legislature, members of the institution, invited testifiers, members of the media, and the people of the Virgin Islands. I welcome all of you here today for this wonderful meeting.
- 0:41:48 Before we begin today's agenda, I would first like to acknowledge the significance of the month of June and the many national observances and celebrations that it represents. June is recognized across our nation as Caribbean Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the immeasurable contributions of Caribbean people to the cultural, social, political, and economic fabric of our communities and this nation. We celebrated Father's Day on June 12th. Happy belated Father's Day to my fellow fathers and father figures. Men's Health is celebrated to raise awareness about preventable health problems and encouraging early detection and treatment among men.

- 0:42:35 I really encourage all my brothers out there who's listening, viewing, to really take that serious and get your health check out. Especially our Cigna card-carrying members, go and get your health check out, please. I think there were people that said ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Correct, Brother Francis? Good. June is also recognized as national flag month culminating with the flag day on June 14 when we proudly honor the symbol of our democracy and freedoms most importantly we recently recommended we recently commemorated June Juneteenth on June 19th a historic day marking the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the United States. Juneteenth serve as both a celebration of freedom and a reminder of the ongoing work toward justice, equality and opportunity for all people. As Virgin Islanders, we understand the importance of resilience, perseverance and honoring the sacrifices of those who came before. At this time, I also want to extend my heartfelt condolences to every family throughout our territory that is grieving the loss of a loved one, whether that loss has come through illness, tragedy, violence, or unforeseen circumstances. Our hearts are with you. No family should have to endure the pain that so many in our community are experiencing. We pray that God grants you strength, peace, and comfort during these difficult
- 0:44:31 days, and we ask our community to continue surrounding these families with love, prayer, compassion, and support. The recent increase in violent crimes throughout our territory is deeply concerning and should serve as a call to action for all of us. We cannot become numb to the violence or accept it as our new reality. Every life lost is someone's child, parent, sibling, friend, or neighbor, and every act of violence leaves a lasting impact on families and our community. I respectfully call upon Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and Police Commissioner Mario Brooks to continue taking decisive action and to demonstrate the full strength of law enforcement in addressing this troubling trend. Those who choose to commit violent crime must understand that the government of the Virgin Islands is united and committed to protecting our communities. Criminal behavior cannot and will not be tolerated. At the same time, Public safety is a shared responsibility I urge every resident to do their part By remaining vigilant Reporting suspicious of criminal activity Cooperating with law enforcement And helping to create safer neighborhoods Strong communities are built When citizens and law enforcement work together And trust the purpose As a member of this of the legislature I want the Governor, the Police Commissioner, and our law enforcement partners to know that if there are legislative tools, policy changes, or additional resources needed to strengthen public safety efforts, I stand ready to work collaboratively. The legislature must be a partner in finding meaningful solutions that reduce crime, support our officers, protect constitutional rights, and restore a sense of safety throughout the Virgin Islands. Together, we can send a clear message. Our communities deserve peace, our families deserve security, and we will continue working tirelessly to ensure that the Virgin Islands remains a place where every resident can live, work, and raise a family without fear.
- 0:46:52 I also want to extend warm wishes to everyone participating in the upcoming Emancipation Independence St. John festivities. As residents and visitors come together to celebrate the rich culture, history, music, and traditions of Love City, I encourage everyone to celebrate responsibly, safely, and respectfully. May this festive season be filled with unity, joy, and pride in our Virgin Islands heritage. Lastly, I want to remind the public that July 2nd, 2026 is the final day to register to vote in the upcoming primary election. Voting is one of the most powerful tools we possess as citizens. I encourage all eligible residents, especially our young first-time voters, to register and make their voices heard. Civic engagement strengthens our democracy and helps shape the future of our territory.
- 0:47:48 Thank you all once again for your attendance and participation today. We will now proceed with the agenda before the Committee of Government Operation Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection. May God continue to bless the Virgin Islands and the people who call these islands home. Let's begin today's work on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands. Madam Clerk, could I please have a roll call? Yes, Mr. Chair. Senator Ray Fonseca. Senator Fonseca.
- 0:48:18 Absent. Senator Novell E. Francis, Jr.? Here. Senator Francis, Jr.? Present. Senator Alma Francis-Heiliger? Present. Senator Francis-Heiliger? Present. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins? Here. Senator Gittins? Present. Senator Franklin D. Johnson? Senator Johnson? Present. Senator Carla J. Joseph? Present, please. Senator Joseph, present. Senator Avery L. Lewis. I am here.
- 0:48:53 Senator Lewis, present. Mr. Chair, you have six members present, one member absent. Thank you, Madam Clark. Madam Clark, are there any correspondences from any committee members to be read into the record? Yes, Mr. Chair. Please proceed. The Honorable Avery L. Lewis, Chairman, Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection. Dear Chairman Lewis, please accept my apologies for being late to today's meeting for the Committee on Government Operation, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, scheduled for Monday, June 29, 2026. I have a previously scheduled engagement to attend. Thank you for your appreciation. Cordially, Senator Ray Fonseca, 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands.
- 0:49:40 Thank you, Madam Clerk. Madam Clerk, are there any correspondences from any invited testifiers to be read into the record as it pertains to Block 1? No, Mr. Chair. Thank you. Madam Clerk, please read the agenda into the record for

Block 1. Yes, Mr. Chair. Dated June 22, 2026 The Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection has scheduled a meeting for Monday, June 29, 2026 at 10 a.m. in the Fritz E. Lawitz Legislative Conference Room, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands in consideration of the following bills Bill number 36-0250 An Act's Amendment Title III, Virgin Islands Code Chapter 27, Section 717C relating to personal loans made to members of the Government Employees Retirement System. Proposed by Senator Maurice C. James. Invited testifiers, Mr. Angel E. Dawson, Administrator, CEO, Government Employees Retirement System. Bill number 36.0279, an anthem and entitled Tree Virgin Islands Code by creating the position of Women Veterans Coordinator within the Office of Veterans Affairs. Proposed by Senator Marie C. James. Invited testifiers, Mr. Patrick Farrell, State Director, Virgin Islands Office of Veterans Affairs.

0:51:04 Mr. Chair, this concludes the reading of Block 1. Thank you, Madam Clerk. As it pertains to Bill 360250, an act amending Title III, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 27, Section 717C, relating to personal loans made to the members of the Government Employees Retirement System. Who speaks to this bill? Good morning, Senator Lewis. I do. Proceed, Senator James. Thank you. Sorry, before you do that, I'd like to recognize first the presence of non-committee member Senator Marie C. James, who has two bills in this morning agenda. Thank you, Senator. Now you may proceed.

0:51:50 Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, Virgin Islands. Good morning, testifiers. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, everyone in and out of the room. Senator Avery Lewis, Chairperson of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection, members of the committee, fellow legislators and members of the public. Today I bring before you a bill that addresses a matter of both fairness and integrity, a bill that says to our public servants, your years of service cannot be erased because of a financial setback. This legislation was inspired by a troubling case brought to my attention. a constituent who worked faithfully for 22 years, she applied for retirement only to be told that nine of those years would be taken away. Why? Because of a loan default. I want to acknowledge and commend the current administrator of the government employees retirement system, Angel Dawson, for reviewing this constituent's case and taking corrective action. I appreciate his willingness to ensure that justice was done in this instance. However, However, this legislation is not about one constituent or one administrator. Administrators change, policies change, interpretations of the law change. A future administrator could simply revert to the prior practice unless the legislature clearly establishes what the law requires. That is why we legislate. We do not enact laws based solely on the character or judgment of the individual currently serving in an office. We enact laws to establish clear, consistent rules that protect every public employee and retiree, regardless of who occupies that office of administrator in the future. No retirement system, no matter how well-intentioned, should have the authority to rewrite an employee's work history because of a financial default. Service is earned. It reflects time, labor, and sacrifice. It's the cornerstone of what we promised government workers. To strip it away as a punishment for debt is frankly both unjust and legally questionable. This bill does not prevent GERS from collecting debts. They may pursue repayment. They may apply offsets. But what they may not do is reach back into an employee's record and erase years they rightfully earned. Let us send a clear message that we protect the dignity of service, we respect our retirees, and we will not allow administrative overreach to destroy what someone has worked decades to build. I respectfully urge your support. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

0:54:44 And I'd like to recognize the presence of non-committee members, Senator Clifford. Joseph, Sr. Good morning. Mr. Dawson, sorry. Administrator Dawson, good morning. Good morning, Senator Lewis. I don't know if you want to get closer to the mic, but I could barely hear you. Say the track one more time. Yes, good morning, Senator Lewis, Mr. Chairman.

0:55:17 All right, if you're ready with your testimony, go right ahead. Can you hear me clearly? Yes, I could. Go right ahead. Excellent. Good morning, Honorable Avery Lewis, Chairman of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection. All committee members, all senators present, all within the sound of my voice. Good morning. And good morning, Senator James.

0:55:46 Good day. I'm here today to testify on Bill number 360250 and specifically to the revised amendment in the nature of a substitute, which seeks to amend Title III, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 27, Section 717, Subsection B. This amendment would insert language to ensure that the government employee's retirement system shall not reduce, revoke, or otherwise alter a member's service resulting from a default or delinquency on any loan or financial obligation made through or administered by the system. Nothing in this subsection shall prohibit the system from collection of outstanding debts through lawful means, provided such actions shall not alter the member's service.

0:56:42 Service shall reflect the actual duration of government employment. This legislation, as Senator James alluded to, arose out of a situation brought to her attention by a constituent that she, in turn, brought to my attention. Subsequently, I discontinued an existing practice within the GERS that prevented members who are no longer employed by the

government or its agencies from restoring contributions that were previously deducted to pay off delinquent loan obligations to the GERS. This discontinued past practice could have effectively resulted in permanent loss of service. Although I discontinued this standing practice administratively, The bill's sponsor, understandably, desired to statutorily foreclose the possibility of its recurrence. I understand this instinct, and it was a pleasure to work with Senator Maurice James and her staff in reviewing and revising Bill 36-0250, which I now fully support in its revised amended state. Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement on Bill 360-250.

0:58:07

I'm prepared to answer any questions on this matter. Thank you. Thank you very much, Administrator Dawson. Bill number 36-0279, an act amending Title III Virgin Islands Code by creating the position of Women Veterans Coordinator within the Office of Veterans Affairs. Who speak to this bill? I do, Mr. Chair. Senator Mary Jim, you're recognized. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair and colleagues. I rise today to ask for your support of this important legislation establishing the position of Women's Veterans Coordinator within the Office of Veterans Affairs, which was brought to me by Director Patrick Farrell, and I wholeheartedly agreed with him. Today women serve in every branch of our armed forces and have answered our nation's call in times of war and peace. They have served with courage, honor, and distinction, yet too often when they return home they encounter a system that was not designed with their unique experiences and needs in mind. Women veterans frequently face challenges that differ from those of their male counterparts. They may require assistance accessing health care tailored to women, navigating disability claims related to military sexual trauma, obtaining benefits for which they are eligible, securing housing and employment resources, or connecting with mental health services. Too many are unaware of the benefits they have earned through their service or become discouraged by the complexity of the claims process. This legislation ensures that women veterans in the Virgin Islands have a dedicated advocate, someone whose responsibility is to help them navigate federal, territorial, and community resources, coordinate services, assist with benefits, applications, and claims, provide outreach and education, and ensure that no woman veteran falls through the cracks simply because she does not know where to turn. The women's veteran coordinator will also serve as an important liaison between the Office of Veterans Affairs, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans organizations, health care providers, and community partners to improve access to services and strengthen support for women who have worn the uniform. This bill is not about creating unnecessary bureaucracy. It is about recognizing that women veterans have unique needs and ensuring that the government is responsive to those needs. It is about improving access, increasing awareness, reducing barriers, and delivering better outcomes for those who have already sacrificed so much in service to our country. By establishing this position, we affirm that the women who defended our freedoms will not have to fight another battle simply to receive the benefits and services they have earned. Our women veterans served without hesitation. Today we have an opportunity to demonstrate that the Virgin Islands values their service by providing the dedicated support they deserve. I respectfully ask my colleagues to join me and support this legislation and vote in favor of this bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator

1:01:31

James. I'd just like to make some clarity here for the listeners. Coming to you, Director Farrell. I'd just like to make some clarity to the community what we're doing here this morning. Before us, we have two separate bills, and we're going to us. Director Dawson has put his testimony on the record and Director Farrell. Administrator Dawson put his testimony on the record and Director Farrell is going to place his testimony. So we'll be discussing two separate bills. One is dealing with relating to personal loans made to members of the Government Employees Retirement System. Another one is addressing creating the position of women's veterans coordinator within the office of veterans affair director farrell good morning how are you doing today i am well senator thank you so much good are you ready to proceed i am you may go ahead chairman of the committee on government operations veterans affairs and consumer protection the honorable senator avery l lewis committee members and other distinguished senators of the 36th legislature of the virgin islands of the united states a pleasant good day to you additional greetings to everyone physically present those viewing via the legislature's legit tv and those following through other media sources special greetings and prayers to our servicemen and women currently serving around the world you are serving during unpredictable times but please know you are in our hearts every step of the way to those who have borne the battle known to us as our veterans thank you for our your service to our country and our beloved territory to the staff of the virgin islands office of veterans affairs whom i refer to as the pillars of the office of veterans affairs ms frederick ms daniel and ms gordon thank you for your daily commitment to our veterans your dedication enhances their

1:03:22

quality of life and exemplifies our mission i am patrick d farrell director of the virgin islands office of veterans affairs i appreciate the opportunity to testify today in strong support of bill number 36-0279 an act amending title 3 virgin annals code by creating the position of women veterans coordinator within the office of veterans affairs proposed by senator maurice c james esq at the onset i would like to extend my sincere appreciation to senator maurice james the sponsor of this legislation for her leadership and foresight in recognizing the importance of this issue being a veteran herself of the united states army her commitment to ensuring that women who have served our nation receive the advocacy outreach

and support they deserve is both commendable and deeply appreciated i also wish to thank the committee the members of this committee for taking the time to consider this important measure and for your continued commitment to improving the lives of the veterans of the virgin islands as director of the virgin islands office veterans affairs i have often said that our responsibility extends beyond helping veterans access benefits it is to improve their quality of life bill number three six dash zero two seven nine reflects that very principle it is an investment in the well-being of a growing population of veterans who have served our nation with distinction and who deserve a dedicated advocate within our agency the virgin islands has always answered the call when our nation needed us our women veterans also answered that call with courage professionalism and honor today through

1:05:14 the consideration of this honorable body we now have an opportunity to answer their call a call for support on behalf of the virgin lands office of veterans affairs and the women veterans who proudly served i respectfully ask for your favorable consideration and support of bill number three six dash zero two seven nine thank you for the opportunity to testify and may god continue to bless the veterans of the virgin islands the united states virgin islands and the united states of america i will be pleased to answer any questions of the committee at this time thank you thank you director farrell and if i may add director farrell i believe if i'm going wrong you may correct me i think last month this month june 12th june 12th we it was women veterans recognition day am i correct you are absolutely correct so good so we're in the right direction that is correct okay good i'm being a a veteran i think the good senator is on the right track he is absolutely good all right thank you senator james we're moving forward positively today um colleagues we're going to go to a four minute round uh the order this morning is going to go senator novelly francis jr senator franklin johnson senator carla joseph then to Alma Francis Heiliger, then to Kenny Gittins, then to Clifford Joseph, and myself, and then the bill sponsor.

1:06:51 Senator Novel Francis, Jr., you're recognized. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. My check, one, two. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good morning to everyone. Good morning, Virgin Islands. I want to, first of all, certainly continue to offer my condolences to the individuals from Venezuela as it pertains to the earthquake. And I think last week when I mentioned this, we had a death toll of 164. However, this morning, that death toll is up to almost 1,400 individuals. So we've got to continue to pray for that situation in Venezuela with that earthquake.

1:07:33 I also want to commend Michelle Smith, who has been recognized once again and extend my congratulations for earning gold in setting a record at the Senior Pan Am Championship. My colleagues spoke about our crime situation. I know that there should be some effort being made this week in terms of recommendations that have been made by this body to the administration in regards to the collaboration of our peace officers really attacking this crime situation head on. because we can't continue to let this spiral out of control, so I'm sure you'll be hearing more about this. In respect to the two bills before us, Bill 36.0250, as well as Bill 36.0279, I stand in full support of these two measures. I want to commend the bill's sponsor for her foresight and addressing this particular issue. Certainly the loan default situation.

1:08:26 And, you know, I, too, had a similar situation recently where Vitron employees, as a result of Act 7087, had desperate action taken against them. And because of prior year service and when they moved over to the Department of Public Work, you know, they were somewhat being penalized as a result of that. I want to thank you, Director, Executive Director, Angel Dawson, Jr., in respect to your quick and steady response to that particular situation, recognizing the impact to those employees and offering to address it head on. Have you been able to prepare notices or address that particular issue? If you could just give us a feedback on what's happening in that regard.

1:09:20 Yes, good morning, Senator, and it certainly was a pleasure to work with you and your staff on this matter, and this is a matter that's being actively developed within GERS in terms of the outreach that is required. So I should be able to give you an update on that within the next week or two, this being a short week. Very well. I want to, again, encourage our government employees, please take advantage of the Government employees retirement system workshops you know they offer you these workshops for the purpose of ensuring that you're well aware and preparing for retirement well in advance of your retiring you find yourself in in this um quagmire situation in regards to when you're getting ready to uh retire and tend to turn sends you into a tailspin you know there is opportunities for you to be able to check your record and be able to correct it well in advance of your retirement So I want to encourage our government employees to take a little look at it and don't wait until the last minute. Certainly, as an individual that has family members, to include a daughter that's a veteran, I certainly appreciate women's veterans being recognized and that our coordinator will be established within the Office of Veterans of Fear. I think that always looking at the numbers, when I look at it in terms of the military gender demographics, we see that men represent 80% to 83%. Certainly women represent 18% to, well, 17% to 18%.

1:10:55 When you start to look at the breakdown per military branches, if I may just wrap up, Mr. Chair, United States Army has 22% to 23% females. United States Navy, 21% to 22%. United States Army, 16% to 17%. Marines, 10% to 11%. And, of

course, the United States Space Force, 15% to 16%. So we have women that are very well represented in our military, and we have to recognize and take care of them because they contribute equally and equitably to our male counterparts. So, again, kudos to the bill's sponsor of this particular legislation. I stand in support of both of them. Thank you, Director Farrell, for being here and presenting your position, which you certainly support this, correct? Absolutely, 100%. thank you very much mr chair for your time and opportunity thank you senator francis jr and thus piggy piggybacking of some of the things that vice chair said here this morning i'd just like to um say that as it pertains to the government employees retirement system you know on the flip side to what the the scenario the vice chair brought up we have a different scenario and i i empathize with those employees and i've reached out to the administrator but is just a matter of our health institutions at jfl and snyder regional we have employees that would like to participate in a loan program but the facility have not been paying in their portion not a government portion um quite frankly to me i think it's a lack of better words i think it's criminal and you know the hospitals really need to get their act together uh so these people and in this community grs is one of the biggest lifeline people look forward look forward and

1:12:46 that's no secret look forward for there to go to get this loan or even to refinance and when it's not grs they look forward to either credit union or one of those other institutions because in our daily lives we hit hit those uh obstacles that we need that little extra um mr farrell before i go to senator franklin johnson i'd just like to ask you i in this new position that's coming to your office is this a paid position is it a paid position yes yes senator i didn't really see no salary and so forth in there so that's what i was asking we having got today this salary portion of the discussion just we're just putting it in yes okay no problem sorry Senator Franklin Johnson you're recognized for your four minutes Good morning, thank you very much Mr. Chair, good morning to my colleagues good morning to the testifiers good morning to the viewing and listening audience and I too want to shout out Michelle Smith and her gold medal and whoever out there listening she'll be coming in today at 2.50 so I don't know how I'm going to run away but I'm going to find some time to get down there to welcome her It's always a pleasure to not just support our athletes when they go to higher heights, but in these stages, when they travel out and when they come back. You know, I'd like to see the airport full with people here today. You know, this young lady has been representing the Virgin Islands well, continuously, and we need to go out there today to the airport. She's landing in at 2.50. Make sure you're there, I'm going to welcome her. I'm going to do my part. So, Mr. Chair, I hope we get you this before 2.50 so I could find myself down there to the airport to welcome Michelle Smith. I definitely want to applaud the sponsor of these two measures, very important measures, especially with GRS. Time after time, you find where folks at the last minute when they're getting ready to retire, not doing their checks and balance, finding out that they got these issues. And I just ask for people to do that. You know, you don't wait until the last minute. You've got two, three years more left, and you're planning this. Don't plan in your mind at not going down to GRS and have these conversations.

1:15:05 And as my colleagues say, we've got to make sure these agencies that are collecting the money out of the checks, pass that money where they need to go. It can't continue like this because it creates havoc for the system. So, you know, I just hope that we could get these agencies to do their part. And, you know, these measures are straightforward. So I don't have a million question for the two of y'all because both of y'all are in full support. But I'll start out, and I think Avery alluded to it, of it not being an existing job inside of your agency, Patrick Farrell. So we'll have to come up with funding.

1:15:45 So it's not budgeted as we speak right now. Is that correct to say? Right. It is not budgeted as yet. Do you have any idea of what the cost might be for a position like this? Do you have to put that in thought? Not yet. I do have a network of other women veteran coordinators across the nation that I'm speaking with, so I'm going to get a feel from them and see which direction we really need to go. All right, so this is something in other veteran affairs, they do have it.

1:16:15 Oh, absolutely. Almost every state in the nation has it, so we are kind of behind on it. That's why I want to get us caught up. Glad to be a part of voting and making sure that we put it in our zone and make sure that it's workable. And I want to say thank you very much for your working with my family and the loss of my brother, who was a veteran, and I really appreciate your work. Absolutely. And we do have some work to do. We've been having some conversations, so we definitely got some work to do when it comes to our veterans losing their lives and making sure that we assist them in each and every way. So at the appropriate time, those measures will come forward too.

1:16:50 MR. Good morning. I'm Mr. Dawson. How are you doing this morning? MR. Good morning, Senator Johnson. Very well. Thank you. How are you? MR. I'm fine, thanks. I want to ask you, do you have an idea of how many members were affected? I estimate in the past practice of reducing and preventing restoration of credit service. Do you have any idea number? MR. No, Senator. All right. All right. And then, will there be any financial impact on GRS if Credit Serve is restored or affected the members? It should be neutral, Senator, because we are requiring the member to restore the credits that were offset due to the delinquency of a loan that may have had to have been paid off from their contributions.

- 1:17:43 So the system will be made whole in that regard. And, of course, the member or the retiree will be able to receive their annuity. And what meadows will GRS still use to try to recover those unpaid loan balance? Well, with regards to personal loans, it is quite clear up front, is actually in the statute that the member contributions is a security for these loans. So that is the primary method for us to be repaid in the event, unfortunately, of a delinquency. If for whatever reason, which should be very rare, that were to be not possible to make the system whole, then, of course, we would utilize the court system to go after the member for whatever balance remains. But as the legislation indicates, it would have to be lawful means, and that is what we would do. All right. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for the leniency, Mr. Chair.
- 1:18:51 At the appropriate time, I definitely will be voting in the affirmative to support both of these measures. Thank you, Senator Johnson. I really appreciated your line of questioning. Because, you know, Senator, Administrator Dawson, I know your team is out there a lot. I see them to the act fair. We see them to different activities, and I really appreciate that. But what happens if the GRS alert in employees? Because I don't remember if I get a letter or not, saying, well, you're at 29 years or 30 years or anything.
- 1:19:33 Do you automatically get a letter or anything as it approaches that time? Senator, I'm happy that you've asked because I was itching to, first of all, commend Senator Francis, senator johnson and yourself for reminding folks that we do have workshops every month that we invite folks to attend particularly those that are coming closer to retirement so senator francis you're the first one that mentioned that today i'd like you for i'd I'd like to thank you for doing so. And Senator Lewis, specifically to your question, every single year, every active member of the GERS receives an annual statement, and that is by law, and we have been doing that with regularity. So you can see the contributions that our records reflect, and you can alert us early on, years before retirement, if you feel that there's an issue with regards to your records. Thank you. Thank you very much. Senator Carla Joseph, you're recognized for your four minutes.
- 1:20:46 Thank you so kindly, Mr. Chairman. A pleasant good day to everyone within the listening hearing of my voice as well as the viewing audience. I also want to echo our vice chair of this committee sentiments to the residents and the people of Venezuela. I know some human beings who are from Venezuela who are right now experiencing a lot of tragedy because they have lost loved ones and they're still unable to locate other loved ones and friends. So my heart and my prayers goes out to all of them and i really hope that we get a lot of and they receive a lot of support and donation and contribution and the people of venezuela have been through a lot already this year and so my heart goes out to them and my prayers are with them now i want to also commend the sponsors of the two bills that we have before us this morning bill 36-0250 which is an act amending title 3 Virgin Islands code that deals with a GRS system to allow those delinquent loans that those delinquent loans don't become a financial obligation made and administered to by the system meaning that the system no longer is going to take out your years of service when you default.
- 1:22:25 And then I also want to commend the bill sponsor for bill number 36-0279, which is going to create a position for Women Veterans Coordinator within the Office of Veterans Affairs. Now, I just want to quickly go to my question to you first, Administrator and CEO Dawson, you are not envisioning in any cost to the system to implement this? No, Senator.
- 1:22:56 Did you check with your actuarials and see if there's going to be any cost? Because one of the things that happens is that, you know, you are able to recoup your amount for defaulted loan from that employees. annuity or their contributions. So you don't see that as being any way affecting that and going towards GRS insolvency? No, Senator, to the contrary, we are enabling an individual to be able to give us money. So that is by no means going to be a cost. I mean, of course, we will have to pay them their rightfully due annuity, but it would be unfair for us not to do so. And I want to make it clear that really what we're talking about here is that an individual who had their delinquent loan offset against their contributions, the prior practice had been to, if they were no longer an active employee, to deny them the ability to make the system whole by coming in and paying those missing contributions thereby reducing the amount of credited service and the amount of retirement annuity that they would receive and in discussing this with senator James to me it was really a matter of fairness because somebody got up every day to go to work for a period of time whether it was five years ten years 15 years and now we're saying that you cannot due to an unfortunate circumstance make your contribution record with us whole so that you can get the benefit of those four years of service so you're saying that they can pay if they are delinquent and they want to get the benefits service they
- 1:24:50 will pay back mr. chairman I just want to make clear thank you so kindly you're very gracious so you're saying that they would now have to they can now if If they're delinquent, they could pay that delinquency off. Well, it's not a matter of the delinquency. The delinquency was already handled because the contributions were offset to take care of the delinquent loan. And that could have been five, ten years ago, and now they're coming to retire. And we're saying, in the case of somebody who is no longer in government service and has effectively deferred retirement, that now that you are actually trying to retire, that we will not take your money to allow you to make your employee contribution record whole and get

full credited service. Okay. I think I follow you. I do have another question for Director Farrell. Director Farrell, how are you doing today?

1:25:56 I'm doing well, Senator. How are you doing? I am thankful every day. I would like to ask you, how much do you envision for this position of the Women's Veteran Coordinator? Like I mentioned to the previous senator, I do have a network of... I understand what you mentioned. I'm sorry to cut you off, but give us a range. Because you're going to come before us to testify, and this is a new position that we're creating. So the average across the nation right now is between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per annum.

1:26:38 Okay, good. That is something that you're looking at. Now, one final question, Mr. Chairman, bear with me. In 8DA, it talks about a section 8A of this chapter. What does 8A of this chapter define? the coordinator shall be be a veteran as defined in section 8a of this chapter and an active member of the national association of state women's veteran coordinator at all times while in the position would the person have to come in with that qualification or would they have to earn that national uh membership the qualification of veteran they they must be a veteran before applying because with the as as relates to the association you cannot become a member of the association unless you are a veteran so veteran first uh position second and then the association third and would they have to be a veteran enlisted in the u.s virgin islands or can they be a veteran from anywhere across our great nation the intent is to create this position for a virgin islands veteran when you say a virgin islands veteran what do you mean by that virgin islands veteran is one who was domiciled in the virgin islands one who joined from the virgin islands and uh gain their veteran status from there and that's uh indicated in our code that is a virgin islands veteran is that defined here in our code it is okay i just wanted to make sure that we have uh that clearly outlined in our code thank you so much mr chairman for your leniency and the clarity of both testifiers granted i will be voting in the affirmative on both measures

1:28:39 thank you so kindly thank you senator joseph senator alma francis heiliger you're recognized for your four minutes thank you um good day to my colleagues good day to the people of the territory Good day to the testifiers, everyone in the chambers. I think these are two excellent pieces of legislation. And first of all, I want to say thank you to the sponsor for bringing them forward. The first thing I want to touch on in regards to the Veterans Women's Coordinator, Is this position gender-assigned, or can anyone that could provide these services, regardless of gender, be able to serve in this capacity?

1:29:31 Can you repeat the question, Senator? I didn't hear the question clearly. The question I'm asking, is the position of women's coordinator gender-specific? because if it's just to provide the services to make sure that women get the services they need, is the position gender-specific, or could it be held by male or female? Gender-specific. Okay.

1:30:02 Is that something we can do? because I'm trying to make sure in regards to laws about discrimination against sex or gender, et cetera, because I was listening to your response in regards to Senator Joseph, and I wanted to make sure that also you're saying that the only people that could hold this position would be people that are domiciled here, or would this not be, well, not domiciled, Of course, they would have to live here, but they would have to have been become a veteran from the Virgin Islands originally.

1:30:41 So what I'm hearing is that we don't know what this potential position is going to cause. I also heard that it's coming from the standpoint of because other states have it. You're saying that you're going to specifically put a female in the position. Now, don't get me wrong. It doesn't bother me, but I want to make sure we're doing it correctly from the standpoint of laws and rules and regulations. So that's where I need my clarity to make sure that we're not saying I'm putting things on the floor that might come back to haunt us later on.

1:31:20 And when you were doing the research to find out that so many other states had this position, did you get any kind of cost? Because I'm always worried about how much we're spending. And I also need from you, do you have the amount of female veterans that are collecting or getting assistance with benefits here in the territory to now justify us opening this position locally? Because if the percentage of the veterans here, and have you had any complaints from females to say that they were having a difficult time with getting the services that they do need here that would then justify this particular position being open in the virgin islands especially based on our size and demographics i know i thought a lot hopefully you got most of it so i'll listen thank you senator and yes you you tossed out uh quite a few questions i'm going to try to answer them all as i remembered um as it relates to costs we it's uh between 50 and 75,000 is the national average as it relates to the gender-specific issue. The association that I am a part of, which is the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, we started, and this is what brought my attention to the position as well.

1:32:50 Time. We started hosting our association meetings together at the same location in the fall of each year. Okay, Mr. Chair, hold on. They already said time. Could you just answer the question because I don't have any more time. Senator, he's going to answer you on my time. One second. He's going to answer you on my time. So it's okay.

- 1:33:20 it's okay i appreciate it i appreciate that you might proceed but could he answer my questions and then he could tell the stories on your time thank you so much i think he was trying to answer all questions that you asked he answered for nothing for me he asked everything that you asked he's answering but go ahead you restate your question so you could be more specific okay i'll restate them um number one you just told me about the cost number two i needed clarity on whether the position and performing to make sure that the women get the services they need has to be gender specific and is that within the confines of the law i also asked in regards to has there been any complaints from the percentage of the women veterans here locally that they're not getting the types of services that they do need and also what percentage of women here in the territory are veterans so we could understand that they need this particular service because there's some kind of lack because it's one thing when a state has a position that has millions upon millions of people versus us who might be giving them the services that we may or may not need the position because you're now saying that's potentially upwards of another 75 000 so i just want to get on the cost effectiveness it is not anything against veterans or women i just need facts so i can make a sound decision thank you thank you senator francis heiliger i'd like to recognize the presence of committee member senator Wait, Ray Fonseca, good morning, Senator Fonseca. Madam Clerk, Madam Clerk, could you please give me a new tally, please?
- 1:35:22 Yes, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, you have seven members present. Thank you. Point of information, Senator Frances Elliger. It was senator joseph but i was waiting for him to answer the questions and i'll just mic down and listen and it was senator joseph that said point of information thank you all right i would ask one second i would ask mr director farrell to respond to your inquiry and then i'll recognize Senator Kala, Joseph, for a point of information. Director Farrell?
- 1:35:59 Yes. As it relates to gender specific, I do not know that it's a national requirement for it to be a woman veteran. However, I strongly suggest that the position is filled by a woman veteran so that we have someone in the position that understands the community of people that they are about to serve. As it relates to complaints from women veterans, we have not had any complaints from women veterans in the Virgin Islands about the position. But as a director, I noticed that there has been a void by us not having the position because our women veterans are missing out on certain things by us not having this advocate as a woman veteran. Right now, we do not have someone that attends that national meeting where best practices are shared, where all types of different things, benefits and access to service are shared.
- 1:37:06 So this position will place that person in a place where they can learn all the things that Virgin Islands women are missing, Virgin Islands women veterans are missing, and hopefully come back and implement some of that stuff into our agency. I hope that answers the question. If I miss one or so, please let me know, and I'll be happy to answer that question at that time. Thank you, Senator Carla, for your point of information. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Director Farrell, I have a real salient question because the bill calls for the person to conduct and I'm reading from section 1, A1, which says to conduct outreach, provide assistance to women veterans and their spouses and dependents. Now, we have some women who don't have any dependents and they don't have any veterans, women veterans that doesn't have any dependents and they don't have any spouses. So they have siblings. Is there any way we could include that? I think there was a national movement to include the entire family with respect to veteran benefits and supporting our veterans. Is that something you think can be like a friendly amendment?
- 1:38:43 uh honestly senator as we are a this will be a virgin islands law we as what i would say today the lawmakers are able to put anything or add anything into the bill as it relates to virgin islands law as it relates to the national law siblings are have very very little benefits that they are able to gain based on their veterans, their family members being a veteran.
- 1:39:16 But they do have, excuse me, Director Farrell, but they do have benefits, do they not? I'm not sure of your question, Senator. I'm asking you whether or not, because some veterans do not have a spouse, they do not have any dependents, but they have siblings. Dependents, I'm thinking, is their children. That's how it's usually determined.
- 1:39:45 But they have siblings. I'm asking you if internationally, if there is that movement to include families. Families which include their parents, their spouses, and their siblings, and their children, and their dependents. senator the one benefit that i know siblings are able to benefit from nationally is burial reimbursement or the dic benefits which relates to the debt of a veteran and that goes in order spouse first and then children if there's no children or spouse available then it goes down to siblings okay so that's why I wanted to see if we could choose do that as far as the specifications in this bill and to do just a little friendly amendment so it's clear and what about the parents because this coordinator is to conduct outreach and provide assistance to women veterans and what about their parents because maybe it could be a woman veteran who is right now under the care of a parent because they're disabled if having served a great nation do you do you see that that would be beneficial in granting clarity to this piece of legislation If there is something in the form of a will or trust where the veteran designates the parents in an event like that, then the parents are able to benefit from specific benefits after the passing of the veteran.

- 1:41:37 However, I will say that most benefits in that case are for when they are service members, not really veterans. But, again, lawmakers are able to put anything into the law as it would be a state benefit and not a federal benefit. Right. And that's what I'm trying to get. This is just for outreach to those families. I'm looking at families. Families. The outreach. It says conduct outreach and provide assistance. So you're doing the outreach to the family of that veteran, whomever that is, regarding what benefits are available to that veteran who may be in their care or who may need some assistance. I will continue. Thank you so kindly, Mr. Chairman, for the leeway.
- 1:42:28 Thank you. Thank you, Senator Carla Joseph, and us, you know, for the listening and viewing audiences, legislatures, we do have the right to make amendments. Yes, you do. And I think we could do it now today, we could do it in rules, we could do it at any time. So we could continue. And I think I alluded to that, Senator, being that it will be a state legislation. Thank you. Senator, can I get in here recognized for your four minutes? Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning to all. I do support both these bills, especially 36, well, both of them.
- 1:43:07 But 36-0-250, I have a special interest in because as one of the primary sponsors of Bill No. 31, That's 0289, which became Act 7880, now allows for the GRS to be able to give employees loans. And as I review this bill, I'm seeing that the bill's central focus is to simply ensure that members earn credit service, which determines retirement eligibility and pension benefits is not simply reduced because the members default on a personal loan. We all know that credited service should ordinarily reflect that of their years of government service and retirement contributions made by these employees during their tenure.
- 1:44:18 Also, I see that the bill also preserves GRS's ability to recover outstanding debts through offsets and other lawful collection methods which protects the system's financial interests. So I wanted to ask quickly, though, of the administrator, what legal authority allows GRS to reduce credited service because of a loan default? Good morning, Senator Gittins. Thanks for the question. But that is in the Virgin Islands Code. I don't have the exact reference at this moment, but that is within the existing Virgin Islands Code.
- 1:45:09 Our legal counsel is on the floor. I will ask through the chair for her to research that and let me know the legal authority that GRS has to reduce credited service because of a loan default. legal counsel you you got that could you repeat it one more time senator i want to know what legal authority allows the grs to reduce credited service because of a loan default uh also uh if i may let me clarify uh it's not that credited service is is reduced but the The contribution, the employee contribution is offset to cover the loan.
- 1:46:02 Again, I want to know under what legal authority the GRS is using for that. Also, my next question to you is how many members are affected and what is the actual cost of restoring their service credits? uh senator i'm aware of the one that was brought to my attention by senator maurice james which was the impetus for her bill and which uh yielded the decision to discontinue the practice all right um you know and on the other hand um the the sins of an employer should not become the penalty of our employees speaking now to the hospital employee situation if an employee has the credits and the ability to repay they should not be denied access to their own retirement loan program because the employer is delinquent so my question to you is what specific law regulation or even board policy authorizes the GRS to deny a member's loan application solely because the employer is behind on its contributions, even when the employee has sufficient contribution credits and otherwise qualifies for the program?
- 1:47:46 Well, Senator, that's the first problem. there wouldn't be sufficient retirement contribution credits if they're not being remitted to the GERS because if the employee contributions are being deducted from their pay but aren't being remitted to the GERS then we don't have it and that is the basis upon which the statute that authorizes the loan program and the security for the loan program is written that it is secured by the employee contributions so so that's that's where the employer might be delinquent however that only because the payments are not up-to-date at this time however if those monies are in that can cover the loan that they're requiring why are they still denied it if there's because efficient monies in their accounts why are they being denied because senator if the employer is deducting the loan payment from the employees pay but not ref remitting it mr errs then the loan is not being paid mr administrator you're only going now to where the employer is now delinquent this body have appropriated funding where uh grs was paid up uh to some point back i'm not sure how long now the um the delinquent payments are but i'm pretty sure i'm almost 90 sure that those employees would have those funds in there covered you're talking about the delinquent payments now as of today but they had monies in that account prior so why are they still denied being able to participate in a
- 1:49:48 loan program especially if they have the ability to repay because senator if they have the ability to repay and the loan payment is being deducted from their pay but we're not receiving it then the loan isn't being paid and effectively we don't have a loan program we would have a grant program and we are fiduciaries and we have to ensure that we are looking out for the best interests of all the members of the gers well and it's retired i i hope you understand that i too am looking out for the best interest of all as well but what i'll do is i'll ask you to um get with the uh board members again and please

take a close look at this uh situation because these hard-working employees should be able to benefit from this loan program as well at the same time we're also working with the hospitals to make sure that they uh get up to par with their uh employer payments thank you mr so happy to hear that senator giddens thank you senator giddens senator i'd like to recognize a non-committee member senator dwayne de graf one of them information senator reform shaker yes thank you uh mr chair i wanted to follow up on the line of questioning from our honorable vice president um and it goes to the grs um administrator um the loans are insured against debt or total and permanent disability so you made a comment um about a grant uh but it isn't it true that if

1:51:40 the person dies or disabled grs still gets their full uh money you are reimbursed right Yes, the person dies, but we're not about to kill a living member to get our loan payment. Yes, I know. But in that case, it's not a grant. You're not given a grant. The employees are going to pay this back. And if they do not, if they cannot do to death or disability, GRS is refunded the money thank you mr chair for the time thank you thank you senator cliford joseph you're recognized thank you mr chair and good morning to the listening public good morning to my colleagues good morning to the testifiers here this morning And I, too, stand in support of these two measures.

1:52:40 As far as individual retiring, I think a three to five-year window would be great for you to start to look in to what you plan. I mean, if you're retiring, retirement is not final like that, but retirement is final as far as being in the system. So you want to make sure that you're going early enough to clear that if you have an outstanding, that you'll be able to make a payment of a small amount to get you back up to the status. Because I can't know how long in government, when some folks started in government, the retirement system ticked out a year later. Most of those individuals now should be retired, most, but maybe not all. So if that's the case, you want to make sure you're going in earlier so you could not run into that issue as far as being ready to retire.

1:53:38 Question to CEO Dawson. If an individual, if the government wasn't making a payment, that's the time that you contact the employee to let them know that they're behind? Good morning, Senator. Joseph, thank you for your question and thanks for reminding those within your voice that they should be planning for retirement several years out in case there are any issues. Now with regards to your question about loan delinquencies. We typically don't have any loan delinquencies, particularly the central government because The central government remits the deductions from the employees' pay, including for loan payments. So that is not a problem. The problem that we've had have been with certain semi-autonomous agencies that have failed to remit their employee deductions and employer contributions, for that matter. Well, that should have been my question. The semi-autonomous agency that's not making the payments, that's where the issue arises.

1:54:48 Yes, Senator, and whatever can be done to assist these agencies, Senator Giddens alluded to assistance that he's seeking to author. We certainly encourage that. It's my time. Anyway, thank you for your response. As it pertains to bill number 360279, I, too, support that measure as well. I feel that having both sex have the same attention when it comes to one being a veteran and already serving. And I don't have an issue either if it's a female handling that. I feel it's even better because she will be able to advise.

1:55:57 You will be surprised to know how much people are not connected medically to their body. So if you have an individual who has the same or might have some of the same issue that you might be encountering, I think that will seal real good for the veterans of the Boston Islands. So, I mean, I'm not a member in this committee, but I'm in support of these two measures. So when they do come to the committee who I am in, which is the rules, I will be in support of these measures.

1:56:28 Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the time. Thank you, Senator Joseph. Senator Riffon-Shaker, you recognize for your four minutes. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair, and a pleasant good morning to all my colleagues and all the viewers listening and tuned in. I am in support of both of these bills. They are very welcome. The bills are well written.

1:56:57 I want to extend condolences to all of the victims and the families that have suffered due to the earthquake in Venezuela. And also a special congratulations to Michelle Smith. You know, my name is Smith, too. You know, I'm a Ray Smith Fonseca Williams. So I got to check, see how she related to me. but you know the four 400 meter hurdles is a difficult race it's um 10 hurdles you got to jump over of 30 inches you go all the way around the track so her record is 54 uh 54.93 seconds and so now she qualifies for the 2027 panam games in lima peru congratulations to miss smith you You know, I wish you were coming in on the airport over here, but I understand she's, you know, living in St. Croix.

1:57:58 Blessing to this Virgin Islander. Let me go real quick to bill number 36-0279. You know, I was checking it out, and, you know, the Women's Veterans Coordinator, right, She assists with special services that are gender-specific health care issues such as reproductive and gynecological care, maternity care, breast and cervical cancer screening, menopause, mental health, you know, women's counseling, and of course, military sexual trauma, which is important. And, you know, the women, I looked at the statistics, and women are the fastest growing segment of the women's, of the veterans, and it's

up the enrollment in 2024, there was 16,725 women enlisted in 2025, there was 23,985. So it's a 43% increase. So I congratulate you, Director Farrell.

1:59:11 This is definitely a needed position and a good bill. I wanted to go to bill number 360250, and I definitely agree with that. You know, the accredited service self-reflect the years of government service. I wanted to ask the administrator a question. If someone has, say, 12 years service, but for some reason or the other, they only had paid in nine. One minute.

1:59:46 Can they still qualify for this loan? For a personal loan? Yes. Yes, they can. Okay. In this case, we have a limited loan program where the maximum amount is \$10,000. So if you have several years of contributions, it's quite conceivable that you would have sufficient balance in your employee contribution account. Okay. So what would be the minimum years of contributions to qualify for the loan?

2:00:26 you have to have been an employee for at least two years two years okay so um because you know i want to follow up on the question from senator the vice president he had mentioned that accredited service time like the years of government service so if someone has say they've actually been with government three years but they've only paid in for one year so they have three years service to the government but they only pay in can they do a plan to pay in the other two and still qualify for the loan or that person will not qualify well that's a highly unlikely scenario because if you're if you have the money on hand to make two years of contributions then chances are that you won't be applying for a loan right the loan is only ten thousand dollars No, but maybe they wanted to go and get a second loan to pay in because they have three years service.

2:01:25 And, Mr. Chair, can I just wrap up real quickly? I heard my time was gone. Go ahead, Senator Vance. Thank you. You see what I'm saying? The person has three years, but they've only paid in one. But they need this loan, so they're going to go and borrow the one years that they knew contribution. Can they pay that one year in and then qualify for the loan? Senator, I don't know of any scenario in which you're going to have three years of service, but you've only paid in one because you're supposed to be paying through payroll deduction, right? There's some issues where you could have a temporary employee and, you know, for different reasons, the NOPA, the person could be processing. There's several scenarios that could happen. Trust me, in this government, it does happen.

2:02:10 And it happened to me when I first started out. I was working with the government, but it wasn't taking out the GRS deduction. Of course, you know, before I retired, I had checked that out, but it does happen. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for your leniency and your kindness. Thank you. From the Chair to Legal Counsel, I think that you had some updates you would like to give, put on the record. For the stenographer's sake, put your name on the record, please. Hi, there was a question on the floor that if the women's coordinating position could be limited only to women, And according to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the answer is that the position cannot be legally limited to women.

2:03:11 It will be a violation of that federal statute. The second question from Senator Gittins asked the question, if the GRS, there was a legal authority for the GRS to reduce credited service for a loan default. And from my research, there's no provision in Title III, Chapter 27 that authorizes GRS to reduce previously earned credited service solely because a member defaulted on a retirement loan. Thank you, Attorney Moore. Mr. Chairman. Senate Administrator Dawson, you're saying something? Yes, Mr. Chairman, if I may.

2:04:00 Proceed. Under Section 717C, Investments, Personal Loans, and the Virgin Islands Code, it states in case of separation from service or for any reason, including death or disability of the member, However, the balance due on the loan and any accrued interest thereon must be deducted from any refund of contributions, annuity, debt benefit, or any other benefit due to the member's beneficiaries. So this is one instance in which we can certainly utilize the member's contributions to offset the loan, including the fact that our promissory notes indicate that clearly. Okay. Director Dawson, while I have you, let me ask this question. This is not for me, but it's for the public. If an employee goes and they do the consultation with your team, and when they get the overall, you would say, well, based on our records, we see that you owe the GRS, let's say \$2,000, for lack of better. just using that number, \$2,000, how could that be cured? How could that be paid? What are the options after that? Would your employee sit to the constituent? Senator, to be clear, is this somebody who is thinking of retiring and has gotten this information and has a few years remaining so that they can bring it back to me?

2:05:38 trying to clear up things before they arrange to make they can arrange to make monthly payments to the gers to cure any deficiencies that they may have i think what i was trying to get out of here is whether they could say well okay could it be payroll deducted could i come in and pay direct you know what what what i don't want to watch in your mouth so you could you say They can come in and make the payments.

2:06:09 Okay. Thank you. Senator DeGraff, they're recognized for your four minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, test affairs. All of you who are listening and present. You know, before I start, Administrator,

GRS puts up how much money for the loan program? Well, it depends. in the last um two programs that we've had we've put up 20 million dollars okay 10 million per district and and where do you get that money from um investments or how do you put that up uh we would typically tap our investment portfolio uh to fund these loan programs uh we consider the loans to be another form of investment okay so then it's backed based on the plan sponsor because of their employer and employee contributions is why what would determine that well ultimately that is how the grs gets his money so yes okay so then the plan sponsor the government even the semi-autonomous entities are the reason for you able to get 10 million or 20 million ultimately yes Okay. Okay. Just want to make sure I get that straight. Okay. You know, Mr. Chair, I'm not a member of this committee, but I couldn't let issue regarding veterans, male or female, slide without being present.

2:07:43 so um to my colleague the sponsor i got your back i'm here i'm gonna sign on but director farrell uh one question i had in regards to the bill was um and and i would be appalled to hear that women veterans aren't receiving those the services that services that they the part of us fighting for for the freedoms of america women veterans are having problems getting their services can you repeat the question can you repeat the question yes the question is we're here to support the women veterans and i'm trying to find out does the coordinator is the coordinator position derived because women are not receiving those services that this should be getting that that's not a um that's that's not the situation center what it is a coordinator women's veteran coordinator position will help to eliminate some of the barriers for women veterans that are currently available not just on the local level but across the nation There are many services where women veterans need a specific advocate to help them get across the boat so they'll be able to make sure that they get all the benefits that they deserve and are entitled to.

2:09:18 Okay, I just want to make sure I appreciate that. Now, in closing, the position you want to put as an exempt position? One minute. As we haven't discussed the specific costs as yet, we haven't discussed the specific classification as yet either. I am going to lean on the personnel experts to give me guidance on the direction that we should probably go on as a result of eligibility and classification. Well, I think the best position or classification to put that person under would be in a GS position.

2:10:00 You put them exempt, any governor come, gear at him, you know, go through a whole process, a stall in the whole, put them in a GS position. And I think going forward, there is a GS pay plan and stuff that we could bring them in. But I think keep that one in mind rather than you have a unionized one, maybe a little more difficult, a GS position or exempt. I don't think you should go along the lines of being an exempt position. so just as a suggestion um have that discussion regarding that and if we have to put that into law then we just an amendment so um mr chair i'm just here strictly as a non-voting member but to support my colleagues you know uh i'm here the veterans are here you know i'm the one over here she's the one over there on the big island so hey we will hold one head for the virgin islands thank you for the time mr chair thank you senator the graph go green go white okay um before i go to senator region senator getting's point of information thank you uh mr cheers so if i understand the administrator's um response earlier let me let me just be clear again so an employee that has a loan do they have the ability to come in and pay in person yes or no no senator why wouldn't they be allowed to come in and pay because by policy and i do believe by statute is to be paid by payroll deduction

2:11:52 um can you tell me uh what part of the statute states it has to be paid by payroll deduction senator i am not here with the entire virgin islands court in front of me uh you can we have legal counsel and we can certainly revert to you mr administrator i'll due respect this is your shop and um i i didn't come here for this today we're not gonna go back and forth later i'm just asking you if your entity is doing this under what authority that you're doing it so if you're doing it under some uh authority you should be able to tell me what authority you're using if you don't know the part of the code then tell me that but i could just do do away with this smart talk. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

2:12:51 Thank you, Senator Kiddens. Senator Mary James, you're recognized for your four minutes. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to my colleagues for your kind words about the two pieces of legislation that is in front of you. I do want to also say that the Women's Veteran Coordinator, as stated earlier, is a position that recognizes that women veterans have unique needs.

2:13:33 And we must ensure that the government is responsive to those needs. so with with my colleagues who asked whether a man can be hired in the position of women's veterans coordinator it would be illegal for there to be an advertisement that said only females However, you can, in fact, advertise that this position targets, as it does by this very name, issues that women, especially, and women, not especially, but only women veterans experience, such as, I'll give the example, military sexual trauma. As a former JAG, I know that it was easier for women who had experienced sexual trauma, especially those young women who had gone off to basic training, and when they returned, it was easier for them to speak with the women in the guard than it was for them to speak to the males in the guard. And I think most of us as females understand that there are some women who prefer, as well as there are some women who prefer men.

- 2:15:13 But as my colleague, my co-sponsor on these bills stated, the very fact that we are creating a position like this acknowledges that we need, that women veterans encounter challenges that are different from males. But I do agree with my female colleagues who actually were the ones who raised the question of whether a man, I thought that was interesting too, of whether a man could be hired for this position. One minute. It kind of takes me back to the fact that in this nation, And in this country that we're in right now, we've decided that people of color sometimes or don't have issues that are unique to them, just like women have issues that are unique to them.
- 2:16:26 So I thank them for the question, though, because it clears up that issue. No, we are not discriminating from male applicants. We cannot legally. However, we can, in fact, target women veterans who may want to serve in this position and know the needs of other women who have served in this position better than a man who has served in the position, just by nature of the fact that women and men are different. I just want to speak a little bit to the other piece of legislation.
- 2:17:09 That legislation is very specific, and I know that whenever we appear with certain bills that my colleagues can enlarge and expand because of questions that they have concerning whoever is in front of us. In this case, it's the administrator for the GERS. But this specific, this piece of bill of legislation, really, the one thing that it does is it makes sure that the years of service, as I said earlier in my statement, cannot be erased because of a financial setback. That's the only thing that this bill addresses. It doesn't address all the other issues that my colleagues raised, and I would also encourage them, knowing that, as I said before, too, that administrators change, that in fact, if we want to make sure that the retirees are protected, this is a situation where we codify it. And we make sure that by doing so, we enact laws that give us clear, consistent rules that protect every single public employee and retiree. I will say this, too. I don't know every law in the book. It's impossible to know every law in a book. It's impossible for any one of us.
- 2:18:52 especially when we are called upon to answer questions that have no relevance to the bill in front of us. So I would ask my colleagues moving forward that when we see issues with the government retirement system that we in fact pass laws to protect those. And it doesn't matter who the administrator is today or tomorrow, that we, in fact, establish what the law requires. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you. I personally don't have any questions. I rise in support of the two bills and the one amendment.
- 2:19:38 And I think I'm hearing an amendment. Amendment, Senator Novelli-Francis, Jr. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. is my mic on thank you very much mr chair mr chair and colleagues i offer amendment number 36-770 amendment to bill number 36-0250 bill number 36-0250 is amended by striking all the language after they show a title and inserting the following section one title three virgin code chapter 27 section 717 is amended by inserting the following subsection d d not withstanding any other law the system shall not reduce revoke or otherwise alter a member's service resulting from a default or delinquency of any loan or financial obligation made through or administered by the system nothing in this subsection shall prohibit the system from pursuing collection of outstanding debt through lawful means provided such actions do not alter the members service service shall reflect the actual duration of government employment i so move second amendment number three six that seven seven zero has been properly moved by senator novelly francis jr seconded by senator almer francis heiliger senator franklin johnson hearing no objections so order motion motion senator novelly francis jr thank you uh very much mr chair mr chair and colleague i move amend bill number 36.0250 an act amended title
- 2:21:29 three virgin isles code section 27 chapter 27 section 717c relating to the personal loan made to members of the government employees retirement system as amended be approved by the committee of government operations veterans affairs and consumer protection and sent forward to the rules and judiciary committee for further consideration and vetting iso move second second Bill No. 3600250, an act amending Title III, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 27, Section 71C, relating to personal loans made to members of the Government Employees Retirement System, as amended, has been properly moved by Senator Nova Lee Francis, Jr., seconded by Senator Franklin Johnson, Senator Carla Joseph, Senator Ray Fonseca, roll call.
- 2:22:28 Yes, Mr. Chair. Senator Ray Fonseca? Yay. Senator Fonseca? Yay. Senator Novell E. Francis Jr.? Senator Francis Jr.? Yay. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger? Yes. Senator Francis Heiliger? Yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins? Yes. Senator Gittins? Yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson? Yes.
- 2:22:54 Senator Johnson? Yay. Senator Collar J. Joseph? Yes. Senator Joseph, yay. Senator Avery L. Lewis? Yes. Senator Lewis, yay. Mr. Chair, you have seven yays. Thank you, Madam Clerk. Bill number 36.0250, an act amending Title III, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 27, Section 71C, relating to personal loans made to members of the government the Employees Retirement System has been voted upon favorably in this committee, Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, and will be forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary favorably for further vetting and consideration. Motion.

- 2:23:39 Motion, Senator Novelli-Francis, Jr. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair and colleagues. I move Bill No. 36-0279, an act amending Title III, Virgin Honor's Code, by creating a position of Women Veterans Coordinator within the Office of Veterans Affairs, be approved by the Committee of Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, and sent forward to the Rules and Judiciary Committee for further consideration of vetting. I so move.
- 2:24:09 Second. Second. Bill number 36.0279, an act amending Title III Virgin Islands Code by creating the position of Women Veterans Coordinator within the Office of Veterans Affairs has been properly moved by Senator Novoley Francis, Jr., seconded by Senator Franklin Johnson, Senator Carla Joseph, Senator Ray Fonseca, roll call. Yes, Mr. Chair. Senator Ray Fonseca?
- 2:24:41 Yay. Senator Fonseca, yay. Senator Novell E. Francis Jr. Senator Francis Jr., yay. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger. Yes. Senator Francis Heiliger, yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins. Yes. Senator Gittins, yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Collard J. Joseph. Yes. Senator Joseph, yay. Senator Avery L. Lewis.
- 2:25:11 Yes. Senator Lewis, yay. Mr. Chair, you have seven yays. Thank you, Madam Clerk. Bill number 36.0279, an act amending Title III, Virgin Islands Code, by creating the position of Women Veterans Coordinator within the Office of Veterans Affairs, has been favorably voted upon in this committee government operation, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection, and will be forwarded to the Committee of Rules and Judiciary favorably for further vetting and consideration. So, Mr. Farrell, sorry, Director Farrell, I thank you for coming here today, and I'll give you 30 seconds to wrap up.
- 2:25:54 Thank you, Senator. I just want to say thank you to, of course, the bill sponsor, Senator Maurice James, for bringing this bill forward, and to all other senators who supported it. You know, this is merely an effort to move Virgin Islands veterans, whether men or women, from being in the underserved category to being in the properly served category. For so long, our veterans have not gotten the services, benefits, and entitlements that they so deserve and are entitled to.
- 2:26:31 And this is just a next step forward for our veterans of the territory. Veterans, we are on our way. Thank you so much, Senator. Thank you, Director Farrell, and your excuse. Director Administrator Dawson, you have, thank you for coming here today, and I was providing your testimony. Your insight is much needed and warranted. I really appreciated it. Thank you, and do you have 30 seconds to wrap up? To give your closing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was truly a pleasure to be here today, and it's always a pleasure to collaborate with members of this body.
- 2:27:13 Senator Francis referred to a recent collaboration, and it was certainly a great pleasure to collaborate with Senator James on bringing some modicum of fairness to an issue that had been outstanding. so we definitely look forward to continuing to serve our constituents in this case our members with our active loan program incidentally I have received the code reference with regards to the employee payments and that is found in title 3 chapter 27 section 717 paragraph 3 that requires a repayment amongst must be deducted from the salary of the member at the same time and at the same manner as the members contributions to the system are deducted so there's a statutory basis for employee deductions being required for loan payments with that mr. chairman thank you for the opportunity to be here today and I look forward to our next venture thank you administrator dawson uh your excuse senator marie's james you're recognized for your point of personal privilege thank you mr chair i just want to thank um administrator dawson and director farrell for appearing and supporting the legislation i want to thank all my colleagues for supporting it i really appreciate it and um i believe that the women veterans and the retirees of our community will be better off because of these two pieces of legislation thank you again thank you senator james a great way to close out a month um at least we could thank women in it we enclosed all the month with just budget alone anyhow the committee of government operation veterans affair consumer protection Stands at recess for 20 minutes.
- 2:29:48 We'll be right back. I'll see you next time [2 such phrases repeated 11 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 2:35:18 Thank you. We'll be right back. Transcription by CastingWords We'll be right back. [3 such phrases repeated 50 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 3:00:48 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. 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. 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. Thank you. The Committee of Government Operation, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection is back on the record.

- 3:19:38 Good afternoon to everyone, to my colleagues, you in the listening audience, to my team, media, all employees of central staff. Good afternoon. Madam Clerk, could you kindly read the agenda for Block 2 into the record? Yes, Mr. Chair. Block 2, Bill No. 36.0213, an act renaming Boulevard Road on the island of St. Croix as Alicia Chucky Hanson Road and appropriating \$10,000 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund to the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works to erect the proper signage proposed by Senator Hubert L. Frederick and co-sponsored by Senator Carla J. Joseph. Invited testifiers, Mrs. Elizabeth Hansen-Watley, Assistant Commissioner of Department of Tourism, and daughter of the Honorable Senator Alicia Chucky Hansen, Attorney Lee Roan, Esquire, Lee J. Roan & Associates, attorney and friend. Former Senator Celestino A. White, Sr., friend and former colleague, Mr. Paul Plain, friend. Mr. Chair, this concludes the reading of Block 2. Thank you, Madam Clerk.
- 3:20:52 Clerk, as it pertains to Bill 36.0213, an act renaming Belvedere Road on the island of St. Croix as Alicia Chucky Hanson Road and appropriating \$10,000 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund to the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works to erect the proper signage. Who speaks to to this bill? Senator Hubert Frederick, you are recognized. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. A pleasant good afternoon, colleagues, testifiers, listeners and viewing audience, the office of Hubert Frederick and central staff. I speak to this This bill, Mr. Chair, on the basis that Bill 36S0213 recognizes one of our iconic Senators. Senator Chucky, Alicia Chucky Hanson, devoted decades of distinguished service to the people of Virgin Islands and remains one of the most respected and influential public service in our territory's history. This measure seeks to amend bill number 8950 to recognize her lasting legislative legacy by renaming Belvedere Road as Alicia Chucky Hanson Road.
- 3:22:18 But after further conversation with the family, we decided to offer an amendment. Amendment number 36-690 changing the contentment road in front of the old legislature building to the Alicia Chucky Hanson Lane, a particularly fitting tribute given that the former legislative building was located along this roadway and has served as a place where Senator Chucky Hanson carried out much of her extensive public service. By honoring Senator Chucky Hanson in this manner, the legislature acknowledges her unwavering commitment to her constituents, her tireless advocacy on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands and her significant contribution she made to the growth and development of our territory. This measure not only preserves an important part of our legislative history, but it also serves as a lasting reminder of the dedication, leadership, and public service that Senator Hanson exemplified throughout her career. In closing, this measure is about honoring of virgin island icon whose dedication to public service spans decades senator hansen's contribution to this territory and his people have left an enduring legacy that deserve recognition by renaming contentment road as the alicia chuckie hansen lane we pay tribute to her service we preserve an important part of our legislative history and we also ensure that future generation remember her contributions to the virgin islands I respectfully ask for your favorable consideration and support of this measure.
- 3:24:04 Thank you very much. Thank you, Senator Frederick. Let's go start it from my left. We're just doing a mic check, and then I'll ask you for your testimony. Yes, mic check. You're representing today? Go ahead. Yeah, power be. Come closer to the mic, Mr. P. Yes. All right. Good. Good morning, Elizabeth Hansen-Watley. Good afternoon, Lerone.
- 3:24:33 Thank you. So, Ms. Watley, you have the honors of beginning first, so proceed. Greetings, Honorable Senator Avery Lewis, Chairman of the Committee of Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, all senators and legislative staff, as well as the present viewing and listening audience. I am Elizabeth Hansen Watley, Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Tourism, Chairwoman of the Taxicab Commission Board, and a daughter of the Honorable Alicia Chucky Hansen. Thank you for extending an invitation to me so that I may add my contribution to the discussion on bill number 36-0213, a bill renaming Belvedere Road on the island of St. Croix as Alicia Chucky Hanson Road, and appropriating \$10,000 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund to the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works to erect the proper signage proposed by Senator Hubert L. Frederick and co-sponsored by Senator Carter J. Joseph. It took me a while to write this testimony as it meant me having to reflect on the fact that my mother took her last breath almost three years ago. And while she is not physically here, the people that she served above all else constantly remind me that she continues to live on in the hearts and minds of all of us. Whether you love Chucky Hansen or not, you respected her.
- 3:26:18 And yes, she earned that respect. Whether you heard of her because of her many battles on behalf of the people or the life-changing legislations that continue to contribute to the quality of life we share that keep our government afloat, Alicia Chucky Hansen deserves to be acknowledged and remembered. The longest-serving senator in St. Croix history, the highest votes for senator territorially, the most number one wins in the U.S. Virgin Islands history for senator, and all of this serving as a no-party independent candidate who would always say, I answer to the people. As I stand here in support of Senator Hansen being acknowledged for her service and dedication, I not only appear as a representative of her immediate family, my dad, Esdell E. Hansen Sr., my brothers, Esdell Jr. and Erskine, and our little brother, Erickson,

who is no longer with us, But I stand here for our entire family, the people of the Virgin Islands, U.S. and British, Puerto Rico, and a wider world, as she was truly loved throughout many nations.

3:27:36 I am a proud daughter, not just today, but every day, and it is my hope that the gesture of renaming the contentment road Alicia Chucky Hansen Lane will evoke questions and conversations about who she was and her legacy long after we are all gone. The location holds a special place in my heart as I grew up at the old legislature building that is located right off of this road. It, the sweet tamarind, off the large tree in the front parking lot, spending many late nights there as those who would become historic figures in VI history would walk in and out of her office. Even as a child, I understood that the people came first. Her work was important and necessary. and that the expectation of all of us was to do our part to make our islands great for all, no matter where our story began. I still hold those ideals to be true, and I hope to demonstrate that in short order. I want to sincerely thank the author of this bill, Senator Hubert Frederick, and his co-sponsor, Senator Carla Joseph, for seeing it fit to bestow this honor on the legendary voice of the people, the Honorable Alicia Chucky Hansen. To the people who continue to support me and my family as we continue to navigate this new normal with you of not having the legend, the voice, remember to stand, though it is hard. Speak even when you feel weak.

3:29:19 And remember that a little bit of Alicia Chucky Hansen is in all of us. You just have to trust yourself. Things will get better. God is always in control, come hell or high water. Thank you. Thank you. Ms. Watley. Mr. Payne? Yes, good morning. Yes. Let me, before you speak, I'll say to my colleague, Mr. Payne, I did not submit a testimony, but I'm going to allow him to say some words.

3:29:53 Just to say a few words. Good morning. Yes, I'm here. Government Operation and Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection. Yes, good morning, Senator. Thanks to you, Hugo Frederick, for sponsoring this measure. Senator Hansen was a fighter. We all said that, you know, every lion is a cat, but every cat is not a lion. Senator Hansen was a real lion. I remember when you could speak about the Guarantee Insurance Fund, we could speak about when Stanley on the road, driving around Christmas time, the Senator Hansen, Prime Sponsor, I remember when she called me and told me to police them, take them off the truck, and now they can't drive around and got through the different communities themselves, applying the Christmas carol. senator hansen gather all her senators them and move legislation to make it loud that stanley could go wrong serenading through the different communities they even said been to saint thomas i remember morning when she told me come down to the office and bring three dozen what i do or not i said well it's 36 donuts and when i went down there you didn't want to see senator hansen office people at that day senator hansen office become wapa water and power authority nancy become the receptionist for wapa what happened on that day there when i went into her office and i don't usually ask her this i said senator what happened a lot of people out there you tell me bring all these owners she tell me wapa cut the current the electricity and wapa cut the water at that time if you're all for water wapa will cut everything and they they didn't come to the legislature they come to chucky hansen and senator hanson turned to me and tell me general you know the clock stopped what she mean by the clock stop is we gonna work until we fix it and she bringing the whole media and everybody had the light and current by then on three o'clock she called the governor and that's why he said she know kia hanson is a liar and she's a ruler so i gotta say when and i gonna say this when the senator the light like half in the legislature to senator hanson put it out at that and she was a ride and die i like that ain't every cat is a lion every lion is a cat yes

3:32:27 but every cat ain't a lion action we call them big big cats i like that we got to spice up the day yes Colleagues, we're going to go to a three-minute run. You're on leave. Oh, Jesus. I apologize. I apologize. I apologize. You call me the Alicata lion thing now, don't roar up the place. Attorney Lee Rohn, sorry, I apologize. Humbly apologize. No worries. Thank you very much, Senator Lewis. And good morning.

3:33:00 Good afternoon to all the senators and staff and the public that are listening. Chucky Hanson was a force to be reckoned with and I am forever grateful and lucky to have been her friend and at times her co-conspirator in certain matters. Chucky was a barrier breaker. She saw matters that needed to be done and she got them done even against all odds. She did so both by accuracy and pure determination and commitment. If Chucky decided something needed to be done, she was not going to finish until it got done um chucky and i became friends and co-conspirators because of a passion for fighting wrongs and fighting for the underdog she was able to use her ability to pass legislation um and she aided me in using the courts to support that legislation and make sure it was enforced uh and the and thus we were able to use two arms of the government to achieve our goals and her goals. Chucky and I worked on the Freedom of Arbitration Act because there was a time when big corporations were making people sign documents that said they had to give up their ability to go to court in order to get employment. Chucky passed that act. It has been supported by our Supreme Court.

3:34:32 Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has found that if interstate commerce is involved, then the federal law applies. But it has saved many, many people who would have had to go to arbitration and not have had their day in court. We also joined forces against Alcoa and Glencore when they had allowed those huge mountains of red dust to accumulate over by

the refinery area and then blow all over the western part of the island in the hurricane. That case took 27 years. Unfortunately, Chucky was not still alive when it finally ended. But Chucky was instrumental. I could have never done that without Chucky. And she fought and counseled the neighborhoods frequently.

3:35:27 As with all groundbreakers and fighters for the people, there were many who fought against her, and in many ways. There was even a controversy about her name, and in 2016, she had to officially change her name, because people were trying to keep her off the ballot, because they couldn't beat her any other way but sheer foolishness. uh chucky was recognized not just by the virgin islanders but nationally as well she was honored uh with a speaking slot at the million women's march in washington d.c and she was counseled and consulted by many national officers she not only spoke to the people from the senate floor and from her radio show keeping in touch but she would also roll up her sleeves and serve food to the needy after hurricanes it is fitting and well deserved that this contentment road be named alicia chucky hansen road and i i thank the sponsors immensely for this opportunity thank you do we have anyone else any online Good. I know Senator, former Senator Celestino White was invited. I haven't heard anything back from him. We're going to proceed. Colleagues, we're going to proceed with a three-minute round, beginning first with Senator Novelli-Francis, Jr.

3:37:06 Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to everyone. Thank you for your testimony. I want to certainly recognize the bill's sponsor and presentation of this piece of legislation. And I stand in support of the legislation. Love Chucky Hansen or not, she has been one of the most steady legislators over the years here in the Virgin Islands. I know as a young law enforcement officer, many times you could rely on Chucky to show up, be it whatever there was activity for the Virgin Islands Police Department. a funeral, you know, a party, you always expect Chucky to show up and show out. She walk in the room, a lot of time late, bump every table, bump every chair, but you're going to recognize that Chucky Hansen is in the room. And, you know, she had a level of respect from her colleagues and this community, and regardless of what, you know, again, you know, she's always been steady. I had the opportunity to serve with her in the, I think it was the 32nd legislature of the Virgin Islands, and we're obviously on the opposite side. Me being a Democrat, she being an independent, but nonetheless, there have always been a cordial relationship. And after leaving the Senate, you know, we have had the opportunity to dialogue a lot of times. You know, she'll call and offer advice, suggestions, recommendations, or whatever in regards to a particular piece of legislation or something that's going on in the community. Particularly, she looked out for some of our youngsters in terms of the time when the summer job was needed for individuals that, you know, she wanted to ensure that she's able to support them in getting some of that summer jobs or internship.

3:38:53 You know, so she made the calls that was necessary to make sure that those individuals had a seat at the table. So, again, I stand in support of this piece of legislation. And really, Elizabeth, I can't imagine, you know, certainly that you have missed her. Your family has missed her over the years. And even when she took sick, as a cancer survivor myself, you know, we had conversation up to very recent before her passing. it was a surprise when she passed because you know we um she sounded strong and good up until that last time so um i truly believe that you know chuckie hansen when the history books are written you know she'll definitely be there um in the history books and be one of those you know steady leader that have been well respected you know throughout and again you don't have to to like her but like you have indicated you will respect the work of her contribution she had supporters that truly believed in her um because again they knew that that they could rely and depend upon her um so i stand in support of this piece of legislation i'd just like to ask you know how have the family has been able to cope with such a giant over the years that has really been a steady part of um mr chaffer may just wrap up a real trigger in their life complete complete senator hey how have the family been able to cope with that situation i think the best way i could say it is uh through community support uh one of the things that um i knew in her life was that she was very popular and well um accomplished but when she was no longer physically here what remained was the love that people had for her across the board didn't matter what roots they came from what island what nation uh people reached out to me from all over the world people i didn't know and uh shared stories and and at the end of the day it's all about how the people felt about her you know um she would always say i ain't looking for nothing except for blessings from god

3:41:08 When I would say, well, nobody mentioned that you did this or you did that. You named the court. You named the Wanglui Hospital. You got no recognition. She would say, I ain't looking for nothing from nobody but God. And all I want is blessings. So the reassurance in, I don't miss her in a way I think a lot of people miss her in her absence. Because I went toe-to-toe with her every day. So I don't have any regrets. i remember all the good times i remember all the experiences and i'm able to live her legacy through the people of the virgin islands and them remembering her the way she touched their lives and changed their lives so that's how we cope with it through memories great memories uh thank you thank you very much and again i believe that chucky has been a public servant throughout this community she has been um had a servant leadership and certainly she should be remembered um you know public services is just that you

make all these contributions you're gone and people forget about you and you know i think when i like i said when the history book is written i think it's definitely important that we denote and you know recognize her contribution here in this community uh so i i do intend to support this piece of legislation thank you swatley you wanted to add something yes mr chair um while we're on the subject of legacy i i did want to bring to the senator's attention that one of the legislation she passed with WAPA for reconnection is supposed to just stay at \$25. There is an additional late fee now added, and so I would love, in remembrance of her, that you all look into that, because I think that it was fitting to keep it at the \$25. I don't want anybody going around the near Barry Bush to undermine the legislation. And we know if you can't pay \$25, you can't afford more than \$25, right?

- 3:43:05 So that's just something I wanted to bring to your attention to look into that. Thank you. Thank you, point well taken. Senator Franklin Johnson, you're recognized for your three minutes. Good afternoon. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon to my colleagues. Good afternoon to the testifier. Good afternoon to the viewer and listening audience. I first met Chuckie Hanson when I was going to Cloud of Marco School. She was a school monitor. So I was a little boy, and she still had that Puerto Rican accent still. And it's only years after I found out that when she first started that job that she had just come from Puerto Rico.
- 3:43:44 But if you go in my office right now, you'll see a picture of Chuck Janssen in my office. A little picture when we had her body lying state from some family members. I didn't just take the picture to take it. I put it up in my office. Because she was one of the persons that would call me when I first got in the legislature and give me a little insight. She was always quiet. I ain't tell you nothing but telling you this.
- 3:44:15 And she would always guide me many days with things that I might not have known or was not aware of. And I thank her for that every day. But as I walked in here today, I see a young man there to the stand. I couldn't recognize him. for a moment and i asked who is this young man there but a general a very loyal supporter and and it means a lot and i know it means a lot to you general because um you've been there with chucky and chucky been there with you and when was the first time you actually meet senator hanson When she started to run for public office, when she come in Mali, we didn't want to put up her sign there, because we used to tear it down. And she said, no, she's putting it up, she's from Puerto Rico. And she called out there with we, and she's been there with we a while, and we said, she's real. And from there, and she's been an annex in West.
- 3:45:14 Remember when the legislature been in Christian Stead? She put her office in Frederic Stead, which was a little annex for she. You know, when I listen to Attorney Lerone talk about Chucky, sometimes you might think she's controversial, but any time you're fighting for the underdog, it could always seem controversial. That's why I want you to expand a little bit on that, Attorney Lerone, in regards to some of your fight that you and Chucky had when it comes to looking out for what we call the underdog or the less fortunate. Yes, so getting into some good trouble. was the thing that we enjoyed the most.
- 3:45:54 And she would come in, and she would have some, like, waffle or something, and we would sit there and think about what laws were there and how we were going to get around it. And she was brilliant. She's just brilliant. So, you know, we'd all be thinking one way, and she'd be like, well, you know, let's get the people involved. She always knew that you needed a base of real people who real things were happening to. And there was so little time to take care of that, to worry about some of the other stuff. So she was a real people person, and she always put people first.
- 3:46:40 She definitely was, and she always walked with a force. And when she started a new commercial, if I may, Mr. Chair, I may proceed. Continue. Push! With that big explosion. You know it was Chucky. All you had to hear was that explosion. You say, that's a Chucky commercial coming there. But she had her way, and she really was sincere about her service, especially for those, what we say, the underdogs, the less fortunate, The ones who didn't have someone to have a voice They didn't have a voice But they knew that if they go to Chucky Their voice is going to be heard I don't care how small it is If it was a problem for them Chucky made sure that everyone found out about it And I appreciate what you say here today, Elizabeth In regards to the memories, you know that will be with you for the rest of your life and you'll always be thankful for that time because that's what's going to give you strength to continue moving it's going to never leave, it's going to always be there those memories, those times that you spent with her those times that you go in that trench hole and you're just right there there's no word to say how you cope with it There are going to be good days, and there are going to be bad days.
- 3:48:07 You know, you're going to wake up one day, and it'll be a rough one. But I always remember that you're not in this alone. All right? I thank you guys, and I thank the sponsor of this measure for, you know, making sure that we recognize our fighter for the people. She fought very hard, and I thank the sponsor for it, and I definitely will be supporting this measure at the appropriate time. Thank you, Senator Johnson. Senator Collett, Judge Joseph, you're recognized for your three minutes.

- 3:48:40 Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Pleasant good day to all the testifiers. Of course, I've already greeted my colleagues and the listening and viewing audience. When I saw that my colleague, the Navy veteran, had proposed this piece of legislation, I had to immediately sign on. I knew this lady. I knew this icon of a leader who walked humbly, had the most radiant smile, was so approachable. And I knew her from working here in the legislature.
- 3:49:22 I worked here in the legislature before I became a senator. And she was a fighter for the little man, the little people she would say. She's fighting for them, and she is unwavering, unwavering. I had the opportunity while she was senator to, on behalf of a program I manage in the district of St. Croix, The name of the program was Youth Bill.
- 3:49:51 Our graduation ceremony was scheduled for March 25, 2017, and it was in William's Delight. And Elizabeth, I don't mean to bring up Ms. Hanson-Watley, I don't mean to bring up any bad memories, but you know what happened in William's Delight. And the young people in that program, because this was underserved young people who came from that community, and they were adamant. They said, Ms. Joseph, we want Senator Hanson to be our guest speaker and bring her right here in William's Delight to speak to us. These are underserved young people.
- 3:50:36 They had been expelled from high school, and we were providing opportunities for them to earn their high school diploma. brought we got the senator late great icon to come and I would tell you those young people embraced her like if she was dead auntie auntie who they cared about when she spoke about her tragedy that she had occurred they were hugging her up because they too felt it, because they too had endured it. And so they were so grateful that she came to William's delight. I want to conclude and say that when I became a senator, even though I'm a Democrat and she always was an independent, this great icon of a lady took me under her wing. People don't know, so I'm going to tell you now. I would be here on the Senate floor. She would call me. And she said, Carla, fix your necklace. It has to be fixed. Mr. Chairman? Complete your thoughts, Senator. Thank you so kindly. She would say, Carla, fix your necklace. Carla, you are correct in doing this. And when I went to the sea trade for the first time, the cruise ship sea trade, she was there. And she and I walked all over the sea trade. She said, Carla was one of the first she wasn't calling me college she would call me senator i was one of the first senators to come here when this uh global sea trade was not where it is now and we went all over the place together and she was showing me the rope she was taking me under her wings and i appreciated that deeply i could never repay her for that guidance i could never repay her family for that guidance and that level of camaraderie. So for me, this is about time to give this great lady a flower. I hope that we would have been able to do it while she was living, but I'm thankful still that we have a fearless senator who is willing to do it. And I signed on, and I'm ready to vote in affirmative.
- 3:53:00 Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for the leeway. Thank you, Senator Carla Joseph. Senator Alma Frances Heiliger? Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I can't see you, Senator Frances Heiliger. I'm sorry. Can't see you now. Can't see you now. I'm here. Okay, media got it. Okay, thank you. Unfortunately, I can't. Today was the day I wanted to physically be in there because this one is kind of special for me. I met Senator Hanson about 20 years ago as an employee working at the legislature, and me and her always hit it off great. I remember the day I got the phone call and they shared with me that she had passed away. Now, I'm not a crier.
- 3:54:00 But I'm not going to lie to you. I literally slumped backwards and tears started to come down my eyes because all I kept saying is I'm going to miss her. Because a lot of people don't know. Senator Hanson always made sure she checked on you. Like before I was a senator, when I was a senator, she would always call and say, Senator, what are you doing? Senator, you're right on this one. Senator, you're sure about that one? She was always there like a mentor, always checking, always sharing her thoughts.
- 3:54:38 She would make her jokes and be like, you know, keep up as an independent. You're keeping on the right track. And I don't think people realize how much I miss those calls, how much I miss our conversations. And sometimes when you're in this position and you feel like your back is against the wall, and sometimes when you feel like your voice is the only one in a particular situation that's being heard, I often think about Senator Hansen. I said, I witnessed this woman in these chambers go up against any and everybody when it came to protecting the people of this territory. And I always said to myself, if that fearless woman could do it, who am I to not defend the people of this territory? Who am I not to do it? So, when people think that sometimes everybody is the same, we all have different personalities.
- 3:55:48 I keep hearing people saying, oh, whether you liked her or not, I don't care about that. You could have liked her, you didn't have to like her. That wasn't my problem. My thing was always that woman fought for the people. That was it. That's all I knew. That's all I cared about. and i love the way he put the people first i loved how she put her family first i she was one of the time i have witnessed when it came to her husband listen you couldn't say anything everything was like look do what you want say what you want my daddy is off limit he did not play when it came to her husband and i i i saw that And I loved her for how she fought for the people, how she protected her family, and how she loved us all.

- 3:56:43 I don't want to drag this on, but I want to say to her family, thank you for sharing her with us. Thank you. We appreciated her more than sometimes we allow ourselves to say. But I'm going to say it today for me. I appreciated Alicia Chucky Hansen, and that's it. Thank you.
- 3:57:11 Thank you, Senator Francis. Senator Kenneth Algitens, you recognize for your three minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Three minutes to talk about the great Alicia Chucky Hansen. I don't think that's sufficient timing, but let me say thank you to the sponsor, And today, as we sit here to discuss this measure, we do way more than just rename a road in her honor. But we're looking at her legacy and her service to the people of the Virgin Islands throughout her lifetime.
- 3:57:53 And it's fitting for us to memorialize her name in such an honor for us to carry on. I do support the measure, and I thank the bill's sponsor. I just want to remind colleagues that when naming or renaming streets in someone's honor, we need to definitely look at the suffix that we're using, whether it's a road, a lane, a drive, a way, etc., because these names carry certain meanings.
- 3:58:32 So I'm looking at it that there's an amendment to change it to state Alicia Chucky Hansen Lane. I'm not sure if it should really be a lane. and Alicia Chucky Hansen served more than 11 terms in this legislature, and I think that in her honor as well that her title should be on there, or even if it says Honorable Alicia Chucky Hansen, but not just Alicia Chucky Hansen Lane. So I will work with the bill sponsor to see if he agrees.
- 3:59:16 I'm not going to let it be a tug of war or anything, but we'll discuss the differences between a lane, a way, a road, a drive, and see what's the most appropriate suffix to use. But I'll also suggest that we put a handle in front of her name as well as we conclude this bill. Thank you so much, and thank you for the testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
- 3:59:47 thank you senator ray fonseca you recognize we got three minutes yes good afternoon mr chair thank you very much um i'm definitely i've already signed on to this legislation alicia chucky hansen of course she's a legend in the whole virgin islands is a legend you know i was doing a little research and you know what um chucky hansen and i share a whole lot that's right a whole lot you know she was constantly protecting the whopper repairs against some rising electric rates she voted against allowing whopper to build customers for the street lights that's right uh as a matter of fact in 2017 she pointed out that wapa had went back to fuel oil from the propane because they could not pay the propane supplier well sir popa we right in that stage today we need chucky hansen we need chucky hansen because those things that chucky hansen honorable chucky hansen senator was fighting for with wapa WAPA is right back at it again. That's right.
- 4:01:15 Like how my senator from Fredericksburg would say, again. Sounding like a cushion today. How are you doing, Mr. Vice President? You know, I met Senator Hansen a few times. I used to run into her in the Frenchman's Riff Hotel quite often. But, you know, I'm going to tell you something. She always had a fantastic hairdo, Popa. A fantastic hairdo. Listen, Senator Chucky Hansen was always well-dressed. I always noticed that about her, you know. She was well-dressed. So, you know, I'm definitely signing on to this. This is well-deserved. I have a picture. I was looking through my last pictures of her.
- 4:01:59 The last picture we have with her is a picture of me. and the current president of the legislature and also the rules chair, Madam Rules Chair, we were at Miami at a sea trade convention and we took a picture. So that's the last picture that I have of her. You know, a brilliant, brilliant senator legislature. But the stuff that Senator Hansen was fighting for, you know, against WAPA and abusing the rate payers, and not having reliable electricity service that's the same thing we're having today i just checked my phone here whopper say even though last week they say we offer rotation guess what bavoni off again um because a lightning strike whopper lightning strike whopper that's right that guy right here i just sent it to all the senators in the senator's web trap lightning strike you see that we're here honoring chucky hansen and they are realizing that we need a chucky hansen today so i'm gonna do my best to take up that mantle senator chucky hansen rest in peace and congratulations to all of the family and well whistles and testifiers blessings thank you mr chair for the time thank you lightning for checker thank you senator well if i go to the bill sponsor i definitely will be signing on to this and you know all of my interaction i had with senator answering this when i was a union president when i was a union president and in my labor role and um as i always was a good you know insight and she would say um don't give up don't mind them go right in and tell them this and tell them that you know and uh you know and just remembering some of the commercials you know and she had said chucky's back you know and i remember one senator and she tell my good friend uh hugo you hurricane you go you know it's not a whopper issue you know but um
- 4:04:24 they the other people some may like to differ but you know that's them and is there and nice me so they have my support the family have my support on this one you know um i'm a firm believer that i think that people should have their flowers while they're alive so they could smell the fragrance in this instance you know some light up the road in a minimal belvedere road no contentment road that'd be the chucky hansen lane road sorry senator frederick um mr chair oh sorry sorry sorry i didn't see you today man he's next i i are you no no no no no you are next he's last you're next sorry senator

the graph i didn't realize you were back in the chambers i do apologize uh thank you mr chair you know um i i do apologize also to running from one meeting to the next um i had to be here chucky hansen is like you know the haleys comment you know these rare occasions come every blue moon and and chucky is one uh to the family thank you for sharing her with us you know i have a a unique distinct honor of having the opportunity to work with her and oh man she everything i thought i knew or i think i know or everything she knew it way before you know so it's i'm gonna make her she's also an honorary savonero so for life the family have a pass to come savant anytime you know but because she wasn't just a senator from st croix like i would like to say she was a virgin islands senator a representative of the territory and that's rare because fierce she was fierce like

4:06:24 like my one colleague said she fears about her family but she fears in her beliefs and she knew every technique in this institution so a lot of the little tricks and stuff the little ways to get around things and address things she taught me well you know and i will take them to my grave because i i highly appreciate what chucky has done for me and in the 32nd legislature we were there and she was in rare form so to to know that she spent all the years she spent okay service is something that you don't look to do service is in you and that's what she was gifted with serving the people so to the family to the sponsor thank you i i think this is you know i had the opportunity to name 10 buildings and roads and stuff after virgin islanders and I would name everything colonial after Virgin Islander. So I'm very happy to hear this. And I think when I named the road after Adyatly, he said he didn't want to be Adyatly Road, he wanted Boulevard. So I, from knowing Chucky or big Chucky like things, she would want a boulevard or or highway so keep those things in mind and we talk about lane and we talk about think think grandiosos when it come to chucky hansen so chucky hansen boulevard chucky hansen highway that's what chucky deserved that's what chucky would like to have so mr chair i just wanted to make sure putting my two cents to it even though i'm not a voting member i support this 100 thank you for the time mr thank you and i do agree with you senator degrab that

4:08:11 Chuck, you wouldn't want it to go no little but just road, Boulevard Highway, express lane, man, something. Senator Frederick, you're recognized for your three minutes. The bill's sponsored. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Again, a pleasant good afternoon. Colleagues testifying and listening to you in the audience, my office and central staff. I'm excited to have been the sponsor of this measure because I knew the name as a child. I knew the name when I returned home as an adult, and I met the legend, and I was so impressed with her, that big grin, that big smile that she has, you know, and she likes to hug, she hugged me, and I was like, why is she hugging me? I haven't done anything, but that's just the way she was. she, she was, I've been in the job for 17 months. She's been in the job for 22 years. That, that, that's amazing. I can't imagine being in this job for 22 years. She did it and she loved every minute of it. So that, that was impressive. That's pure, pure service. I mean, that's, that's what she is. He really is a public servant. And so I aspire to be as her. And that's my charge to be just a fraction of what this great woman was. So I give her her flowers for everything she's done to the people for the people of the Virgin Islands. She's not perfect. I probably would not have voted for every single initiative she put out there. But who says you're supposed to. So, but overall, I think her impact was very impactful and a tremendous benefit to the people of the Virgin Islands. And she has some wonderful children. Erskine is a buddy of mine, so I like him personally. When I first started, I got my little tidbits from him,

4:10:12 what to do. I didn't get it the first time, but the second time I took everything he told me and look. So it works. You know, there's a magic in that family about elections and that's as unique. And I just want you to know, Ms. Hanson, that, you know, your mom deserved every bit of the recognition we're giving her today. This is a small token for the work she did for the community. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Let your dad know. Let your brothers know we thank you from this institution and this community um attorney lee ron you were always with her when when i went out i just wanted to know you guys were more than just um she was more than a client of your year she was actually a friend right oh she was a great friend of mine she worked with me sometimes uh when she wasn't in the legislature she worked at one at point. She worked in my office for a while. But we just clicked. She could finish my sentence and I could finish her sentence at times. So we were close. That's your girl. So just wrapping this up, whatever we need to do to modify the end of the name, the Alicia Chucky hanson freeway we'll we'll come up with it so thank you very much mr chair appreciate the time thank you could i have um legal council to the floor legal council could you please come on to the floor the committee of government operation veterans affair and consumer protection stands And recess for two minutes.

4:12:22 Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. the committee of government operation veterans affair consumer protection is back on the record

4:19:17 And we were discussing, and we have before us today, Bill 36.0213, an act renaming Belvedere Road on the island of St. Croix as Alicia Chucky Hanson Road, and appropriating \$10,000 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund to the Virginia Department of Public Works to erect the proper signage. Motion, Senator Franklin D'Hanson. Mr. Chair, I move

Amendment No. 36690 to Bill No. 360213. Bill No. 360213 is amended by striking Section 4 in its entirety and inserting the following new Section 4. Section 4, the public roadway commonly known as Contentment Road on the island of St. Croix, is here renamed the Alicia Chucky Hanson Lane. Technical amendment, Senator Alicia Chucky Hanson Lane, in honor of Senator Alicia Chucky Hanson, longstanding legislative legacy and service. The contentment road is particularly fitting to be renamed for Senator Hanson since it was along this road that the legislature of the Virgin Islands was previously located and was where Senator Hanson performed much of her extensive service. The Department of Public Works shall, within 90 days of this enactment of this act, erect at each end of the contentment road a sign bearing the inscription of Senator Alicia Chucky Hansen Lane.

- 4:20:59 And I so move. Amendment number 36690 has been properly moved by Senator Franklin Johnson, seconded by Senator Novel, and technically amended, has been seconded by Senator Novel Lee Francis Jr., Senator Kenneth Gittins, hearing no objection, so ordered. Motion. Motion, Senator Franklin Johnson.
- 4:21:37 Bill number 360213, an act renaming Belvedere Road on the island of St. Croix as Alisa Chucky Hanson Road and appropriating \$10,000 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund to the Virgin Islands Department of Public Work to erect the proper signage be voted on favorably in the Committee of Government Operation, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection as amended and be forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration. I so move.
- 4:22:07 Bill number 36-0213, as amended, an act renaming Belvedere Road on the island of St. Croix as Alicia Chucky Hansen Road, and appropriating \$10,000 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund to the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works to erect the proper signage has been properly moved by senator franklin johnson seconded by senator novel e francis jr roll call senator ray fonseca yay senator fonseca yay senator novel e francis jr Senator Francis Jr., yay. Senator Alma Francis Heiliger? Senator Alma Francis Heiliger, yay. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins?
- 4:23:07 Yes. Senator Gittins, yay. Senator Franklin D. Johnson? Yes. Senator Johnson, yay. Senator Collager Joseph? Yes. Senator Joseph, yay. Senator Avery L. Lewis? Yes. Senator Lewis, yay. Mr. Chair, you have seven yays. Thank you, Madam Clerk. And Bill number 36.0213, as amended, technically, has been properly voted upon in this committee, government operation, veterans affair, and consumer protection, and will be forwarded to the Committee of Rules and Judiciary favorably for fraud of vetting and consideration.
- 4:23:50 Mr. Payne, 30 seconds to close out. Thank this committee, as Senator Hanson will say, this is your Senator Alicia Chucky Hanson, keeping in touch with my people. God bless and keep, but thanks for the committee, and St. Croix will love this, and I will love the lane. Thank you. Thank you. The sun shine bright by day and the moon shine bright by night. Everything we do shall be awful and right, but this thing has to be all night for this thing to be all right. God bless and keep still. I love to hear that on the radio. Attorney Lerone. I thank you very much on behalf of our friends and the people of Virgin Islands.
- 4:24:39 This is a great day. Excellent day. Ms. Wadley. I just want to thank the committee on behalf of my family, friends, loved ones, The people of the Virgin Islands and the wider world, I recognize Alicia Chucky Hansen. And I just want to put it on the record, not because we're not Democrats, we got to be on opposing sides, right? All of us are Virgin Islanders, and the people come first. And so one of the things I want all of us to remember in the legacy of Alicia Chucky Hansen is people first, party second. Thank you all so much, and I thank the bill sponsor. I know this isn't easy. I know that everyone may not have been in favor of this, but you still went out there and did it, and I appreciate it. Thank you.
- 4:25:30 I ain't know about you guys, seven votes. But I'd just like to say before we close out, you know, we have upcoming Emancipation Day and Independence Day. I'd like everybody to enjoy their weekend, have a safe and a blessed day. There being no further business to come before the Committee of Government Operation, staff, I'd like to thank staff, central staff, my staff, my colleagues, and to the listening and viewing audience, thank you for tuning in. Now, there being no more business to come before the Committee of Government Operation, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection, this meeting is hereby adjourned. God bless and peace and love to the people of the Virgin Islands. 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.

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 18x | <b>Senator Alicia Chucky Hansen</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Alicia Chucky Hanson, Hansen, Hanson                                                                                            |
| 18x | <b>Senator Franklin D. Johnson</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Franklin Johnson, Johnson                                                                                                        |
| 17x | <b>Senator Avery Lewis</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Avery L. Lewis, Lewis                                                                                                                    |
| 16x | <b>Senator Novelle Francis</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Francis, Francis Jr, Francis Jr., Nova Lee Francis Jr., Novel E. Francis Jr., Novel Francis Jr.                                      |
| 15x | <b>Senator Carla Joseph</b><br>the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph<br>heard in this transcript as: Carla J. Joseph, Joseph                                             |
| 14x | <b>Senator Kenneth L. Gittens</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Giddens, Gittins, Kenneth Gittins, Kenneth L. Gittins, Kiddens                                                                    |
| 14x | <b>Director Patrick Farrell</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Farrell                                                                                                                             |
| 11x | <b>Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Alma Frances Heiliger, Alma Francis Heiliger, Alma Francis-Heiliger, Frances Heiliger, Francis Heiliger, Francis-Heiliger      |
| 11x | <b>Senator Marise C. James</b><br>the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr<br>heard in this transcript as: James, Marie C. James, Mary James, Maurice C. James, Maurice James |
| 11x | <b>Senator Ray Fonseca</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Fonseca                                                                                                                                  |
| 7x  | <b>Senator Hubert Frederick</b><br>heard in this transcript as: Frederick, Hubert L. Frederick                                                                                                      |
| 4x  | <b>Senator Collar J. Joseph</b><br>the surname alone also matches: Carla Joseph; Clifford Joseph<br>heard in this transcript as: Collager Joseph, Collard J. Joseph                                 |
| 2x  | <b>Governor Albert Bryan Jr</b>                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2x  | <b>Senator Carter J. Joseph</b><br>the surname alone also matches: Carla Joseph; Clifford Joseph                                                                                                    |
| 2x  | <b>Senator Dwayne DeGraff</b><br>heard in this transcript as: DeGraff                                                                                                                               |
| 2x  | <b>Commissioner Mario Brooks</b>                                                                                                                                                                    |

## 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.

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Act 7087</b> | Act 7087 · An Act providing that all employees of ·Manassah Bus Company· shall become fulltime employees of the Government of the Virgin Islands                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Act 7880</b> | Act 7880 · An Act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, sections 717 and 766 by requiring the GERS to issue personal loans to members in an amount not to exceed \$10,000 and requiring that the personal loans issued not exceed the aggregate amount of \$10,000,000 per annum, per district and by making a technical amendment ---() |

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Bill 36-0250, Bill 36-0279, Bill 36-0213