

BILL NO. 35-0059

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

March 24, 2023

An Act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, subchapter V, section 559 by inserting a subsection (g) relating to pay systems. to establish a pay differential for French and Spanish-speaking bilingual 911 Dispatch Operators and amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, subchapter IV, section 522, relating to entrance and promotion tests, to provide for foreign language proficiency tests

PROPOSED BY: Senator Franklin D. Johnson

WHEREAS, the Virgin Islands is a multi-lingual community with many residents and visitors whose primary language is not English; and

WHEREAS, 911 Dispatch Operators often have to communicate with individuals in emergency situations; and

WHEREAS, Spanish and French are the other primary languages that are spoken in the Territory; and

WHEREAS, a pay differential for 911 Dispatch Operators with a demonstrated proficiency in English as well as Spanish or French would help with recruitment and retention of 911 Dispatch Operators; and

WHEREAS, when individuals that speak only Spanish or French call the 911 Public Safety Answering Points there will be an increased likelihood that they will be able to effectively communicate with a 911 Dispatch Operator in Spanish or French; Now Therefore

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. Title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, subchapter V, section 559, is amended by adding a subsection (g) that reads as follows:

“(f) All bilingual 911 Dispatch Operators of the Virgin Islands Territorial Management Agency fluent in French or Spanish, as determined by the Director, shall be paid a differential of 10 percent of their basic compensation which shall be in addition to their basic compensation.

(1) Eligibility under this subsection requires that an Operator must be certified by the Director of Personnel as being proficient in English as well as Spanish or French under section 522(a) of this chapter.

(2) Operators who receive a foreign language proficiency pay differential shall be expected to use their foreign language proficiency in the performance of their duties as a 911 Dispatch Operators and are required to recertify each year.”

SECTION 2. Title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, subchapter IV, section 522, is amended in subsection in the following instances:

(1) By inserting “, foreign language proficiency tests,” after “entrance tests”; and

(2) By inserting “, differential pay qualification lists” after “employment lists”.

BILL SUMMARY

This bill amends title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, subchapter V, section 559 by inserting a subsection (g) that allows for a ten percent (10%) pay differential for French and Spanish-speaking bilingual 911 dispatch operators of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management. It also amends title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, subchapter IV section 522 by adding a foreign language proficiency examination under the purview of the Division of Personnel.

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