

BILL NO. 36-0091

Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

May 19, 2025

An act repealing and re-enacting title 3 Virgin Islands Code chapter 25, section 570a, establishing a recruitment and retention program for police officers, correction officers, and registered nurses within the Division of Personnel

PROPOSED BY: Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr.

WHEREAS, the Government of the Virgin Islands has a critical need to increase personnel in essential government agencies, including the Virgin Islands Police Department, Bureau of Corrections, and healthcare facilities;

WHEREAS, the Government of the Virgin Islands has historically faced challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified police officers, correction officers, and registered nurses due to workforce shortages, competitive job markets, and geographic limitations;

WHEREAS, recruitment and retention incentives are essential to attracting and maintaining a highly skilled workforce necessary for the effective functioning of government services;

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest to implement a structured recruitment and retention program that provides competitive incentives to fill critical vacancies and retain experienced personnel in key government positions; and

1 **WHEREAS**, offering financial incentives, relocation assistance, and retention bonuses
2 can enhance workforce stability and encourage long-term service among government
3 employees; Now Therefore,

4 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

5 **SECTION 1.** Title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, section 570a is repealed and re-
6 enacted as follows:

7 **“§570a. Recruitment and Retention Program for Police Officers and Other In-**
8 **Demand Positions**

9 (a) As used in this section:

10 (1) “Eligible employee” or “eligible position” means police officers, correction
11 officers, registered nurses, and any other critical-need positions as determined by the
12 Director of Personnel.

13 (2) “Program” means the Recruitment and Retention Program established under
14 this section.

15 (3) “Director” means the Director of the Division of Personnel of the
16 Government of the Virgin Islands.

17 (b) The Director shall establish the Recruitment and Retention Program within the
18 Division of Personnel to attract and retain qualified professionals in eligible positions.

19 (1) The Program shall include recruitment incentives, retention bonuses,
20 relocation assistance, and delayed retirement bonuses to address staffing shortages in key
21 government departments.

22 (c) The following incentive bonuses shall be paid to eligible employees:

23 (1) Recruitment Bonuses:

24 (a) a \$10,000 cash incentive for newly recruited employees.

25 (b) a \$5,000 relocation bonus for employees relocating to the Virgin
26 Islands.

(c) a \$500 employee referral bonus for government employees referring a successful candidate.

(2) Retention Bonuses:

(a) a \$10,000 delayed retirement bonus for eligible employees who commit in writing to serve an additional five years.

(3) Disbursement of Payments:

(a) Recruitment bonuses shall be distributed in stages:

(i) \$2,500 upon passing initial hiring requirements.

(ii) \$5,000 upon successful completion of training or probationary period.

(iii) \$2,500 upon completion of two years of continuous service.

(b) Retention bonuses shall be distributed in stages:

(i) \$2,500 after one additional year of service.

(ii) \$2,500 after three additional years of service.

(iii) \$5,000 upon completion of five additional years of service.

(d) Employees receiving incentive payments must sign a written service agreement committing to a minimum of three years of continuous service for recruitment bonuses and five years for retention and relocation bonuses.

(1) Employees who fail to meet the required service period shall repay a prorated portion of the incentive received over a two-year period.

(e) The Director shall conduct an annual review of the Program's effectiveness and submit a report to the President of the Legislature.

(1) Every three years, an assessment must be conducted to determine:

(a) Positions still in need of recruitment and retention efforts;

(b) Effectiveness of the incentive structure; and

(c) Staffing levels and vacancy trends.

(f) The Program shall be funded through existing budget allocations for vacant positions and applicable federal or territorial grants. The Director shall also seek additional funding sources to fund the Program.

(g) The Director shall promulgate regulations necessary to implement the Program.”

SECTION 2. The first assessment of the Recruitment and Retention Program shall be completed one year after the effective date of this act.

BILL SUMMARY

This bill amends title 3 Virgin Islands Code chapter 25, section 570a, by repealing and replacing it with a new section 570a to establish a Recruitment and Retention Program within the Division of Personnel. The program provides recruitment incentives, retention bonuses, and relocation assistance to attract and retain police officers, correction officers, and registered nurses in high-need positions.

The bill authorizes cash incentives of up to \$10,000 for newly recruited employees. Payments will be distributed in stages, and employees must sign a service agreement requiring a minimum of three to five years of service, with repayment required if the commitment is not met.

The Director of Personnel must conduct annual reviews and submit a report to the Legislature, with a full assessment every three years to evaluate program effectiveness. Funding will come from existing budget allocations and applicable grants, and the Director will develop necessary regulations for implementation.

The first program assessment must be completed one year after the effective date of the bill.

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