08-18-25 Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance

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Rights	

0:00:00 Music Thank you.

0:01:00 Thank you. Thank you.

0:02:00 Thank you. Thank you. ¶¶ so Thank you. so Thank you. Thank you.

0:06:00 Oh, my God. Thank you.

0:07:00 We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you.

0:08:30 Li lo la la de lo te lo dai Li lo la la de lo te lo dai ¶¶ Thank you.

0:10:00 ¶¶ Thank you. Oh, my God. so so

0:12:30 so so so www.microsoft.com Thank you.

0:15:00 Thank you. so Satsang with Mooji Thank you. Oh, my God. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Let's do it. Oh, my God.

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0:34:30 so Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:38:00 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:41:00 Thank you. Pleasant good morning. I'm Virgin Islands.

0:41:34 The Committee of Budget, Appropriations, and Finance of August 18, 2025 is hereby called to order. I'm Senator Novel E. Francis, Jr., and I'm the Chair of the Committee of Budget, Appropriations, and Finance. Good morning to all present, listening, and viewing. I am thankful that the territory was largely unscathed by the passage of Hurricane Aaron. It's important that we stay prepared and vigilant as we navigate the remainder of the hurricane season. Today the committee will hear from the following agencies. We have the Office of the Inspector General to defend their budget request of $2,898,392 and the Taxicab Commission to defend their Executive Branch requests of $556,043. We will also receive testimony from the megan's bay authority and the west indies company limited and wiko on their financial and management outlook for the upcoming fiscal year i'll also like to take this time to offer my condolences as well as my prayer for delegate plaskett as she lay her mom her beloved mother magdalene agatha hendrix plaskett to rest today madam clerk i'll please read today's agenda into the record the committee on budget appropriations and finance will meet on monday august 18 2025 10 a.m in the earl biotley legislative hall in st thomas to receive testimony on the fiscal year 2026 budget block 1 10 a.m to 12 noon office of the inspector general invited testifier Ms. Delia Thomas, Inspector General. Block 2, 1 to 3 p.m., Megan's Bay Authority, Invited Testifier, Monique Simon, General Manager. Block 3, 3 to 5 p.m., Virgin Islands Taxi Cab Commission, Invited Testifier, Melissa Smith, Executive Director. And Block 4, 5 p.m., West Indian Company Limited, invited testifier, Charlene Turnbull, Interim Chief Executive Officer.

0:43:54 This ends the reading of today's agenda, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. Just a reminder for those of you in the audience to please turn your cell phone off or turn them at mute as to not to interrupt today's proceedings. We do have the Inspector General, Delia Thomas, seated at the testifier's table. At this time, we'll go to her for an introduction as well as a staff member. Good morning, Senator Novel E. Francis Jr., Chairperson of the Committee on Finance, I'm sorry, Delia Thomas, Inspector General.

0:44:31 Morning. Good morning, Lucas Pascal, Director of Budget Affairs. Very well. You have anyone on virtual? No, no sir. You may proceed with your testimony at this time. Thank you. Good morning, Senator Neuville E. Francis Jr., Chairperson of the Committee on Finance, esteemed members of the committee, other distinguished members of the 36th legislature, and all those in the viewing and listening audience. I am Delia Thomas, the Virgin Islands Inspector General, and with me today is Mr. Lucas Pascal, Director of Budget Affairs. Today, I am here to present the proposed fiscal year 2026 budget for the Office of the Virgin Islands Inspector General. The Office of the Virgin Islands Inspector General's mission is to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, and to further the prevention of fraud, waste, and abuse in the administration of the programs and operations of the government of the Virgin Islands. We are an agency of 20 employees, comprising 11 auditors, two investigators, and seven administrative and support staff. Currently, we have two vacant positions, including one senior special investigator and a deputy Virgin Islands Inspector General. As we continue to bill our staff, we intend to increase the number of auditors, investigators, and other personnel as needed and as the budget permits. Our organizational chart can be found on page 11. Summary of fiscal year 2025 achievements and challenges.

0:46:07 During fiscal year 2025, our office issued two reports, an audit of the Education Initiative Fund, and an inspection of the Agriculture Revolving Fund's funding sources and usage. In addition, we provided investigative support to our federal partners that has, to date, resulted in the successful prosecution of one government employee. Also, for the first time, our office participated in the International Fraud Awareness Week, held a week of November 17, 2024. During this week, we issued a media blast to government employees and the community to raise awareness of fraud. In the future, we plan to find a variety of ways to continue to educate employees and the community. This year's International Fraud Awareness Week starts November 9th, 2025.

0:47:00 While fiscal year 2025 had its achievement, it has undoubtedly presented its challenges. In October of 2024, we contended with a broken air conditioning unit on the first floor, which had to be replaced. Also the underground sewage line that exits our building to connect to the main line 100 feet south and Irving Brownie Brown Street had to be replaced. The air conditioning unit was replaced seven weeks later and the sewage line four months later. Both projects together ultimately cost $71,600. Therefore, in the first month of the fiscal year, we were faced with a cost of $71,600 of the $80,000 annual maintenance budget. This created a financial challenge because the monthly allotment provided about $28,000 in non-obligated funds. Also, while we had hoped to complete more assignments, we were unable to do so. The challenges we faced mainly included not obtaining the necessary documents needed from the agencies or other entities in a timely manner, combined with a challenging workload that required some auditors to work on more than one assignment. Staff training. During fiscal year 2025, our staff took advantage of several professional training opportunities.

0:48:22 From December 9th to the 12th, 2024, through the Pacific and Virgin Islands Training Initiatives program, we received training on auditing performance outcomes and developing and presenting audit findings. From May 5th to the 8th, 2025, auditors participated, some in person and others virtually, in the Association of Local Government Auditors ALGA's 2025 Annual Conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Additionally, from June 22nd to the 27th, 2025, both the audit and investigative staff participated, either virtually or in person, in the Annual Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, ACFE's Global Fraud Conference, held in Nashville, Tennessee. These training opportunities provided the annual training hours required by the government auditing standards and satisfied the Certified Fraud Examiner's, CFE's credentials. It's worth noting that four of our auditors receive peer review training at the ALGAS 2025 annual conference and are now eligible to participate in peer reviews of other state and local governments across the country. We are looking forward to our staff members traveling to perform those peer reviews as this will add value to the services we provide. As a reminder, a peer review is a review of auditor's work by their fellow auditors.

0:49:51 It helps to monitor the auditing practices and promote and enhance the quality of the services provided, ensuring complaints with generally accepted government auditing standards. The next peer review for the Office of the Virgin Islands Inspector General is scheduled for calendar year 2026. Audit and inspection assignments completed and ongoing. The Education Initiative Fund. This report was issued on May 6th, 2025. This report highlighted the need for the Department of Education to ensure, one, that all schools receive their fair distribution of funds annually, ensure the funds are spent on allowable expenses and within set limits, ensure that undistributed and unused funds are spent on permissible costs, and the need to update the law to address ambiguous and contradictory language stemming from sections 3093 and 3100I of the law. Since the release of this report, act number 9005 was passed on July 9th, 2025, which updated the law governing the education initiative funds. The inspection of the agriculture revolving funds, funding sources and usage.

0:51:09 Our office issued this inspection report on January 14th, 2025. the report pointed out the lost opportunity of $4,125,000 for the Department of Agriculture. This occurred due to no general fund appropriations for fiscal year 2016 through 2018, totaling $1.5 million, a partial general fund appropriation of $125,000 not allotted for fiscal year 2021. Over six years of underfunding from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund, totaling two million. The instability of the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund in fiscal year 2018. Agriculture officials not submitting two OMB written requests that are required for the release of funds. Currently, our office is working through a total of 11 assignments, nine audits and investigation inspection assignments, one follow-up review of recommendations, and one surprise cash count, which are at various stages of the audit and inspection process. The Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission. This audit's draft report is in the edit phase.

0:52:28 As a process of editing, referencing, holding an exit conference, allowing the agency three weeks to respond, and finalizing the report moves forward, we aim to issue the report by the end of the first quarter of fiscal year 2026. This audit covers fiscal years 2018 through 2022. The audit's focus is on the Taxicab Commission's compliance with the laws regarding approving taxi licenses, the sale of and accounting for medallions, the inspection of taxicabs, revenue collections, and expenses of the Taxicab Commission. The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority, WAPA. On April 14, 2025, with a fully executed contract, we hired a consultant to assist in WAPA's audits. This consultant's focus is on areas specific to Act number 8731, namely the VTOL Propane contract and the $2 million offshore payment. While this audit started four months ago, I can report that we have received some information. Although other important supporting data needed have not been received.

0:53:42 The consultant has a meeting set with WAPA's CEO, Mr. Carl Knight, to update him and to discuss the importance of the needed information and how we can expedite this process. The audit of the application of WAPA's employees' loan payments. This audit's draft report is completed, however, the process of referencing must be completed before an exit conference can be held. The objective of this audit is to determine whether monies WAPA deducted from employees' salaries for loan payments were transmitted on time to the respective financial institutions for calendar years 2021 and 2022.

0:54:21 This audit has taken longer than expected, as we were at times hindered by getting information from WAPA and some financial institutions in a timely manner, because not all loan payments were transmitted electronically. WAPA's billing and collections for calendar years 2021 through 2023 and other appropriate periods. This audit is an extensive assignment and is still as previously reported in the fieldwork phase. Obtaining information on this assignment was very slow. However, with the intervention of the former chairman of the WAPA's board, we are in a better place today than one year ago. The The objective of this audit is to determine whether one, WAPA followed its policies and procedures for accurate and timely billing, the advanced metering infrastructure AMI improved the accuracy and timeliness of billing, and three, WAPA did its due diligence in managing and collection of delinquent accounts. We anticipate issuing two reports, one on billing and one on collections. WAPA's contracting practices from October 2017 to December of 2022.

0:55:34 This inspection aims to determine whether WAPA solicited, awarded, and monitored contracts in accordance with its policies and procedures, as well as applicable laws and regulations. This assignment is in the field work phase. This audit had experienced some delays in obtaining information. However, we were able to work through some concerns and are now in possession of the requested information. The East End Medical Center. The objective of the inspection is to determine whether the East End Medical Center followed established laws, policies, and procedures pertaining to its contracts and lease agreements from 2018 through 2024. We are currently in the field work phase of this assignment.

0:56:19 We are experiencing some delays in obtaining information, however, we are working with the medical center's management to address the delays. The medical center is citing understaffing for the delays. The Government Employee Services Commission Board. The audit objective is to determine if the board expended funds in accordance with established laws, rules and regulations and met its reporting requirements. The audit scope is fiscal years 2018 through 2022. We are in the field work phase of this assignment. Information requested on this assignment has been slow incoming. The Waste Management Authority. We are conducting a follow-up review of recommendations made in the audit of contract administrations at the VI Waste Management Authority. This report was issued on February 8, 2022. This follow-up review of recommendation is at the end of the fieldwork phase of the assignment. The Health Department. As part of our plan to restart surprise cash counts of government funds entrusted to the department and agencies of the government, we recently conducted a surprise cash count at the Eldra Schultebrand Residential Care Facility. This assignment is in the fieldwork phase.

0:57:41 Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Education, and the Virgin Islands Police Department. At the request of the Honorable Governor Albert Bryan Jr., we have been asked to audit these departments contracting practices. This assignment, as previously reported, was in the planning phase and due to the unavailability of auditors to devote full-time to this assignment. At the completion of the Taxi Caps Commission's audit, all members of the audit team will transition to this audit. Today, we have five auditors along with the consultant fully engaged in WAPA's assignments. The six remaining auditors are working on multiple assignments with the responsibility to maintain the same level of quality and due diligence for each project. Also, we continue to make ourselves available to assist federal auditors regarding activities they plan on conducting in the Virgin Islands. Furthermore, we will continue to find ways to address any other pressing issues that may arise. Our 2025 annual audit plan summary is found on page 12. Investigations. Regarding investigations, our office currently has seven open cases. The result of these open cases could range from insufficient information to substantiate the allegations, to a report with recommendations to the affected department or agency and or a recommendation for prosecution sent to the Virgin Islands Department of Justice. In addition, we continue to assist other local and federal agencies when asked. For confidentiality purposes, I cannot discuss the details of these investigations. The Office of the Virgin Islands Inspector General's 2026 proposed budget.

0:59:31 The Virgin Islands Inspector General's Office budget recommendation is $2,898,392, which maintains the same level as fiscal year 2025. Our fiscal year 2025 actual expenditures through July 11, 2025 totaled $2,145,013 or 74%. The following are comments on each prime account of the fiscal year 2026 proposed spending plan. Our fiscal year 2026 proposal by sub accounts is shown on page 13. Personnel services and fringe benefits. The budget proposal allows the office to maintain the 20 field positions and two vacant positions. The proposed funding level for personnel and related services is $2,437,405 or 84% of the budget requests. This amount consists of $1,717,644 and $719,760 for personnel services and fringe benefits, respectively. In addition, regarding the overall budget requests, supplies are estimated at $76,652, or 2.6%. Other services are estimated at $331,235, or 11.4%. Utilities are estimated at $45,100 or 1.6%. Capital outlays are budgeted at $8,000 to cover investigative and computer-related equipment costs, which is 0.3% of the budget requests. In closing, I want to thank this body in advance for supporting the Office of the Virgin Islands Inspector General's recommended fiscal year 2026 budget of $2,898,392. This budget will allow us to fund 22 positions as we work to continue growing the agency to the desired 25 field positions to better address audits and investigations.

1:01:36 Thank you for the opportunity to be here today, and I'm available to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you very much, IG, Dela Smith, for your testimony. Thomas, Thomas, Thomas, Thomas, Thomas, Thomas, Thomas. Thomas, I'm sorry. Leila Thomas, you make this mistake every time. Your, there's a few questions. Well, first of all, Madame Clerk, before we go into the question phase, please conduct the roll call.

1:02:17 Senator Marvin A. Blyton. Senator Blyden, absent. Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff. Good. Senator DeGraff, present. Senator Ray Fonseca. Good. Senator Fonseca, present. Senator Novell E. Francis Jr. I'm here. Senator Francis Jr., present. Senator Hubert L. Frederick. Present.

1:02:43 Senator Frederick, present. Senator Maurice C. James. Senator James? Absent. Senator Kurt A. Valey? Senator Valey? Absent. Mr. Chair, four present, three absent. Thank you. Thank you very much. Madam Clerk, any correspondence to be read into the record? Yes, Mr. Chair. You may proceed with a reading of those correspondence.

1:03:11 August 18, 2025. Honorable Senator Nova E. Francis Jr., Chairman, Committee on Budget, Appropriation and Finance, 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, Capitol Building, St. Thomas VI 00802. Dear Senator Francis Jr., please accept my sincere apologies as I am unable to attend today's Monday, August 18, 2025 Committee on Budget, Appropriation and Finance budget hearing hearing due to my attendance at the Council of State Governments, CSG, East 2025 Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum. Kindly excuse my absence. I regret any inconvenience this may cause and thank you for your understanding and consideration. Respectfully, Maurice C. James, Esquire, Senator, 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands.

1:04:08 letter dated august 18 2025 honorable novelle e francis chairman committee on budget appropriation and finance 36 legislature of the virgin islands capital building st thomas vi zero zero eight zero one there mr chair i regret to inform you that due to previously scheduled engagement i will be unable to attend today's hearing please mark my absence as excuse and please accept my apologies for any inconvenience cause as well as my best wishes for your productive meeting sincerely Marvin A Blyden Senator 36 legislature of the Virgin Islands this concluded reading of all correspondence mr. chair thank you very much I'm Adam clerk please mark Senator Maurice James as well as Senator Marvin Blyden as excused and also recognize the presence of non-committee member Carla J. Joseph. Inspector General Thomas, in respect to your FY 2025 appropriation allotments, have you received all of the allotments to date? Yes. Okay. And you get your allotments quarterly or monthly? Monthly. Monthly. Have you all, have you received any federal funds during this fiscal year? No, sir. Any money from the OIG, Office of Insular No sir. Any ARPA or Kirsak funding?

1:05:34 No sir. Any other funding for any assignment initiatives or other means? What we're getting right now that I am aware of is that we're getting a reimbursement. So I will have Mr. Pascal answer that, the reimbursement. We got a reimbursement from the hurricane, so we got some equipment and stuff like that, so we're going to check from VITEMA.

1:06:13 What's the amount of our funding? Give me one second, I can look at that one. And what is it, you said the purpose is for replacement? Yes, it's for a prior year. I'm not quite sure which hurricane was that. What about vendor's payment? Do you owe any funds in vendor's payment? No. Everything is up to date? Yes. Do you pay your utilities water through the single payers utility or do you pay them directly? No.

1:06:43 Directly. And are you up to date with that? Yes. Your funding to GRS is up to date? As far as I know. I know. As far as you know. How do you measure productivity within your office? Do you use KPIs, key performance indicators, or can you just tell me what is your mechanism by which you're able to measure effectiveness? Mainly setting the, when we're doing an assignment, we strive to get it done within like eight months. So we set the plan in, the field work, and the various stages within that time frame. What we have started to do in this last fiscal year is actively document each and every time a department has not responded to our requests. Before we weren't, we used to make comments that they have not been responding, but we're actually documenting that it took us this much time so why the different phases of the audits aren't getting done so for the most part that's how we're tracking so tell me what is the nuclear option because I see your testimony several time you mentioned the fact that information is not provided in a timely fashion or timely manner to use your word what is a nuclear option exercised by the inspector general again to ensure that individuals do you have subpoena power you know what is the next level to ensure that these documentation is done in a timely fashion we we do have subpoena power and we've issued a couple of subpoenas already this past year and so they've been complied with we try to work with the agencies understanding that many of them are citing competing interests, like maybe external audits going on, short staff. So we're trying to nicely get the information before we go to that nuclear level. If we can't wait anymore, we say that's it, then we just go and we issue the spina.

1:09:02 So do we want to be nice on a time like this? obviously you're demanding and requiring certain information and there's always a level of reluctance during the course of investigation to provide those those information that's that's I'm an investigator myself and that's always the the nature of you know conducting investigation but you know it's important that our information is then turned over in a timely fashion because it hampers your ability to be productive correct correct so do you believe that there's additional legislation are required for you to get additional teeth for enforcement of these type of requests or what do you need think needs to happen because you know while this is dropped though then you have other investigation now is being delayed consequential to this this information that being turned in a timely fashion so tell me what what can could this body do to support you in that endeavor to ensure that you're getting these things in a timely fashion.

1:10:00 Okay, so let me put this in context. As far as, we have audits going on and investigations, and with respect to all the investigations, I would say we deal with those through subpoenas. So we issue many more subpoenas on a regular basis with our investigations. With the audit side, we do not issue as many subpoenas, but we have issued more than usual this past year. I can't think of anything that I think that would help us other than the fact that I would have to take more initiative to issue more subpoenas, you know, on the audit side if I feel that an agency is deliberately stalling.

1:10:44 Okay. I'm sure we'll drill down further on that as we continue to have this discussion because, you know, I think that when the IG knock on your door, we expect them that they'll be immediate response or some timely response to those things so I don't like the idea of this delay or you know that information is not being turned in in a timely fashion because a lot could happen during that interim period of time at this time I'll open up the floor to my colleagues for a five-minute round and Senator Dwayne DeGraff you'll recognize your five minutes I thank you is the chair good morning colleagues good morning testifiers all of you listen I'm present uh good morning IG how are you doing today fine thank you uh how many employees do you have we have 20 on staff right now 20 filled um how many under 35 1,000?

1:11:42 Under 35,000, correct. One. One. How many vacancies? Two. Two vacancies. So, 22 total? Yes, sir. Okay, how many vacancies under 35? None. None. Zero. Okay, I heard you mention about trying to get 25 slots or positions. Okay, but you only have for 22 people to cover. So your senior special investigator in 25 was budgeted at 50%. It's now in 26 budgeted at 75%. So if you hired that person, where's those funders going to come from to finish out their salary?

1:12:34 Okay, so what's mainly been happening and what has been suggested to us is that we can hire people sooner in the FY fiscal year. It just means that we would be delaying the hiring of a second position. So in that case, if we hired the senior specialty investigator October 1, we would almost have to delay hiring the deputy inspector general. Because the funding from that would be covering until we catch up.

1:13:10 Don't make no sense to me, but if that's what they're telling you, and you go to the, and respectfully I'm saying that if you try to get them on together, you can't. We would be basically using funding from another category. Yeah. Okay, I got that. And presently, between now and October 1, do you have those positions? Anyone locked in for those positions as yet? No, sir. No? Okay. All right. So you probably work out better that way. Okay. Has anyone received any raise, wage increases, any raises in 25? Lucas Pascal, yes. We had 12 GS employees received their raises and then also the retro.

1:13:58 Okay. And they received the retro? Yeah. All of the retro? Yes. Okay, and they're the only individuals? Yes. Good, okay, good. Per diem, you mentioned about your personnel, I think, going off-island for training. Did they receive per diems? Yes, sir. They were paid it? Yes. Okay, good. Now, what are you average paying in utilities on a monthly basis since you pay your own?

1:14:28 I'm around $33,000 from St. Thomas and St. Croix. Okay, combined $33,000. Okay, good. Okay, now, and can I have your actual, your dated personal fringe, supplies, other services and charges? And as of when? Okay. I have, do you want to, by category? Yes, please, personnel, fringe, supplies, other services and charges.

1:15:02 Okay, this is as of August 13th. August 13th. So personnel is $1,249,444.96. Fringe is $530,760.41. Supplies category is $34,253.80. Other services is $284,328.91. Utilities is $38,984.33. And capital projects is $7,890. With the total. Okay, so, excuse me, just one second.

1:15:44 Supplies again, $34,000. Supplies is $34,253 and 80 cents. Wait, say again. $34,253 and 80 cents. 80 cents. Okay, and other services in charge was $284,328,91. Yes. Okay, good. All right, and again, IG to you and your staff, continue doing the great work you're doing. And, you know, just for the record, when you mentioned where you're located on St. Thomas, the Irving, Brongy Brong Street, you could explain that to my colleagues who are not aware of, that's the gateway to entrance into the greatest neighborhood in the world, Savant, as mentioned by my colleague from Bovoni. So that's basically what I wanted to put on the record that that's the entrance road into Savant. Again, to you and yourself, continue doing the great work.

1:16:44 Thank you. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator DeGraff. IG, just a quick question before I go on to the next, Senator, which will be Senator Frederick. In respect to requests for federal assistance, when you get that request, does it come with some type of funding, association, or what happens? No, it doesn't. No funding comes out of that? Okay. And in instances where, well, you don't have, you don't, you're not subjected to asset forfeiture funding, are you?

1:17:20 No. Okay. All right. Senator Fredericks, you recognize for your five minutes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Pleasant good morning to everyone, my colleagues, testifiers, listening and viewing audience, my staff and central staff of the legislature. good morning Inspector General Thomas how you doing good thank you it's a privilege and a pleasure to be here speaking to you a fellow CFE I've been one for almost 30 years certified fraud examiner I started off my career in auditing so I feel your pain I wanted to ask you in your testimony you started off saying that you've got 20 employees, but you've only issued two reports for FY 2025.

1:18:19 And I just thought that was, for me, it sounded extremely low. So can you share why only two reports and you've got 20 people working for you? Senator, I have 11 auditors of the 20 employees. Each audit requires an audit team of, in most instances, the larger assignments, three auditors, and then two auditors, and we have some smaller ones that we may try one person on the team. However, it's desirable to have more than one. Last year, I suggested that we would be issuing probably two additional reports in that FYI, But it was the lack of information coming forward for us to move forward with completing those assignments. So you could complete more reports if the information was more forthcoming?

1:19:20 Correct. That's your testimony. Okay, so in the meantime, I guess the staff is focused on working on preliminary audits for other engagements? They're working on several assignments. So if we have 11 ongoing assignments, so we have the 11 auditors, we have them by teams and some of the auditors are working on multiple assignments.

1:19:48 I have one auditor on three different assignments. My concern when I looked at your personnel list was I noticed you have a supervisor, auditor, actually three of them, out of the 11. You've got you, the Inspector General, a Chief of Audit, and a Chief of Inspection. And now you're trying to add another higher up, a Deputy Inspector General. To me, it seemed like it's already enough coverage on the top. Why is that position important when we could get some more auditors or investigators to help out?

1:20:31 That has been my goal, is to fill all the audit and investigation positions before I fill the Deputy Inspector General. It is a very important position, the Deputy Inspector General, because it depends on the skills of that particular person. They can add value to the investigative side, since the value of me is on the audit side. side, they can actually add more teeth to the investigative side. So it is very important. I have committed to the staff to hire the auditors and investigators before I even consider hiring the deputy.

1:21:13 Your chief of investigation, is that a former law enforcement person? Former wife, I'm not sure what do you mean by former. Is that person's background in law enforcement? We hired that person, came out of investigations from the Department of Justice many years ago. Oh, Justice, okay. Now, I was just wondering if they had a law enforcement background, it seemed like they have a legal background.

1:21:46 Is that correct? One minute. I think it would be more law enforcement. Law enforcement, okay. My next question is in reference to your testimony about the surprise audit at the Eldritch Eldebrand facility, which I was pleased to know that your agency is doing that. Can we expect more surprise audits like this in the future? Yes, that's what I'm trying to implement. We have not done it in a while, but I'm trying to implement. We've done surprise cash count during the low periods of larger assignments.

1:22:26 So we would just go in and do a surprise cash count to fill the gap, to keep people busy. Yeah, I think that's very important. So you did an audit recently on the Department of Agriculture Revolve and Fund that I thought it was very well put together and we came up with, we identified over $4.1 million of lost funding to the department of agriculture mr chair if i could please continue this line of questioning you may senator thank you very much and um what i wanted to find out is since those funds were never remitted to the department of agriculture did you go back did your team go back and find out what happened to the funding that was appropriated specifically for the Department of Agriculture that was not? Did those funds ever get identified and what's the outcome of that? For those funds that were appropriated I guess that would be the 125,000 in one of the years it was not given to the Department of Agriculture and we tried to find out why from OMB what was the reason for not releasing those funds and we did not obtain an answer and at this point the matter ends is there any follow-up or we just move on to the next fiscal year and leave this alone it ends for us thank you mr. chair appreciate the time thank you very much IG Thomas for your

1:24:13 responses. Thank you very much, Senator Frederick. IG, in regards to the priority of investigation or audits, how do you determine priorities or even if you have commenced an investigation or audit, isn't there some requests that come in that may require you to then put aside that one investigation or audit and then move to the next one? And I ask that question because in your testimony you spoke about the request that was made by the governor in regards to the Office of Management, Budget, Department of Education, and the Virginia Police Department, that you are awaiting the completion of the one audit to move on to the next one. Don't you see this as a priority assignment or priority request? So how do you gauge your level of priorities in those matters?

1:25:06 It is a priority, however, the choices that I had to make, we did not have the resources to put into it. What the governor asked for, we have started some preliminary gathering of background information from these departments, and it's a lot. So it wasn't something that one person could have taken on, or even two people could have taken on. We could not have walked away from the taxi cab because that information was, it's not electronic, it's manual, and every day it was very difficult for us to get information, the changing of executive directors, the loss of employees, and we needed their assistance on that. Of course, we could not walk away from the WAPA assignments.

1:26:01 So there we have pretty much eight of our auditors of the 11 on those two important assignments. Thank you for your response there. Even with the Virgin Islands Taxi Cab Commission, you talk about the, you're expecting that the final of that will come out in the first quarter of 2026, even though it seems to have been in draft phase at this point. Why will it still take that length of time? And when you say the first quarter, you mean by the end of the year? By December, the end of the year, correct? Yes. Yeah.

1:26:39 It's going to take that long because I tried to work from backward, like backwards. so after we receive a response from a department department is given three weeks to respond to the draft report when we get that report back it takes us an additional week to put the report together and then like a couple of days to release it to the public so we're talking a month so now we're back in November so we're in August right now the editing is going to take probably the next three weeks to finish that up and then we have to schedule an entrance conference that's another week so I've already eliminated two months right there it just takes that long because then we have to find someone else to index the report and that process that has to be done before it goes to the public that this particular person who did not work on the assignment must go through the draft report and go to the work papers and document that everything that's said in that report is supported by competent evidence in the work papers. That must be done before we even go to the exit and it's also done again before the final report comes out. And in that instance, because you're still talking about 120 days there between now and that period, do you scale back in terms of the individuals assigned to this that they could be freed up to do something else or you still have that same level of manpower assigned to that particular auditor investigation? They have been freed up and that's why we did the surprise cash count to give them because we're actually the higher-ups are editing so that's why we send them on a surprise cash count so they could have something to do in the interim. Thank you. Senator Ray Fonseca you

1:28:30 recognize for your five minutes thank you good morning mr. chair and good morning to Inspector General Delia Thomas and mr. Lucas Pascal welcome and the staff IG also good morning to the listening public all those tuned in good morning okay the Inspector General same budget from last year two million eight ninety eight three ninety two. You have three investigators now that's what you said? Positions. Okay. Two filled or just one? Two filled. Two filled.

1:29:12 Okay good. Okay I wanted to go to some new starts. Your audit in your audit of the contracting practices of several government agencies in including sports parks and recreation. Non-disclosure agreements and biddings. I want to discuss those two items in particular. We don't want to discuss any particular division. With the bidding, right, if it's below a certain amount you always need three bidders, and if you don't have three bidders, what's the process to select the single responsible bidder. I'm asking you because I want to see if we need to tighten up on the laws in these areas because I know specifically in one of the divisions that I chair that committee I continually get complaints that only one person was called and when I talk to the staff they said they They tried to call the others, but they didn't respond, et cetera, et cetera.

1:30:25 But the same thing goes on again. And then you hear that, you know, it wasn't a fair process, you know, hearsay. But tell me, what is required specifically if a division wants to bid out some work? Say you want to clean an elderly home and the contract comes in at $150,000. What would be required in that? Three bids, one bid, and if it's only one bid, what's the process?

1:30:56 Senator, I'll answer it as a division that have to follow the procurement laws of the Virgin Islands that comes out of the Department of Property and Procurement. So I don't control the rules and regulations, but I'm subjected to them. so we have anytime we get less the number of required solicitations that we asked for we have to write a justification letter to to to justify why we chose the particular bidder that we we went with or the vendor that we went with so for that you know I just we just do whatever the law says for us to do and I think they just updated the requirements and they had a really wonderful training for us so I'm not sure that I can offer you any that that justification letter is approved by the property and procurement commissioner yes and if that justification letter does not exist basically you can't go ahead and award a contract till you get that approved right that that's the process I understand as far as I know okay so let me ask you in your audits do you find those to be recurring instances or the VI government is pretty good in that area of obtaining justification letters yes In the audits that, I don't really want to answer that question right now because I don't have enough information, broad information to answer that. But, you know, we do see justification letters and sometimes maybe we won't. Okay. I want to go back to the taxicab commission, the sale and accounting for the medallions.

1:33:02 The taxicab commission is supposed to get a benefit when we sell medallions. Is that correct? The revenues? Yes. Okay. You know, I saw a report where the revenues weren't going quickly enough to the taxicab commission. Why would that be? Do you know? Going as if from where? Well, the sale of the medallions is conducted by licensing and consumer affairs and property and procurement, right? I am not sure of that detail. Okay, if you're not sure, then it's not appropriate for you. Okay, so the WAPA employee loan payments.

1:33:51 What employees' loans was that specifically? What kind of loans were they giving to employees? Time. Okay, Senators, some employees elect to have personal loans like mortgages or personal loans from bank, from private institutions deducted from their pay. In some instances, it may be a requirement of the lending institution that it does go through payroll deduction. so what was happening or what we were informed of is that there was a complaint that the monies that were deducted from the employees pay weren't getting or an employee pay wasn't getting to the institution so our job we went in to find out if it was true and to what extent okay and that That has been since resolved.

1:34:50 Well, the report is written, but it's not public yet. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the time. Thank you very much, Senator Fonseca. IG Thomas, in regards to, I know you asked a question about, you said you indicated that you had one employee under $35,000. Have you determined what it will cost to bring that person up to $35,000? I'll let Mr. Pascal answer that.

1:35:18 Lucas Pascal, it costs a total of $2,574.94 with the personnel fringe. That is inclusive of fringe? Yes. What's that amount, please? $2,574.94. So the current salary of that person is what? $34,105.25. Very well, thank you. I will move them to the next step. As a custodial, messenger, slash messenger person. How is morale over at the IG's office? Hopefully it's good.

1:35:56 I strive for it to be good. One second. I asked that question. I'm looking at the faces of the employees behind you. They're all smiling, so you can answer it now. Okay. I strive for it to be good. So, and I always try to put the people first and my employees first and their needs first and make sure that they have all the tools that they need to complete their job. So, hopefully by doing that, that their morale would be good. So, if you had to give it a number between 0 to 10, what would that be? I hope I hope it's an 8 and what will it take to what is there what do you believe is a challenge that confront your employees that wouldn't be a 10 how can we get it higher to a 9 I would actually love to ask them that question because I think I'll be a little presumptuous to say that I may think it's a 10 but what do they really feel you know so that's why I say eight I I don't think it anything is a ten so I'm trying to just be a little cautious and say eight okay so that's your assignment how for next time you come before us I can do that as easy not a problem that's under the graph you recognized for your point of information I thank you mr. chair my office staff is a ten so uh madam IG the the question that the chair acts I was going to ask in terms of that now do you have that money covered in your 25 budget and going forward in your 26 budget yes we yes we do yes you do okay thank you thank you for the time mr. chair thank you very much senator graff senator college joseph you're

1:37:51 recognized for your five minutes thank you so kindly mr. chairman a pleasant good day to to my colleagues, Ms. Thomas and Mr. Pascal from the Inspector General's office as well as our listening and viewing audience. I trust for you, Ms. Thomas and Mr. Pascal, you fared well with the weather? Good. And also you checked on your employees who are behind of you supporting your colleagues who are supporting you and they fared well also. I saw one of them at the laundry on Saturday. Anyhow, I wanted to really commend you and your team for all the good work that you're doing. I do have some questions because, one, I know I sent you a request to do an audit. I don't see it here listed, and that was the audit. You did receive that request, Ms. Thomas.

1:38:50 Yes, I did. So I didn't see that listed, so I need to get a status. Have you started it? When is your date to start it? We have it on the, maybe on the unresourced audit assignment. However, what I have done is that whenever we get requests, I've started to ask auditors to start the background, right, before the assignment starts. So that cuts down, that should cut down some time in the future. So I do know that some background work has been done. And waiting for time to free up on that auditor's list.

1:39:35 I understand. And that is for the audit of the Horse Race Improvement Fund. Horse races have started in the St. Thomas, St. John District, and we want to assure that horse racing commission has access to all the funds that it needs to get the horse racing up and going. Years ago since I came on board here at the legislature I have asked about a forensic accountant for your team and we had really robust discussion about it. Tell me what's the status because I didn't see it here listed as one of your vacant position and I think it's a critical position a forensic accountant is is someone that mainly they prepare for court cases I don't know that we specifically need a forensic accountant but it would be nice to have one between us and the Department of Justice okay I understand that and not to cut you off because I'm looking at what your marching orders were and are based on act number 6333 and one of them indicated that investigate and recommend policies to prevent fraud, waste and abuse, refer matters involving criminal conduct to the Attorney General for prosecution, and bring monetary losses to the attention of the Attorney General for potential civil recovery and how many of those type of instances have you referred to the Attorney General for prosecution and for the recovery of our taxpayers money that's my concern as a sit-in IG right now that under my tenure I have not

1:41:29 referred anything there we do have a couple of investigations going on where I see the potential of referrals down to the Department of Justice though. Okay and I'm just looking at a forensic accountant helping you with your tools to be able to do that in a more expeditious way and that we don't have these issues prolonging. I also wanted to ask you because you said you're a tenure, I remember voted in favor for you to be the Inspector General. I remember drilling you when I was the a member of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary you have a long history and being in this agency in particular so over the years you've been in this agency how many persons have you your agency in your span are recommended to the Attorney General to be prosecuted based on your knowledge what comes to mind I can't think of anything right now, but I know it has been done. It has been done. And that is why I'm pressing for that. It has to be done. We are stewards of a person's hardworking taxpayers' money. And we have to assure that persons are not going to say that they don't do anything.

1:43:00 They're not going to find us guilty or anything. We have to do the work because we are the stewards of their money and that helps to build the trust of our constituency and also the trust of our tax payers who work hard and pay their taxes. Mr. Chairman, I have concluded my question. Thank you so kindly. And thank you also, Ms. Inspector General. Thank you very much, Senator Joseph. Before we go to a quick break and I'll allow a second round, but in question, do you have an impressed fund or petty cash fund? We do have an impressed fund.

1:43:41 And who's responsible for auditing or updating and maintaining that fund? Myself and some other individuals within the office to create the separation of duties. What's the cap on that fund? Is it 15,000? I think it's 15,000. Was it $15,000? I think it's $15,000. $15,000. Yeah. Madam IG, in your testimony, you spoke about the fact that you had fell short or used up most of your maintenance allotment within the first month or so. Is it necessary for you to have additional funding for that purpose, or do you have a outlay our maintenance outlay budget that you have prepared I don't think we need any more funds I just wanted to point that out to say that our budget is very fragile that when we do have an emergency it can have a real impact on the agency so the fact that this sewage system went down and the AC unit normally in historically we've always planned for like a twenty thousand dollar emergency well this is the first time that we've had an emergency that came you know about seventy thousand so I don't anticipate that happen in to that degree anytime soon okay and do you have a rollover funding or what happens at the end of the fiscal year you say zero you zero though you're out use use or lose yes okay very well this time we'll take three minutes recess the committee of budget point of information center of the

1:45:33 graph. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam IG, Mr. Pascal said that he averages $33,000 a month for WAPA bill, correct? And then your year to date, what is your year to date? 33,000 a month kayaks and you said a month. hours ago um it was 33 oh so that's not a month okay let me correct it sure how much you you're averaging a month because your year today total was 38 984 33 so i it was just brought to my It's about 5,000 a month, okay, big difference, okay, all right thank you, thank you for the time Mr. Chair.

1:46:45 Please recognize the mic of Senator Fonseca for a point of information. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Major, I want to go back to that plumbing with the maintenance. Okay, you said that it was 49,200 for about 100 lineal feet of pipe, right? Sewage pipe. Who did the work? Was it the Waste Management Authority or private contractor?

1:47:17 Private. Private contractor. So are you the only one was connected to that line running all the way down to the sewer main or there's other persons? Just us. Just you. Okay, see I wanna just point out the number there is 49,200. Waste management was giving us the impression that town was gonna be $700 million just to do those lateral connections And here you got a whole hundred feet done for 49,200. And the sewage behind Windward Passage Hotel still remains there after over a year. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the time.

1:48:00 Thank you very much, Senator Fonseca. At this time, the Committee of Budget, Appropriations, and Finance stands at recess for three minutes. so so so We'll be right back.

1:50:14 so Oh, my God.

1:51:14 Thank you. so You wouldn't even know what paper looks like. [2 such phrases repeated 8 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

1:55:43 And we're back in record and out of recess at this time. And we do have before us today the Office of the Inspector General. We just completed round one. You said you had some information for me, Mr. Pascal, in regards to... Go ahead, update. Okay, so you did ask about the federal funding that we received. Can you get a little closer to that, Mike? Go ahead. So you did ask about the federal funding that we did receive. So we received from Project Worksheet 801 a total of $3,225.04. And also we are getting funding from Project Worksheet 35, which totals $50,540.

1:56:28 And lastly, Project Worksheet 42, $6,000. Okay. And do you have some figures regarding the capital outlay? The balance on the capital outlay fund? We don't have a balance. The expenditure and the capital outlay. No.

1:57:01 Oh, so that $8,000 specifically for investigative purposes as well as any miscellaneous items that may come. Point of information, Senator DeGraff. Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, okay, so you're talking about for 26. So I was talking about in terms of expenditures, what we were asking personal, friends, supplies. Did you have any expenditures for capital? Oh, yes, we did have 7,892, and that was to help purchase our condenser for the AC. 7,892.

1:57:35 890, 892. 7,892. eight nine zero yeah okay eight nine zero okay for the ac okay good okay thank you for the time mr chair thank you ig thomas do you still have your um confidential uh anonymous line yes we do how often is is that used and um is this a good source of information how often do you actually post that to the public that in fact that line is available for information uh We haven't actively advertised it recently, but we do have the call-in, the phone-in, and we do get quite a bit of persons sending requests through our website.

1:58:24 So we do have the ability for people to go on our website and put in complaints that way. What is that number? The phone number for our... The tip line. it would be the same as our phone our phone number at 774 33 88 um what's the extension on that I don't have the extension right now because we're we've moved some employees around so and then that particular person that used to take those calls retired a few months ago and we're filling that position in a couple weeks very well and your audit is posted on your website once it's completed yes it's available and it's currently up-to-date and all of the completed audits it could be viewed by the public on your website yes what is the relationship with the Attorney General's office and the US Attorney's office the US Attorney's office and the Attorney General's office so the Attorney Attorney General's office right now, we're assisting them with the Medicaid Fraud Unit. And the U.S. Attorney, only upon request, I have not met the new U.S. Attorney yet.

1:59:51 But if they need something from us, then they will contact us. But I don't have, I've never met the new. The new Attorney. U.S. Attorney? Yes. Okay. Questions, colleagues? Senator DeGraff, you recognize, but any question? Thank you, Mr. Chair. You were mentioning, from my recollection, reimbursements from different, where you got 3,000 to 25.04. Then you got another 50,540. Yes. And then you got 6,000.

2:00:22 Okay, so they were reimbursements for local funds. That's my understanding. Yes. Okay, so these reimbursements go back to, into the general fund? The, yes, the reimbursement for general fund monies that we use to outfit the St. Croix office from the 2017 hurricane. So that money's now coming back to us, I think maybe last week and this week coming.

2:00:54 Okay, and it will be for your utilization or to the general fund? I would have to ask the Department of Finance how that works. Okay, all right. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much. Senator DeGraf, Senator Frederick, so anybody in questions, you recognize? Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Appreciate the opportunity to ask one more burning question. IG Thomas, if you would, in your tenure, you've been in office for two years?

2:01:27 Yes, sir. Can you tell me the number of cases you've recommended or submitted to the AG's office for prosecution? We have not recommended any to date. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair for the time. Thank you very much, Senator Fredrick, Senator Ray Fonseki. Recognize for your burning question? Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam E.G., when do you plan to hire the Deputy Inspector General?

2:02:10 After I get the Senior Special Investigator. Okay, so those are those two positions. The Senior was budgeted at half for this fiscal year? I thought I saw a half. Is it a full budget? It's budgeted at 75%. 75%, okay. and your accounts payables is only eight hundred and thirty seven dollars correct so why can't you just pay that off it's paid through the Department of Finance okay so you're waiting on finance to pay that off okay um the East End audit that you're doing of course you know I'm interested in that you made a note that it was a delay in receiving some information is um are you Are they responding now or why is it delayed? So let me say that this was requested by their board.

2:03:04 The audit was requested. They're facing challenges with short staff and at times they're citing that they may not even know where the information is located because of the changeover in management so even we've offered to go and look in the warehouse look wherever they think the information is and we would go in and just figure out what's what and they told us that they can't even tell us where the information is for us to even go into a warehouse so that is the biggest obstacle right now, but Dr. Richards, Tess Richards, she is trying to assist us as much as she can. Okay, that's good to know that they're cooperating. Of course, it's troubling when they're saying that information is not available or don't know exactly where it is. It's always concerning, but thank you, Mr. Chair, for the time. Thank you very much, Senator Fonseca. Madam IG, technology, what does technology look like for you? Where are you in terms of technological upgrades to run the Inspector General's office?

2:04:26 We should be in a pretty good position because we usually keep all our equipment up to date. We swap them out, computers, everything regularly. So I do not think that we're in any deficiency where that's concerned. Okay. Very well. And you have all of the necessary recording devices and, you know, camera systems and everything for interviews. All of that is pretty good. Correct. And like this time at the end of the fiscal year, I make sure that I ask all the auditors, the investigators, what is it that you think that would make your job easier moving forward so we could get, you know, whatever they need. So we're in the process, at the end of every year, doing that.

2:05:15 Okay. And also, I just want to advise you over at LEPC, Law Enforcement Planning Commission, there are various grants that may be available for such equipment and supplies. So don't be fearful about submitting for a grant there, if necessary, again, to get your stuff upgraded. CyberAttack, is your system hardened and protected from CyberAttack? Hopefully. I do have an IT person on staff that's in charge of cyber security and everything that we need to make sure that our system is secured. So let's go ahead and make sure that you're able to confirm and verify that.

2:05:59 We don't want to wait until it happens to know if it's soundproof. Make sure that that is done. what about internship how are you doing in terms of um you know preparing the next generation of individuals that may be interested in becoming an auditor or an investigator within the ig's office we've had some inquiries from um students at the university of the virgin islands about internships um it depends on what we're working on at the time whether we grant that request If we're working on like an investigation or an audit that is highly sensitive, we do not allow it to happen. But we do get requests every year for persons to come in and I've already received a request for this upcoming school year for a UVI student.

2:06:51 And have you already selected your understudy or are you waiting for the deputy to come on board for that purpose? not sure how to answer that question I think I'm always preparing people that are on staff to do their maximum and to even go beyond beyond that I think it's up to them I do think that you know that Virgin Islanders need to we need to police ourselves so that is the premise and they they work here their kids go to school here and that should be the succession that you know from my view so um but they know they have my full support okay every position I worked in I always try to find yummy work with individuals to be able to create that level of succession you know I want to sure that the place is left um you know um you know better than than his founders so you want to always prepare that next person to assume that position so um that's the reason why i asked about understudy and you know just kind of exposing individuals and they don't have to be one in particular but you know be able to tap into them so that they could see what you were seeing from your view because you know regardless of where they sit right now they'll never have that view as as the leader um you know so you're giving that that a little bit of exposure and view i think it's critically important at this time the chair will recognize senator college joseph for her wrap-up point point uh somebody um can you hold a second um point of information senator frederick you recognize thank you very much mr chair id thomas really quick i wanted to get some clarification on what happened with this sewage situation um i noticed you pay rent so the property is not owned by the inspector general's office is that correct you're citing the wrong facility I'm talking about the office in st. Thomas and

2:08:55 that's owned by the government we are paying rent in st. Croix so the break was on st. Thomas the st. Thomas property correct which is owned by the government Yes. Okay. Thank you very much. Thanks for the clarification. Thank you, Senator Frederick, Senator Carl J. Joseph, you're recognized for your wrap-up. Thank you so kindly, Mr. Chairman. My question, I just need some clarification to understand, Madam Inspector General.

2:09:31 When you say on page 12, staff days, I see a number of days here listed for all of your assignments what is what is this day is it the day starts rolling based on when you receive it or is it ruling when it begins to actually do the investigation and do the work what does staff days mean at the bottom line that's what I'm trying to get from the time we actually start the assignment we take into consideration holidays vacation and and the expectation that we're getting the information that we're asking for timely okay so if the staff days meaning when you anticipate completing the assignment from yes you receive it start to finish to start to finish so I see you do have the horse racing improvement fund for 300 staff days that it's just one little fund it we're not quite sure we make adjustments on these particular numbers after we've done the background to see the number of people that's going to be needed i don't think that we're actually there yet so we were being um we weren't trying to say 60 days, and then we couldn't do it in 60 days. Okay, so you're just trying to... Sometimes we're... These are estimated days. Correct. Okay. All right. Thank you so much for the explanation. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for the time. Thank you very much, Senator Joseph. Again, this budget is pretty straightforward. It's the same as last year, so it's something that we could certainly...

2:11:21 could address. I wanted to ask you, in terms of my final question to you, what is it that keeps you up at night? What about your assignment that exposes you or challenges you or brings you anxiety as it stands right now? I try to not let anything keep me up at night. But But when we can't get information or people don't understand what our office actually does, we get a lot of requests for people that I try to explain to them that the injured party has to be the government. That is what we do. So whatever happens, it's a fraud against the government or somebody behaving in a particular way that's not reflective of the values of the government so but we get a lot of requests of people who feel that the government has injured them and then they come to our office for us to investigate the government employee or the agency that they felt wrong them so that's one right now I explained to people in the past we would go into two agencies and they would in the olden days open a file room and we would be able to walk in there and they would say take out whatever files you want or not take them out of the building but we would open them there copy them there but with the age of technology things supposed to be easier well the access to people's computer records is giving us some challenges because they're not gonna just give us access to all so we

2:13:18 also we need their assistance now to sit there with them in order to pull the documents that we need so that slows us down I don't like the fact that we don't get assignments done that we start out thinking are simple, and then it turns into be this long production because information is not there. So just normal stuff.

2:13:53 OK. I have some ideas about that, but of course. The federal government, what they'll do is just take your hard drive. A lot of times they subpoena and take your hard drive, take your computer and then they're able to query it as long as there's a government-issued computer. They do have the authority then to take that computer and do a hard drive sweep on it, but. Can I respond, Senator? Sure. Anything with investigations, we do what we have to do. Okay.

2:14:24 Sometimes my answers will come from an audit perspective because that's my background. So my background, I would be more cautious as to how I move forward, but trust me, anything that we have under our investigation unit, we do go ahead. We're not waiting for anybody. We're issuing subpoenas, and we're getting information that we need through our investigation unit. I try to treat those two separately. Understood. I just want the public to listen to and to hear the response that, in fact, you do have the authority then to subpoenas, especially in the investigation aspect of things out there.

2:14:58 So I'll give you 30 seconds to wrap up at this time. Again, I want to thank this body for your support of our office and to support our budget requests. And I hope that I was able to convey to you today that um our budget is very sensitive so i would like for your approval to receive our full two million eight hundred ninety eight thousand three hundred and ninety two thousand dollars thank you uh thank you very much and again um we commend your rank and file for the work that you continue to do we realize that um it's difficult at times especially when you don't get the timely submit a lot of information and you know don't don't be fearful to exercise the nuclear option in those instances where you have to because it's so important that we're able to get that information that you could complete your your task and move on to the next one because there's so much work to do this community and to bring back the integrity and stop the fraud waste and abusing in government the committee of budget appropriations and finance stands as a recess until 1300 hours, 1pm.

2:16:45 I'll see you next time. so so so Oh, my God. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. so Thank you. Thank you.

2:22:45 Thank you. I'll see you next time. so so [3 such phrases repeated 13 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

2:29:45 so so so do We'll be right back.

2:32:15 . so Thank you. Thank you. [3 such phrases repeated 8 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

2:36:45 Thank you. Thank you. Oh, my God.

2:38:15 so Thank you. Thank you. [2 such phrases repeated 10 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

2:43:45 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

2:45:15 Thank you. Thank you.

2:46:15 Thank you. Thank you.

2:47:15 Thank you. Thank you.

2:48:15 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

2:49:45 Thank you. Thank you.

2:50:45 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

2:53:45 Thank you. ¶¶ so so so

2:56:15 Thank you. so Thank you. We'll be right back.

2:58:15 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'll see you next time. Thank you.

3:01:15 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

People named in this transcript

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

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

9x **Senator Ray Fonseca**
heard in this transcript as: Fonseca, Ray Fonseki

8x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**
heard in this transcript as: DeGraf, DeGraff, Dwayne M. DeGraff

8x **Senator Novelle Francis**
heard in this transcript as: Francis Jr, Neuville E. Francis Jr, Nova E. Francis Jr, Novel E. Francis Jr, Novel E. Francis Jr., Novell E. Francis Jr

4x **Senator Carla Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph
heard in this transcript as: Carl J. Joseph, Joseph

4x **Senator Marise C. James**
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James, Maurice C. James, Maurice James

4x **Senator Marvin Blyden**
heard in this transcript as: Blyden, Marvin A. Blyton

3x **Senator Kurt Vialet**
heard in this transcript as: Kurt A. Valey, Valey

2x **Governor Albert Bryan Jr**

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.

Act 9005	Act 9005 · June 27, 2025 · An act amending title 33 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 111, section 3100i to align the disbursement and spending limitations of funds allotted to public schools from the Education Initiative Fund with the realities of academic planning, ensuring that funds are used to maximize student success; appropriating funds to the Virgin Islands Board of Education to administer the Caroline Felicia Adams Aviation Scholarship; amending Act No. 8954 regarding the Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums; amending title 27 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 16 regarding the Appraiser Qualifications Board; appropriating funds to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority for the purchase and installation of
Act 8731	Act 8731 · April 14, 2023 · An Act directing the Virgin Islands Inspector General to conduct an audit of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority; making a $250,000 appropriation to conduct the audit; and for other related purposes
Act 6333	Act 6333 · (title not held)
Act 8954	Act 8954 · November 20, 2024 · An Act amending title 31 Virgin Islands Code, chapters 21and 23, sections 205, 23 1a, 232, 236, 236a, and 239 pertaining to the management of public property and procurement and sale of goods and services; amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 34, section 778(2) pertaining to the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act; amending title 30 Virgin Islands Code, section 104 pertaining to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority; amending Act Nos. 8899 and 8916 to provide supplemental appropriations: and for other related purposes