

1                   **FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET HEARING TESTIMONY**  
2                               **for the**  
3                   **OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

4  
5                   **SUBMITTED BY:**

6  
7                   **JOSS N. SPRINGETTE, ESQ.**  
8                   **CHIEF NEGOTIATOR**

9  
10                  **JUNE 26, 2025**

11  
12                Good afternoon, Honorable Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Chairperson of the  
13   Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance, other members of the Committee,  
14   non-committee members in attendance, and the People of the Virgin Islands. My name  
15   is Joss Springette, and I am the Chief Negotiator at the Office of Collective Bargaining  
16   (OCB). I appear before you today in support of our proposed budget for Fiscal Year  
17   2026, in the amount of One Million Two Hundred Sixty-Three Thousand Three Hundred  
18   Ninety-One Dollars (\$1,263,391.00). Appearing with me today is Zuleyma Chapman,  
19   Esq., Assistant Attorney General-Labor and Nikima Richards, Financial Specialist.

20               First, I will begin my testimony by thanking my team for their continued  
21   commitment, perseverance and professionalism as we provide the central government  
22   with stellar representation. I would also like to give special recognition to our 2025  
23   Employees of the Year: Eling Joseph in the St. Croix District and Roshanna Malone in  
24   the St. Thomas-St. John District. The theme for this year's Employee Recognition Week

25 is unleashing potential. You have tapped into your innate talents and skills, challenged  
26 yourself, worked outside of your comfort, and impressed us all. Continue to make us  
27 proud!

28 **OVERVIEW AND COMPOSITION OF THE OFFICE OF**  
29 **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**  
30

31 Through Act 4440, the Office of Collective Bargaining ("OCB") was established in  
32 1980 within the Office of the Governor. The Office is led by me, the Chief Negotiator,  
33 and our statutory responsibilities are as follows:

- 34 (i) exclusively represent the executive branch of Government and its departments and  
35 divisions and negotiate on its behalf in all collective bargaining proceedings;  
36 (ii) assist the Governor in formulating labor policies for collective bargaining and plan  
37 strategies for such bargaining;  
38 (iii) coordinate the Government's position in all mediation and arbitration cases and labor  
39 disputes;  
40 (iv) conduct systematic studies of collective bargaining agreements for the purpose of  
41 contract negotiations; and  
42 (v) prepare and submit an annual report and such other reports as may be requested, to  
43 the Governor and the Legislature on the effects of this chapter on the annual budget and  
44 personnel matters.

45 Our offices are in the GERS Building on St. Thomas, and at Chandler's Wharf on  
46 St. Croix. We currently have a team of seven (7) employees and one (1) Assistant  
47 Attorney General-Labor. The Assistant Attorney General-Labor is assigned to OCB by  
48 the Department of Justice (DOJ). OCB's current employees hold classified non-union

49 positions, and the Assistant Attorney General-Labor is an exempt employee. The team  
50 consists of professionals with a wealth of experience in administrative functions,  
51 customer service, labor relations, human resources, arbitration, general legal practice,  
52 labor law, and employment law. The current Organizational Chart is attached.

## **PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026 EXPENDITURES**

### **PERSONNEL SERVICES AND FRINGE BENEFITS**

53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58 Our proposed budget for Personnel Services is Six Hundred Ninety-Two Thousand  
59 Four Hundred Eighty-Seven Dollars (\$692,487.00), which represents 54.81% of the  
60 overall proposed budget. Fringe benefits are projected at Two Hundred Ninety-Nine  
61 Thousand Six Hundred Forty-Five Dollars (\$299,645.00), which represents 23.72% of  
62 the overall budget.

### **EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES**

63  
64  
65 Our proposed budget for equipment and supplies is Eighty-Nine Thousand Five  
66 Hundred Dollars (\$89,500.00), or 7.08% of the overall budget. This amount will cover  
67 the cost of paper, a new copier, cleaning supplies, and other equipment necessary for the  
68 daily operations of the office.

### **UTILITIES**

71 Utility costs for Fiscal Year 2026 are projected to be Thirteen Thousand Dollars  
72 (\$13,000.00) or 1.03% of our overall budget. This amount only applies to our St. Croix  
73 office, because we do not pay utilities in our St. Thomas office. These funds are  
74 transferred to the Department of Finance, and utilities are paid through the Single Payer  
75 Utility Fund.

76 **OTHER SERVICES**

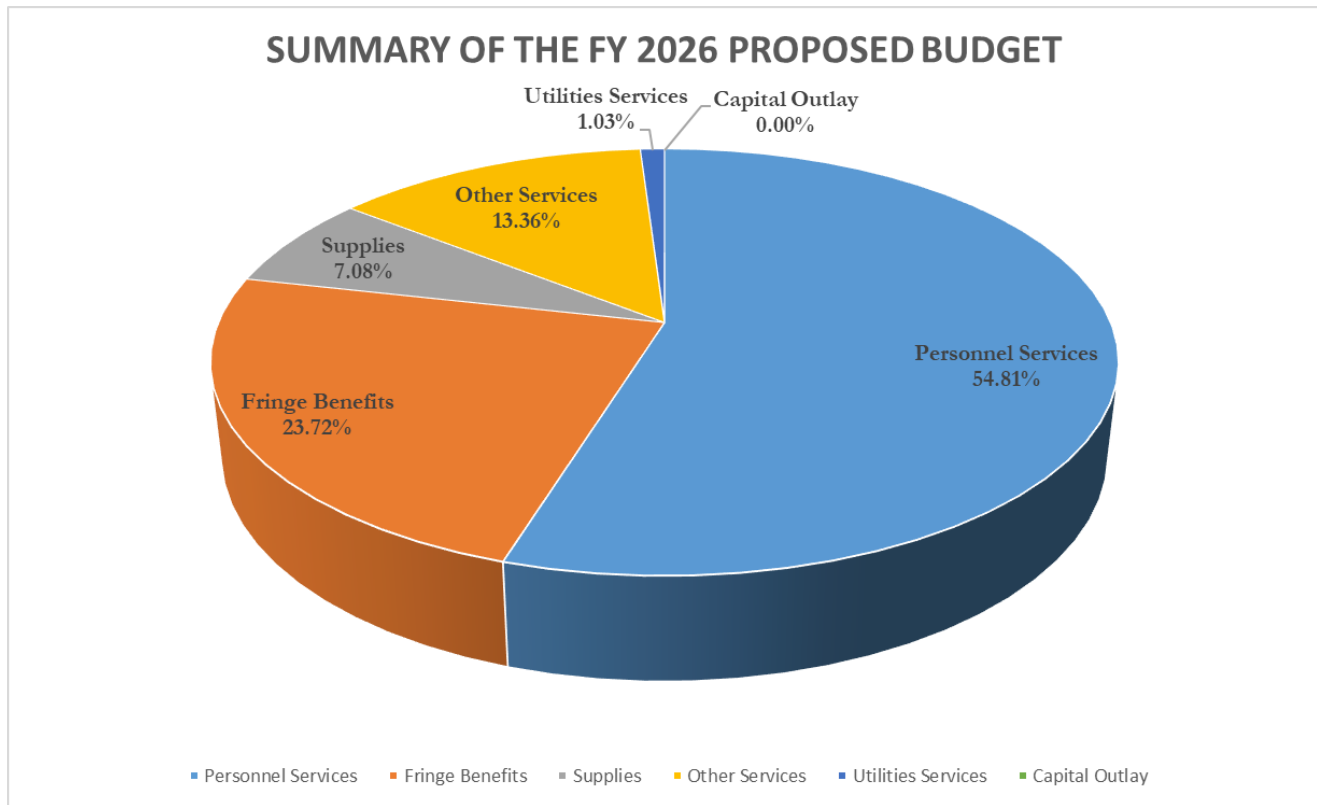
77  
78 Our proposed budget for Other Services is One Thousand Sixty-Eight Seven  
79 Hundred Fifty-Nine Dollars (\$168,759.00) or 13.36% of our overall budget. These funds  
80 cover operating expenses, including rent, service agreements, IT, communications, and  
81 training.

82  
83 **OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED FY 2025 BUDGET**

Personnel Services	\$692,487	54.81%
Fringe Benefits	\$299,645	23.72%
Equipment & Supplies	\$ 89,500	7.08%
Other Services	\$168,759	13.36%
Utilities	\$ 13,000	1.03%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,263,391</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

84

85



86

87 We do not receive any federal funds.

88

89 **OPERATIONS**

90

91 The demands on the Office are increasing with more requests from our clients for  
92 training and advice. Therefore, we need to fill the current vacancies, improve our  
93 technology, and continue streamlining operations. We are also recruiting candidates for  
94 our Financial Management Officer, Legal Counsel, and Paralegal Officer positions. In  
95 addition, my team and I attend continuing legal education courses locally and virtually.

96

97

98

## **LABOR RELATIONS**

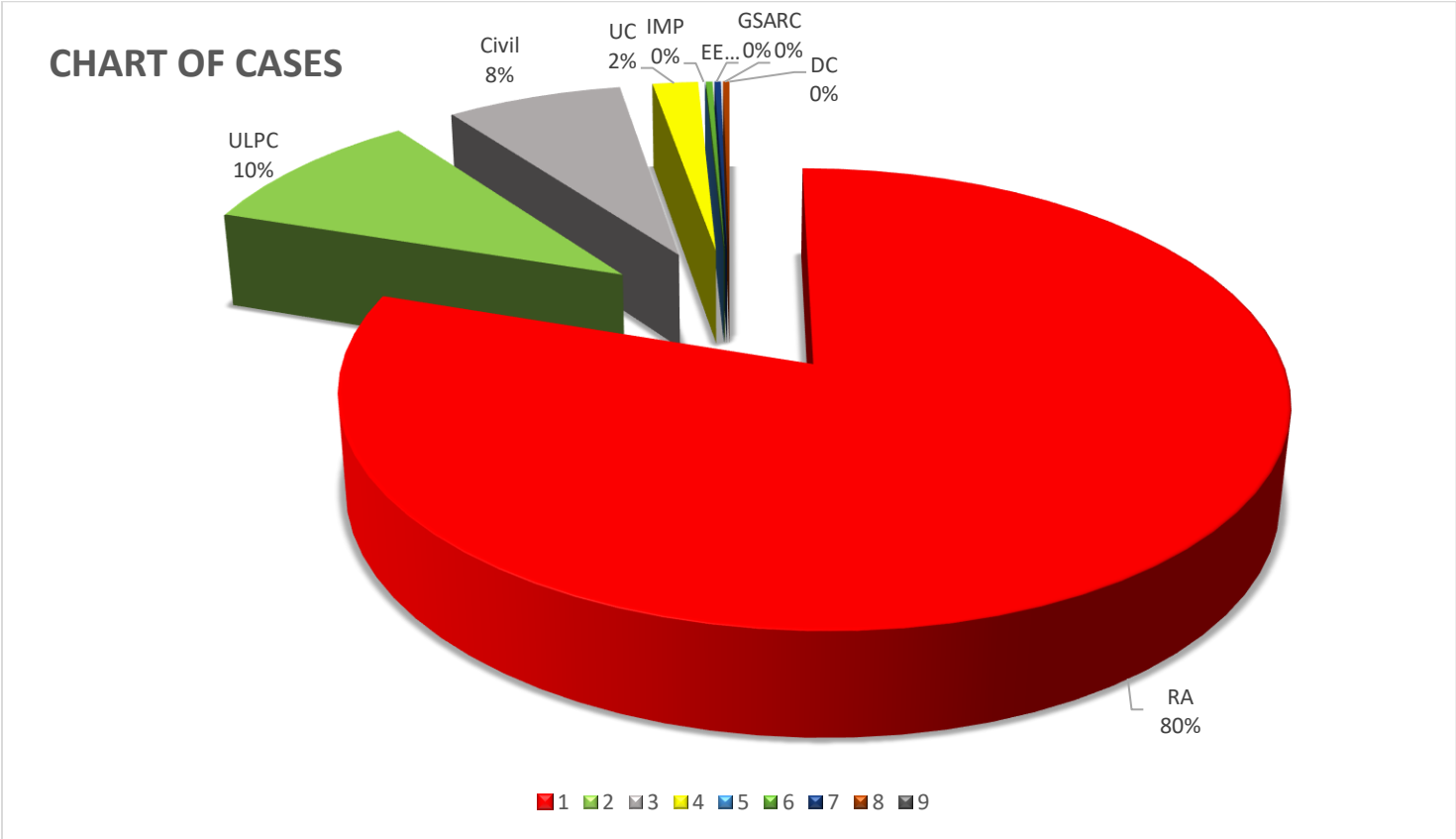
99       OCB's mission is to fulfill our legal mandate to fairly engage in the collective  
100 bargaining process and enhance the relationship between labor and management. Our  
101 goals are to reduce labor disputes, continue training management in labor relations, and  
102 improve relations between management and labor. OCB receives calls and email  
103 inquiries daily from agencies seeking guidance on legal issues, organizational plans, or  
104 OCB's intervention in various collective bargaining matters. These discussions provide  
105 us with insight into the agencies' operations, their challenges, and how OCB can better  
106 serve the government. We also receive calls from unions who seek to amicably resolve  
107 issues without filing grievances or other formal complaints. This dialogue with union  
108 representatives serves as an essential element in labor relations. We encouraged our  
109 clients to do the same, which has resulted in some agencies meeting with unions as often  
110 as biweekly.

111

## **PENDING CASES**

112       OCB continues its statutory commitment to amicably resolve pending cases and  
113 avoiding future ones. As of May 31, 2025, OCB has a caseload of Three Hundred Sixty-  
114 Seven (367) cases. Of that amount, there are two hundred ninety -four (294) Rights  
115 Arbitration (RA) cases, thirty-six (36) Unfair Labor Practice Charges (ULPC), twenty-  
116 seven (27) civil cases, seven (7) Unit Clarification (UC) cases, one (1) Equal  
117 Employment Opportunity (EEOC) case, one (1) Government Service Appeal case, and

one (1) Recertification (RC) case. From October 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025, we received fifty-nine (59) cases and were successful in closing thirty-three (33) cases through arbitration, dispositive orders, withdrawals, or settlements. This is about 9% of the caseload. Below is a chart showing the caseload as of May 31, 2025:



**NEGOTIATIONS**

OCB engages in contract negotiation with fifteen (15) labor unions that represent thirty-three (33) bargaining units within the government. OCB currently manages thirty-two (32) collective bargaining agreements, of which fifteen (15) are current, and one bargaining unit does not have a CBA.

Since my last budget hearing, we have completed negotiations with the following unions:

1. IAMAW for Enforcement Officers and other non-supervisory employees at the Waste Management Authority;
2. OVILU for employees at the Department of Agriculture;
3. OVILU for employees at the Department of Justice;
4. USW for supervisors at the Waste Management Authority; and
5. USW for 911 Emergency Center Operators at the VITEMA

Negotiations continue with the following unions:

1. Virgin Islands Workers Union for Headstart;
2. Virgin Islands Workers Union for VITRAN;
3. Seafarers International Union for Public Health Physicians;
4. Educational Administrators Association;
5. Seafarers International Union Masters Unit;
6. United Steelworkers for Supervisors;
7. International Association of Firefighters for Supervisors
8. Police Benevolent Association;
9. American Federation of Teachers for Teachers;
10. American Federation of Teachers for Paraprofessionals;
11. American Federation of Teachers for Support Staff;
12. Our Virgin Islands Labor Union – Department of Public Works;
13. Association of Firefighters for Firefighters and Corporals;
14. Association of Firefighters for Support Staff; and
15. International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers for Security Guards at the Department of Health and both hospitals.

Attached is a copy of our at-a-glance spreadsheet showing the status of each CBA and our tentative schedule for the rest of the calendar year.

## CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of our budget for Fiscal Year 2026. We urge this body to approve our recommended budget of One



161 Million Two Hundred Sixty-Three Thousand Three Hundred Ninety-One Dollars  
162 (\$1,263,391.00). We welcome any questions that you may have.