

1                   **FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET HEARING TESTIMONY**  
2                                   **for the**  
3                   **OFFICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

4  
5                                   **SUBMITTED BY:**

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

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10                                   **JUNE 24, 2026**

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). Before I begin my testimony, I want to express my greatest gratitude to my team  
17    for always stepping up and continuing to demonstrate the essence of true public service.  
18    I would also like to extend special congratulations to our 2026 Employees of the Year -  
19    Nikima Richards from the St. Croix district, who is present with me today; and Roshanna  
20    Malone from the St. Thomas-St. John District. Their work has been guided by purpose  
21    and contributes to a shared mission and meaningful results. Thank you for always giving  
22    your greatest and continue to make us proud!

23 I appear before you today in support of our proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2027,  
24 in the amount of One Million Five Hundred Seventy-Four Thousand Seven Hundred  
25 Twenty-Eight Dollars (\$1,574,728.00).

26 **OVERVIEW AND COMPOSITION OF THE OFFICE OF**  
27 **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**  
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29 For the benefit of the listening and viewing audience, through Act 4440, the Office of  
30 Collective Bargaining ("OCB") was established in 1980 within the Office of the  
31 Governor. The Office is led by me, the Chief Negotiator, and our statutory  
32 responsibilities are as follows:

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

44 Our St. Thomas office is located in the GERS Building on St. Thomas, and at  
45 Chandler's Wharf on St. Croix. We currently have a team of six (6) employees. OCB's  
46 current employees hold classified non-union positions. The team consists of employees

47 with a wealth of experience in administrative functions, labor relations, human resources,  
48 arbitration, general legal practice, labor law, and employment law. The current  
49 Organizational Chart is attached.

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51 **PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2027 EXPENDITURES**

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53 **PERSONNEL SERVICES AND FRINGE BENEFITS**

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55 Our proposed budget for Personnel Services is Eight Hundred Sixty-Seven  
56 Thousand Two Hundred Fifteen Dollars (\$867,215.00), which represents 55.07% of the  
57 overall proposed budget. Fringe benefits are projected at Three Hundred Seventy-One  
58 Thousand One Hundred Sixty-Eight Dollars (\$371,168.00), which represents 23.57% of  
59 the overall budget.

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**EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES**

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62 Our proposed budget for equipment and supplies is Forty Thousand Dollars  
63 (\$40,000.00), or 2.54% of the overall budget. This amount will cover the cost of paper,  
64 cleaning supplies, and other equipment necessary for the daily operations of the office.

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**UTILITIES**

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67 Utility costs for Fiscal Year 2027 are projected to be Thirteen Thousand Dollars  
68 (\$13,000.00) or 0.83% of our overall budget. This amount only applies to our St. Croix  
69 office, because we do not pay utilities in our St. Thomas office. These funds are

70 transferred to the Department of Finance, and utilities are paid through the Single Payer  
71 Utility Fund.

72 **OTHER SERVICES**

73  
74 Our proposed budget for Other Services is One Hundred Sixty-Three Thousand  
75 Three Hundred Forty-Five Dollars (\$163,345.00) or 10.37% of our overall budget. These  
76 funds cover operating expenses, including rent, service agreements, IT, and  
77 communications.

78 **CAPITAL PROJECTS**

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80 Our offices in both districts are in need of new copiers. Additionally, both vehicles  
81 need to be replaced. Most recently, the vehicle in the St. Thomas District was turned  
82 over to the Department of Property and Procurement for disposal. While the vehicle in  
83 the St. Croix District is operational, it is need of extensive repairs. We are requesting  
84 One Hundred Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$120,00.00) in Capital funding for the purchase  
85 of new copiers and a vehicle.

86 We do not receive any federal funds.

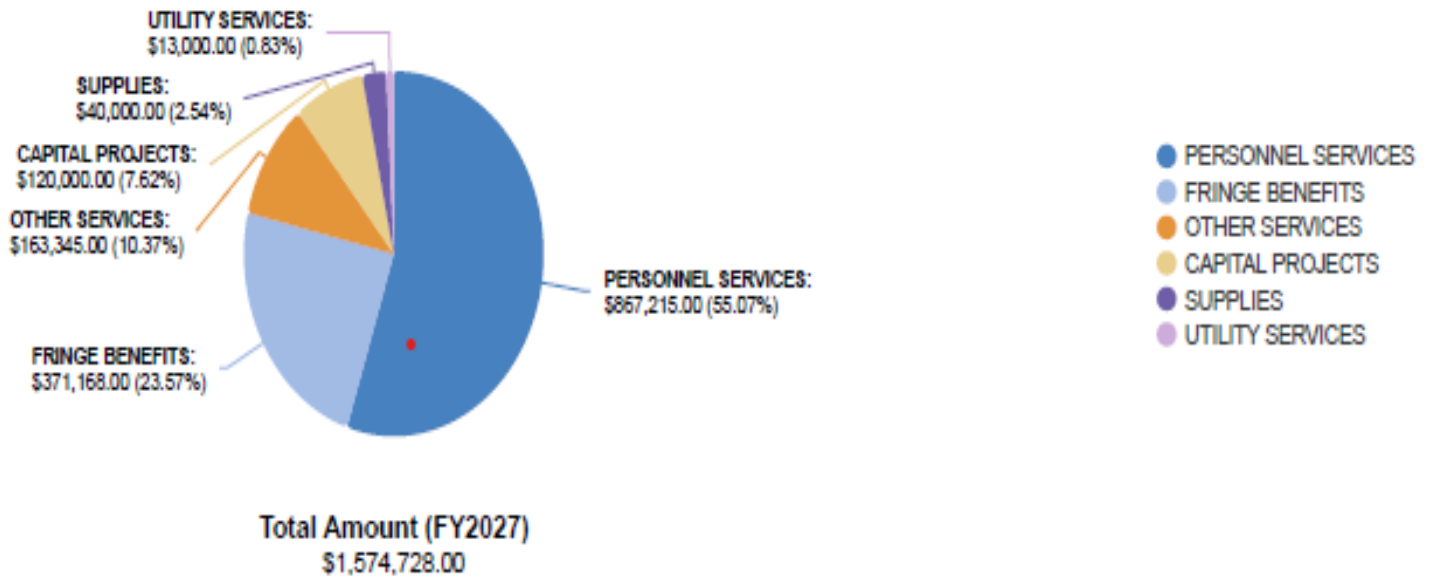
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**OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED FY 2027 BUDGET**

Personnel Services	\$867,215	55.07%
Fringe Benefits	\$371,168	23.57%
Equipment & Supplies	\$ 40,000	2.54%
Other Services	\$163,345	10.37%
Utilities	\$ 13,000	0.83%
Capital Projects	\$ 120,000	7.62%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,574,728</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

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**OPERATIONS**

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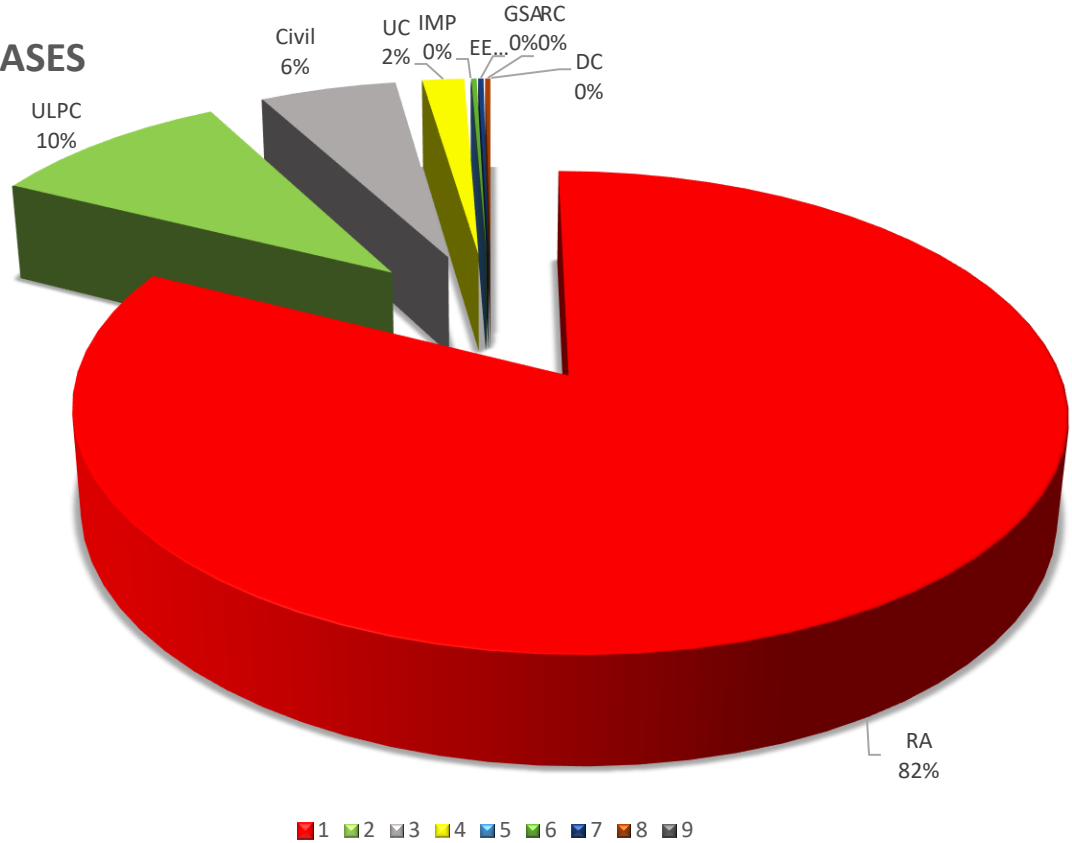
The demands on the Office have increased and clients are making more requests for training and advice. Therefore, we urgently need to fill the current vacancies, and are

97 recruiting candidates for our Financial Management Officer, Legal Counsel, and  
98 Paralegal Officer positions.

99 **PENDING CASES**

100 OCB continues its statutory commitment to amicably resolve pending cases and  
101 avoiding future ones. As of May 31, 2026, OCB has a caseload of Four Hundred  
102 Seventy-Three (473) cases. Of that amount, there are three hundred ninety (390) Rights  
103 Arbitration (RA) cases, forty six (46) Unfair Labor Practice Charges (ULPC), - six (26)  
104 civil cases, eight (8) Unit Clarification (UC) cases, one (1) Equal Employment  
105 Opportunity (EEOC) case, one (1) Government Service Appeal case, and one (1)  
106 Recertification (RC) case. From October 1, 2025, to May 31, 2026, we received ninety-  
107 eight (98) cases and were successful in disposing of five (5) cases during this time period,  
108 both of our attorney positions were vacant. Below is a chart showing the caseload as of  
109 May 31, 2026:

## CHART OF CASES



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## NEGOTIATIONS

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OCB engages in contract negotiation with fifteen (15) labor unions that represent thirty-one (31) bargaining units within the government. Of the thirty-one bargaining agreements nine (9) are current, and one bargaining unit does not have a CBA.

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

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1. American Federation of Teachers for Teachers;
2. American Federation of Teachers for Paraprofessionals; and
3. American Federation of Teachers for Support Staff;

123 Negotiations continue with the following unions:

- 124 1. Virgin Islands Workers Union for Headstart;
- 125 2. Virgin Islands Workers Union for VITRAN;
- 126 3. Seafarers International Union for Public Health Physicians;
- 127 4. Educational Administrators Association;
- 128 5. Seafarers International Union Masters Unit;
- 129 6. United Steelworkers for Supervisors;
- 130 7. International Association of Firefighters for Supervisors
- 131 8. Police Benevolent Association;
- 132 9. Our Virgin Islands Labor Union – Department of Public Works;
- 133 10. Association of Firefighters for Firefighters and Corporals;
- 134 11. Association of Firefighters for Support Staff; and
- 135 12. International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers for Security
- 136 Guards at the Department of Health and both hospitals.
- 137

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

140

## 141 **CONCLUSION**

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143 Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of our budget  
144 for Fiscal Year 2027. We urge this body to approve our recommended budget of One  
145 Million Five Hundred Seventy-Four Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty-Eight Dollars  
146 (\$1,574,728.00). We welcome any questions that you may have.