

BUDGET PRESENTATION

***BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE***

August 11, 2023



FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET

CAROLINE F. FAWKES

SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

ELECTIONS SYSTEM OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

1 **INTRODUCTION**

2 Good afternoon Honorable Chairwoman Donna Frett Gregory,
3 distinguished members of the Committee on Finance, other members
4 of the 35th Legislature, members of the press, the viewing and
5 listening audience. I am Caroline Fawkes, Supervisor of Elections, a
6 Certified Elections Registration Administrator. Appearing with me
7 today is the Board of Elections Chairwoman, Alecia Wells, also a
8 Certified Elections Registration Administrator. It is an honor to
9 appear before you today to present the Elections System of the Virgin
10 Islands' Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 proposed budget, which includes the
11 Board of Elections and the Office of the Supervisor along with our
12 accomplishments, challenges, and goals.

13 First, I will begin with a quote from the great Martin Luther King, Jr.
14 who proclaimed, "Voting is the foundation stone for political action."
15 The Board of Elections is the elected policy-making body of the
16 Election System of the Virgin Islands.

17 The Board of Elections consists of fourteen (14) members from the
18 St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix districts for a four (4) year term.
19 Two (2) of the members in the St. Thomas-St. John District must be
20 residents of St. John.

21 The Board of Elections Members are Chairwoman Mrs. Alecia Wells,
22 Vice Chairwoman – Mrs. Shikima Jones-Sprauve, Secretary Lydia
23 Hendricks, Members – Florine Audain Hassell, Kareem T. Francis,
24 Atanya Springette Boschulte, Lisa Harris-Moorhead, Esq., Epiphane
25 Joseph, Michael A. Joseph, Esq., Angeli Leerdam, Harriet Mercer
26 Lilliana Belardo de O’Neal, Arturo Watlington, Jr. Esq, and Raymond
27 J. Williams.

28 The Office of the Supervisor of Elections is charged with the day-to-
29 day administration of the Election System of the Virgin Islands. One
30 of our main responsibilities is maintaining the integrity of elections
31 by assuring that Virgin Islanders’ voices are heard clearly through
32 the election process. Other responsibilities include training election
33 officials, qualifying candidates for elections, administering campaign
34 finance, managing the territory-wide voter registry, hiring and
35 training poll workers, acquiring and equipping polling places,
36 registering voters and issuing voter information cards, removing
37 voters from the registered voter rolls who no longer live in the Virgin
38 Islands, are deceased, or for any other reason are no longer eligible
39 to vote in the Virgin Islands of the United States, changing
40 information on registered voter rolls when a change request is

41 received (e.g., name, address, party affiliation), sending advance
42 notice of election to voters who are overseas, in the military, or who
43 request notification, accept mail absentee ballot requests and send,
44 receive, and verifying mail ballots, qualifying candidates for territorial
45 offices, preparation for the execution of all elections, testing of all
46 voting equipment, mandating election audits, and providing certified
47 election returns to the Board of Elections.

48 I commend this body, all members of the 34th Legislature for
49 unanimously supporting Bills No. 34-319, 34-320, 34-321, 34-322,
50 34-323, 34-457, 34-460, 34-461 and 34-462 and signed by Governor
51 Bryan creating Act 8690. With the passage of these amendments, the
52 execution of elections falls under the purview of the Office of the
53 Supervisor of Elections in line with other jurisdictions in the United
54 States. For the past sixty years, the Board of Elections has done a
55 remarkable job conducting elections and now the Office of the
56 Supervisor will maintain these ambitious standards and continue to
57 build upon our past successes. Our elections are on the top tier in
58 the region and our sights are on the world. The 2024 Election Cycle
59 will be the first in which the Office of the Supervisor of Elections will

60 solely execute the Election cycle. My team and I are excited as we
61 prepare for this enormous task.

62 On another note, we need help. A new Brennan Center poll finds that
63 election officials are under attack and leaving their jobs. Between
64 January 31 and February 14 of 2022, the Benenson Strategy Group
65 polled nearly 600 local election officials about their jobs. Their
66 responses should set off warning bells across all levels of government
67 and provoke action from Congress and local legislatures. More than
68 half of the respondents are concerned about the safety of themselves
69 and their colleagues.

70 I regret to inform this body that this type of activity has reached our
71 beautiful Virgin Islands. The integrity, character, and efficiency, of
72 our leadership team and employees who are professional and honest
73 in executing the duties of the system No such distraction for
74 unearned political gain can ever and will never impair the abilities of
75 the system.

76 As a prelude to today's ESVI Budgetary Hearing before this august
77 body, I was directed by the Board of Elections (BOE) at its July 25,
78 2023, Quarterly Meeting to state that despite complaints filed by

79 candidates suffering the agony of defeat, ESVI, using its triple
80 redundancy accuracy protocol, has not an iota of doubt about the
81 2022 general election cycle.

82 In the meanwhile, the elections systems of our brothers and sisters
83 in Tortola, Anguilla and other neighbors have consulted the ESVI for
84 its protocols. And when BOE and ESVI staff travel for interactions
85 with other systems, in the Caribbean or the US Mainland, ESVI often
86 receive compliments as to its more technology advanced voting
87 systems.

88 I had a bird's-eye view on the effect this experience had on said
89 employee for only performing assigned duties. Candidates and
90 supporters of candidates during and after the election continue to
91 attack election officials with either Misinformation, Dis-information,
92 and Mal-information.

93 To counter this "infodemic," we have taken various steps and we will
94 continue to push back to combat misinformation:

95 Everyone should speak out loudly for their own individual rights. We
96 cannot allow a few lonely minority voices to cause apathy, while they
97 vote but dissuade others from voting.

98 Our Commitment to Our Voters - The staff commits to excellence in
99 maintaining up-to-date, accurate voter registration rolls to provide
100 fair and equal opportunities for all qualified voters to participate in
101 the democratic process.

102 I would like to recognize and thank, the twelve phenomenal,
103 knowledgeable, experienced, and driven Elections staff, Ms. Kevermay
104 Douglas – St. Thomas/St. John Deputy Supervisor, Mr. Terrell
105 Alexandre – St. Croix Deputy Supervisor, Ms. Milagritos Venzen, Mrs.
106 Ulette Todmann-Hodge – Senior Elections Assistants, Ms. Sheri
107 Richardson, Ms. Melba Smith, Ms. Mari Felix, Ms. Stephanie Joseph,
108 Ms. Tricia Johnson, Mrs. Blanca Maldonado –Election Assistants,
109 Board Executive Assistant - Mr. Richard Wilson. Also, the Board
110 Members, Poll workers/Election Officials, Lead Voting Technicians,
111 Caterers, Department of Public Safety, Property and Procurement,
112 Finance, Education, Sports, Parks and Recreation, University of the
113 Virgin Islands, transportation companies, media outlets and Ranger

114 Security for the successful outcome of the 2022 Election cycle. Crème
115 de la crème

116 **See Appendix A – ESVI Organizational Chart**

117 **OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISOR PROPOSED 2023 BUDGET**

118 Today, I am here to make a compelling request for your support of
119 our lumpsum budget proposal.

120 The law which mandates to whom we submit our budget follows
121 Virgin Islands Code Title 18, Chapter 3, §47. Jurisdiction, powers
122 and duties of the Joint Board, section 12, “the Board of Elections
123 must annually prepare and submit the budget, directly to the
124 Legislature, independent of the executive budget of the Governor for
125 the cost of the registration and party enrollment of electors, of
126 primaries and elections, and of the expenses of the board, for the
127 ensuing fiscal year”. Every year, most members of this legislative
128 body accept what the Office of Management & Budget submits over
129 what we propose, the Agency in the trenches. How can the actual for
130 FY 2022 state we expended over \$2,700,000.00 and we are here with
131 a proposal of \$2,500,000.00? We continue to enhance our processes
132 and our equipment, for the public, while our proposed budget is

133 stagnated or decreased. For the Election System to function
134 effectively, we must spend funds to maintain and continuously
135 enhance our equipment. Modernization and technology
136 enhancement is not cheap. We are tired of robbing Peter to pay Paul.
137 The time is now to change this approach; we have outgrown this
138 practice; we should be treated as a senior organization. We are sixty
139 years old, as of February 20, 2023. If we do not receive adequate
140 funding to conduct the Primary, General Election, or the
141 Constitutional Convention in the Appropriation in 2024, we will not
142 be able to conduct those elections. Funding for these elections should
143 be appropriated in Fiscal Year 2024 and this funding should remain
144 available until it is expended. Acts 8474 and 8590 appropriated a
145 total of \$500,000.00 to conduct the Elections in Fiscal Year 2022 but
146 the Act did not state until funding is expended. Therefore,
147 \$189,763.70 lapsed on September 30, 2022, however, the General
148 Election was November 8, 2022. We had to request a Supplemental
149 Budget of \$100,000.00 to carry us through 2023. With no alternative,
150 I took General Funds from the Office of the Supervisor's Budget to
151 take care of the Election Officials and Vendors for the 2022 General
152 Election.

153 Every enhancement or upgraded equipment purchased from 2014 to
154 now has been with federal funds, totaling over \$2,034,893.00.

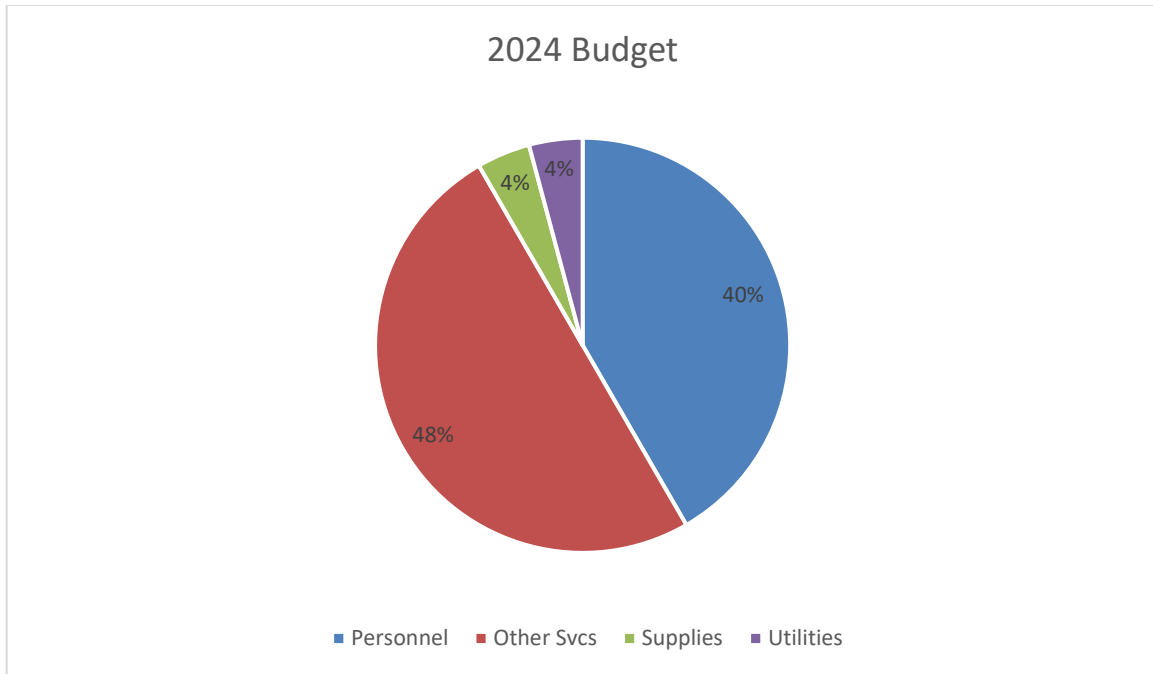
155 A subset of Maintenance of Effort is supplement-not-supplant, where
156 federal grant funds shall supplement, not supplant (or replace), a
157 recipient's non-federal funds which would otherwise have been made
158 available for the applicable program. The federal government will not
159 continue to invest in the Elections Systems of the Virgin Islands if
160 the Virgin Islands Government fails to invest in us.

161 Please have the media show the **Fiscal Year Funding PowerPoint**
162 **Presentation (Appendix B)** of six slides to show our funding for the
163 past eleven years. This clearly shows the flatlined budget the
164 Elections System of the Virgin Islands has continued for over nine
165 years. For nine years, we were below the federally mandated
166 "Maintenance of Expenditure" amount of \$2,400,000.00 mandated
167 once the Help America Vote Act was implemented in the ESVI, 2002.
168 The ESVI received their first Federal Grant in 2003. You can see the
169 peak in 2012, this may have been after the Federal Auditors visit.
170 However, our Budget has flat line ever since, which is detrimental to
171 us. If you had at least a 5% growth each year, this would equal an
172 additional \$1,080,000.00, today we would be asking for

173 \$3,080,000.00. Please take note, you cannot combine the Board of
174 Elections Budget with the Office of the Supervisor Budget to obtain a
175 total, and then think we are satisfying the federal mandate; we are
176 not and have not for over nine years. I will continue to harp on this
177 every budget cycle.

178 ESVI Office of the Supervisor proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2024
179 is for **\$3,000,000.00.**

180 An estimate of 53% of the budget is spent on Salaries and Fringe
181 Benefits for eight (8) classified employees and three (3) exempt
182 employees, 36% on Other Services and Charges which includes
183 Professional Services, Training, Rental of Land/Building, Capital
184 Outlays – 6%, Communication & Security, Supplies – 3% and
185 Utilities – 5%.



186

187 For FY2024 the budget proposal is as follows: Personnel Services-
 188 \$1,400,000.00, Capital Outlays - \$30,000.00, Fringe Benefits -
 189 \$436,100.00, Supplies - \$65,000.00, Professional Services and
 190 Training -\$982,900.00 and Utility Services - \$85,500.00.

191 The need for equipment, salary increases, and services are detailed
 192 below:

- 193 a. The three Managerial Staff were approved for salary increases not
 194 taken into consideration in the budget proposal sent down by the
 195 Office of Management and Budget, which ignores the law, VIC 18,
 196 Section 47 (12), and the mandated salary increases of the Elections
 197 Staff every two years in accordance with Executive Order 508-2020.
 198 All classified staff are at their current step based on the Pay Plan.

199 This is estimated at \$314,000.00 including salaries and fringe
200 benefits. The Manager's salaries have not increased for over three
201 years, after over seven years with no salary increases, while the Line
202 Staff receive a salary increase every two years by Executive Order.

203 b. We have a new position as of this fiscal year with a salary of
204 \$60,000.00, Administrator, Fiscal & Personnel Services Staff.

205 Which also is not factored into the proposed Budget received from
206 OMB.

207 c. Many citizens request we conduct more Forums or Townhalls.
208 Everything required to conduct a Forum has a funding
209 requirement, from rental of the location, sound system, promotion
210 and livestreaming or videotaping the event.

211 d. Two Promethean boards for the Training Rooms/Conference Rooms
212 of the Elections Offices – St. Croix and St. Thomas. Estimated cost
213 \$15,000.00 each.

214 e. Replacement of the two or one of the district 2014 vans – upgrade
215 to mobile voting van with ability to register and obtain a voter's
216 identification card on site and provide a lift ramp to load and unload
217 the demonstration voting machines. Deputy Supervisor Douglas, a
218 few board members and I were able to tour one of Denver City's

219 mobile voting vans in August 2022. We met with Mr. Daniel Sotelo,
220 Operations Coordinator of the Office of the Clerk and Recorder for
221 the City and County of Denver. An estimate for two new
222 replacement vehicles is over \$600,000.00. I foresee us obtaining
223 one at a time, when we can support this in our budget.

224 f. Increase in Professional Services Contracts costs, due to increase
225 in the amount of voting equipment on hand.

226 g. Contracts with various Strategic Communications Teams based on
227 the project at hand; planned and unplanned.

228 h. Funding to support Legal Fees, when necessary, or hire an Attorney
229 on retainer.

230 i. As of July 15, 2023, the Office of the Supervisor has expended
231 \$1,714,561.00 (71%) of its budget.

232 **Primary and General Elections Miscellaneous Budget**

233 The Elections System of the Virgin Islands is requesting the following
234 funding to conduct the elections - \$350,000.00 for the Primary and
235 \$600,000.00 for the General Election. For the 2020 election cycle,
236 both the Primary and the General Election Budget was appropriated
237 in FY 2019. Ever since then we have received the elections budget in
238 the prior fiscal year. The reason for this is the election cycle begins

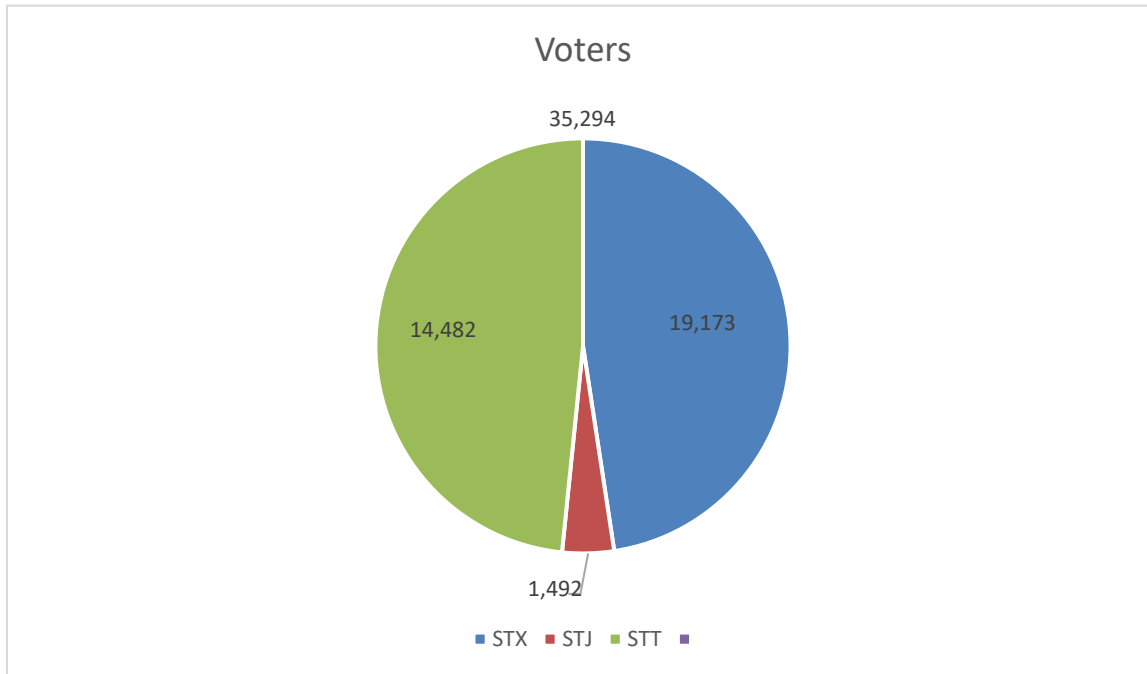
239 after the Primary election and obtaining the funding in late October
240 would hamper the preparations and execution of our operations. We
241 now find ourselves in a catch twenty-two, by obtaining the funding
242 in the prior year, the funds expire prior to us obligating all of it. This
243 explanation was shared with us this fiscal year, and we lost
244 \$189,763.20. The balance that was not expended lapsed at the end
245 of FY 22 since the funds were not available until expended. I was
246 informed by the Office of Management and Budget, to be sure the
247 Legislature makes your appropriation available until expended the
248 fund should be appropriated to object code 0101 instead of 0100.

249

250 **ACTIVE REGISTERED VOTERS**

251 The total number of Active Registered Voters by island are St. Croix
252 – 14,508 St. Thomas – 19,173 St. John – 1,494

253 Total Registered Active Voters – 35,009 as of July 27, 2023.



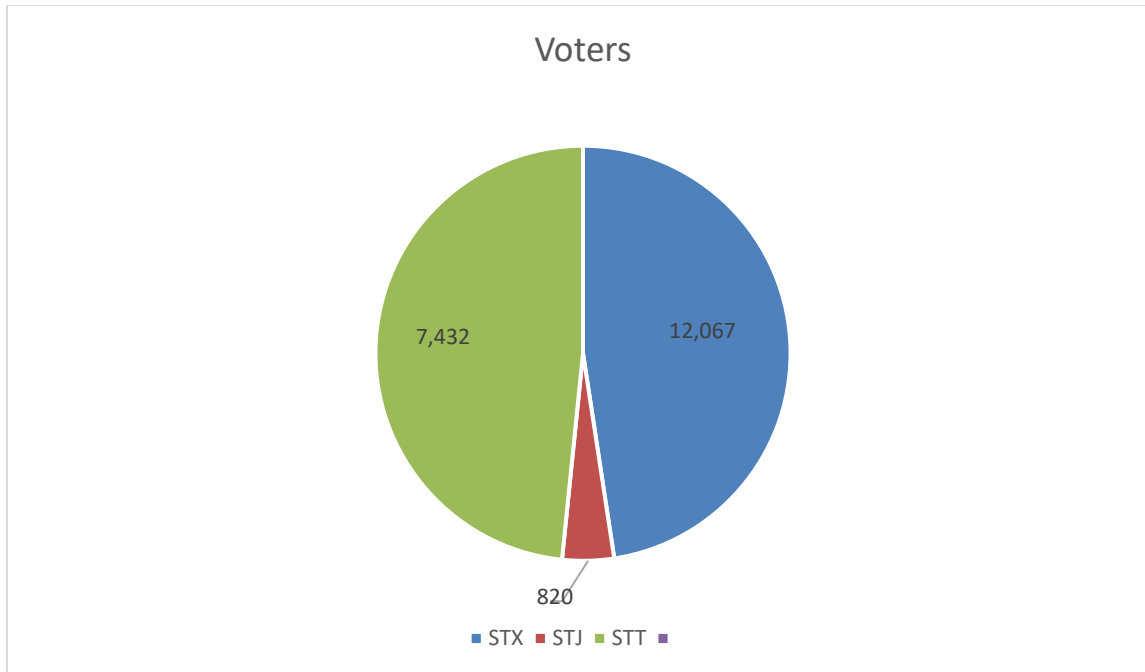
254

255 **See Appendix C -Active Voter’s Registration Statistical Report.**

256 The total number of Inactive Registered Voters by island are St. Croix
257 – 12,067 St. Thomas – 7,432 St. John – 820.

258 This process is ongoing in the St. Thomas/St. John District working
259 on the 2020-2022 Registrants.

260 Total Registered Inactive Voters – 20,319 as of July 27, 2023.



261

262 **See Appendix D – Inactive Voter’s Registration Statistical**
 263 **Report.**

264 The St. Croix Inactive Listing was posted in the following agencies:
 265 Department of Human Services, Licensing & Consumers Affairs,
 266 Water & Power Authority, and the Elections Office. There is also a QR
 267 Code on the cover page, therefore, any person can scan it for
 268 additional information or to complete the reinstatement form online.
 269 We also encourage all voters to utilize the voter lookup to confirm
 270 your registration status and polling location. The instructions are on
 271 the tab on our website, www.vivote.gov.

272 Enter your name, physical address zip code, and year of birth. If your
 273 physical address zip code does not work, please try your mailing

274 address zip code. All fields are required. We continue to utilize new
275 methods and aggressive initiatives to encourage all citizens to register
276 to vote and participate in the electoral process.

277 To keep our database current and accurate, we continue to receive
278 from the Department of Health quarterly Deceased Report. The last
279 report was received on August 1st, which was current as of the end
280 June 30, 2023.

281 **THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS PROPOSED FY2024 BUDGET:**

282 The Board of Elections is requesting \$427,860.00 for Fiscal Year
283 2024 as follows: Personnel Services- \$75,760.00, Fringe Benefits -
284 \$23,599.24, Supplies - \$10,000.00 and Other Services, Training &
285 Stipends - \$235,300.76. Thirty-five percent of the Board of Elections
286 budget is expended on Salaries & Fringe benefits for the
287 Administrative Assistant, Stipends, Supplies, Voter Education
288 outreach, Legal Fees, Election specific Training and Certification –
289 Election Center. With this being an election year, the Board Members
290 will be conducting more meetings, voting equipment demonstrations,
291 training, and travel to the US mainland for conferences. An Executive
292 Assistant was hired by the Board of Elections effective June 4, 2023,
293 with a salary of \$60,000.00.

294 **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

295 Fiscal Year 2023 accomplishments:

296 A. Introduced modern technology in the acquisition of the Next
297 Generation E-Poll books. This new and exciting technology shares
298 real-time data with the Express Poll Connect web-based services,
299 which allows election administrators to monitor voter logs by location
300 on Election Day. For example, if one voted at Tutu Park Mall Voting
301 Center and attempted to vote at any other Voting Center, they would
302 not be able to, because their name would be shown in red. This serves
303 as a flag to the E-Poll book Clerk. The Clerk will then go through the
304 appropriate protocol, because the E-Poll books communicate this
305 information with all Voting Centers. Due to the success of the Next
306 Generation E-Poll Books, ESVI ordered an additional twenty (20) E-
307 poll books with the Security Grant to ensure sufficient, efficient
308 coverage and expansion of the voting centers.

309 B. The National Voter Registration Day Expo was held territorially,
310 Saturday, October 1, 2022. It was an amazing day, and our
311 success would not have occurred without our partners
312 (Department of Human Services, the Virgin Islands Territorial

313 Emergency Management Agency, American Association of Retired
314 Persons (AARP), Public Service Commission, The Disability Rights
315 Center of the Virgin Islands) dedication, and outstanding
316 performance. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. I am
317 grateful to have their support. We hope to welcome them back for
318 the 2024 Elections Expo.

319 C. Premium Pay was paid to all staff members who were below the
320 \$70,000.00 threshold. Three staff members were over the
321 \$70,000.00 threshold and hopefully, the affected staff members
322 can receive their premium pay for the work conducted during the
323 2020 Election Cycle.

324 D. Implemented Bill 34-0266, ACT 8602- which allows all persons
325 eligible to vote in the Virgin Islands to vote in any election by
326 absentee ballot for any reason and allows any registered voter to
327 submit their ballot via facsimile.

328 E. Implemented Act No. 8648 amended Title 18 Virgin Islands Code,
329 Chapter 7, Section 158 to increase the compensation of election
330 officers and clerks to receive compensation from the Board of
331 Elections which appointed them, as follows: **1.** Each judge of

332 election, \$250; **2.** Each inspector of election, \$225; **3.** Each clerk
333 of election, \$200; and **4.** Each voting machine monitor, \$200.

334 Elections Officials are the face of elections and ensure that every
335 registered voter can cast their ballot in a fair, accessible, secure,
336 and transparent manner.

337 Remember this compensation is not for one day, it is for the fifteen
338 or twenty-two Early Voting days as well and for every day the
339 Voting Technician must come in to prepare for an election.

340 F. Successfully conducted the 2022 General Election on Tuesday,
341 November 8, 2022. Voter Turnout was 57%. This higher turnout
342 is a direct result of Act 8591, the ability to utilize the active and
343 inactive voter module. It was a herculean task to complete but my
344 team members accepted the challenge and completed this amid an
345 election cycle.

346 G. Robust educational campaign on active and inactive voting status
347 and media advertising regarding how a voter status changes from
348 active to inactive and how to prevent this process. The cost was
349 \$55,000.00.

350 H. The Elections System of the Virgin Islands was able to produce the
351 2022 General Election results by 8:30 PM on Election Night
352 compared to the Primary Election when the results were produced
353 around 11:31 PM. ESVI obtained the EVS 6.2.0.0 Reporting
354 Standard Standalone Central Processing Unit for a cost of
355 \$17,000.00 with federal funds from our voting machine
356 manufacturer which removed the manual process of transferring
357 election results in each district.

358 I. The Board of Elections added the following Committees this year;
359 Education and Strategic Plan & Townhalls.

360 J. Our website www.vivote.gov has been enhanced and rebranded
361 with vibrant images, user friendly tabs creating a top-notch
362 informational website. Our website can be viewed in five
363 languages, English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, French, and Dutch.
364 A notice is posted at the bottom of the webpage in compliance with
365 the American Disability Act.

366 K. Celebrated our 60th Anniversary on February 20, 2023. We held
367 various events such as, an Open House Reception and
368 Retrospective Exhibit at our St. Croix Office, which launched the
369 month activities, an Honoree Reception at Government House

370 honoring present and past staff, former Supervisors, and Deputy
371 Supervisors of Elections, the longest serving poll workers, past and
372 present board members. The staff, Board Members and Poll
373 Workers participated in a historic exploration of the Ruins on St.
374 John. The 60th Anniversary Jubilee Gala was held on February
375 25, 2023, at The Ritz Carlton Resort on St. Thomas. The guest
376 speaker, Commissioner Thomas Hicks, of the Elections Assistance
377 Commission, made history by visiting the St. Thomas/St. John
378 District. This was the first territory he had ever visited, since being
379 appointed by Former President Barack H. Obama in 2015. His
380 presentation was entitled “Remaining Ever Vigilant in Ensuring
381 Access and the Right to Vote!” This topic was relevant,
382 informative, and encouraging for the present time. Calypsonian
383 Bernard Liburd wrote a calypso in tribute to our organization and
384 Ms. Jonicia Cardin authored a poem celebrating our sixty years.
385 Both were original, intriguing, and inspirational - epic.

386 I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Ricky Joseph for designing our
387 60th Anniversary logo.

388 L. Our next five months Anniversary Events are as follows:

389 Marking Milestones Episode 3 - The Legislators to be released in the
390 third quarter.

391 District Forums in October/November: Naturalization--Home is
392 Where My Vote Is, to be released in the fourth quarter.

393 Marking Milestones Episode 4 – Featuring the present USVI Governor
394 and three ESVI Board Members, one from each island to be released
395 in the fourth quarter.

396 “Civics Matters” - October 7, 2023 - 10 a.m., a competition which
397 will showcase the knowledge of high school students will be held on
398 St. Croix. The place to be determined.

399 December Year End Culmination Event will include a Thanksgiving
400 church service in both Districts.

401 The public can visit our website, www.vivote.gov, under News, then
402 Media Events – 60th Anniversary to view videos and photos of all
403 events conducted to date. Senators, for your convenience, you will
404 find those links at the end of this written testimony. Also, please note
405 that our website continues to be an excellent source of information
406 about past elections and upcoming elections and provides important

407 verifiable and reliable data that can be utilized by candidates and the
408 public.

409 M. In February 2023, the Elections System of the Virgin Islands
410 received another Help America Vote Federal Grant for Cyber
411 Security Training. The awarded grant amount was \$200,000.00.
412 This grant is combined with the prior year Cyber Security Grant
413 with the addition of the \$200,000.00 in May 2022, the current
414 balance is \$335,863.80. The Elections System of the Virgin Islands
415 has always expended 100% of all grant award funding, under my
416 leadership, in accordance with federal mandates. I have
417 successfully closed out two grants thus far, 2012 and 2020 CARES
418 ACT Grants. This new grant will expire on September 30, 2027.

419 N. Representatives of the ESVI attended the U.S. Elections Assistance
420 Commission (EAC) Standards Board Meeting held on April 16-20,
421 2023, in Phoenix, Arizona. Chairwoman Wells was appointed to
422 serve on the Voluntary Voting System Guideline (VVSG)
423 Committee and I on the Standards & Practices Committee.
424 Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) are a set of
425 specifications and requirements against which voting systems can

426 be evaluated to determine if they meet required standards. Some
427 factors examined under these tests include basic functionality,
428 accessibility, and security capabilities. disabilities to vote privately
429 and independently. We have been participating in this certification
430 program since we purchased the voting equipment in 2012.

431 O. Deputy Supervisors, Ms. Kevermay Douglas and Mr. Terrell
432 Alexandre visited the British Virgin Islands (BVI) as Elections
433 Observers. As Election Officials, we are encouraged to visit foreign
434 jurisdictions and the various states to serve as Election Observers.
435 They were also proud to see that some of the successful pointers
436 we shared with the BVI Government in our 2020 and 2022
437 Elections were implemented. This was the first year that the BVI
438 held Advance Voting, this was based on our Absentee Voting
439 tenants tailored to what they require. Performing duties as
440 Election Observers is a long-standing tradition.

441 P. Please allow me to introduce and compliment ESVI Employees of
442 the Year. The STX Employee of the Year – Ms. Mari Felix has 25
443 years in the STT/STJ District – Ms. Milagritos Venzen has 22 years
444 of service to the St. Croix District. This is the second time they
445 both have earned this memorable recognition under my tenure. To

446 them and their families, I say “Thanks for Your Exemplary
447 Service.”

448 Q. On Thursday, June 1st, we enrolled in the Electronic Verification
449 of Vital Events (EVVE) Fact of Death (FOD) by the National
450 Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
451 (NAPHSIS). EVVE FOD is an innovative death matching system
452 that matches against the most accurate death data in the nation:
453 the death record databases of vital records offices. This will cost
454 us \$4,000.00 per year, monies well spent. It is a new requirement
455 we did not have in Fiscal Year 2023.

456 R. Secretary Ms. Lydia Hendricks, Members Mr. Raymond J.
457 Williams, Atty. Lisa Harris Moorhead, Mr. Kareem T. Francis, and
458 Deputy Supervisor Mr. Terrell Alexandre attended the International
459 Association of Government Officials Conference, June 21-28, 2023,
460 in Dallas, Texas. The International Association of Government
461 Officials is the leading organization for government officials, fostering
462 excellence in public service through education, innovation, and
463 networking.

464 S. On July 11th students from the “Youth Arise Visions and Dreams”
465 Summer Program visited the STT Elections Office. Accompanying the

466 students were program coordinator, Mr. Alston Creque, and his
467 assistant, Ms. Karissa Victorine. Deputy Supervisor Douglas,
468 Chairwoman Wells and Secretary Hendricks hosted this event. Ms.
469 Douglas did an election presentation and the board members
470 assisted with the voting machines demonstration. The students were
471 also treated to lunch. They were introduced to a fascinating and
472 educating world of the voting process which also included an exciting
473 and age-appropriate popular music video about the importance of
474 voting.

475 T. Board Member Mrs. Florine Audain-Hassell, Mr. Epiphane Joseph,
476 and staff Mrs. Ulette Todmann-Hodge, Ms. Tricia R. Johnson, Ms.
477 Mari C. Felix, Ms. Sheri Richardson, and Deputy Supervisor Terrell
478 Alexandre are currently taking the Election Center Course which will
479 lead to the completion of The Election Centers Professional Education
480 Program (PEP). The program consists of two major parts. After
481 completion of certain coursework and additional requirements, you
482 can become a Certified Elections/Registration Administrator (CERA).
483 The CERA, CERV, or CEM designation is to be honored.

484 U. Mrs. Audain-Hassell, Mr. Joseph, Ms. Johnson, and Mr.
485 Alexandre are expected to obtain their CERA certification during

486 Fiscal Year 2024. Many other staff members have taken a few of the
487 election courses and are encouraged to complete their certification.
488 We promote training for growth, shared experience, networking, and
489 the continuing integrity of our work.

490 V. We welcomed back Ms. Je'Laisah Roebuck as a summer intern
491 from Monday, June 5, 2023, to Wednesday, July 19, 2023. Ms.
492 Roebuck will be a junior at the St. Croix Central High School when
493 school reopens. Ms. Roebuck was instrumental during the 2022
494 Primary Election, and we were eager to welcome her back and
495 grateful for the opportunity to help train the next generation.

496 W. Mr. Richard Wilson was selected as the Executive Assistant for
497 the Board of Elections on June 5, 2023.

498 While any organization or individual can be the target of a
499 cyberattack, cybersecurity is especially important for an electoral
500 organization. Our voting equipment is not connected to the internet.
501 Our computers and other sensitive systems are constantly monitored
502 by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security (CIS) Agency with
503 monthly reports such as the CISA Cyber Threat Assessments - Cyber
504 Hygiene. To date all our reports have been negative.

505 **GOALS**

506 Our mission is to conduct reliable, accessible, secure, and
507 transparent elections and accurately maintain voter registration
508 records for Virgin Islands citizens. The goal is to make the voter
509 registration process easier by providing uniform registration services
510 through drivers' license registration centers, disability centers,
511 online, and mail-in registration. To increase and improve our voter
512 registration database, ESVI will implement the following:

513 a. An online database that allows U.S. citizens to register to vote by
514 mail using mail-in-forms or online in accordance with the Election
515 Assistance Commission. Our webmaster will create a platform on our
516 website, www.vivote.gov, to allow voters to register to vote, change
517 their address, change their party affiliation, transfer their voter
518 registration from each District, and cancel their voter registration
519 locally or in any U.S jurisdiction. The projected goal for
520 implementation is September 1, 2023. We will verify the documents
521 prior to completing the registration process by sending the voter a
522 confirmation postcard. This is also a cost, estimated at \$75,000.00
523 not factored in the recommended FY2024 Budget.

524 b. Act 8690 permitted voter registration at the Bureau of Motor
525 Vehicles (BMV). Registration at the BMV requires additional

526 discussion to determine each agency's role and responsibilities. We
527 previously held meetings with BMV Director Barbara Jackson-
528 McIntosh to improve the bill. Funding would be required to
529 implement this program with the buildout of the platform to register
530 to vote, salary increases for the BMV Staff, (if operating outside their
531 scope of work per Union contract), transfer data from the BMV to
532 ESVI, and the maintenance cost of the platform.

533 c. The Board approved at its July meeting to purchase the seventy
534 (70) Express Vote Universal Voting System Printers at a cost of
535 \$65,000.00 utilizing the HAVA Grant Federal Funds.

536 This printer will simplify the set-up and shut-down process for poll
537 workers; dismisses the need for special transportation or need for
538 large storage space due to its compact size; reduces wait time as it is
539 ready to print 5 seconds after turning it on; prints up to a 19-inch
540 activation card in just 5 seconds; eliminates ballot waste as it prints
541 on demand; eliminates the need for toner; accelerates the voter
542 check-in process with a secure, hardwired connection to the Express
543 Poll electronic pollbook; and improves the voter experience as voters
544 will receive the activation card that correctly identifies the correct
545 ballot information.

546 **CHALLENGES**

547 a. The non-receipt of adequate General Funds for the Office of the
548 Supervisor to operate effectively and efficiently.

549 b. We had one outstanding vendor payment for the Elections System
550 and Software (ESS) in the amount of \$41,859.50 for quarterly
551 maintenance fees prior to August 9th. This payment was process
552 with approved Justification Letter in accordance 31 VIC, Section
553 239 (a) (8) & Section1301. We cannot pay the full year of the ESS
554 contract with a monthly allotment of \$208,325.00, because this will
555 leave us with insufficient funds to even pay bi-weekly salaries along
556 with many other required expenses.

557 c. Educating, empowering, and motivating more citizens to register
558 and voters to participate in the Elections.

559 d. The Elections System of the Virgin Islands has worked tirelessly
560 and continues to submit proposed revisions to Title 18 of the Virgin
561 Islands Code, with input from the public and other organizations.
562 However, we need the Legislature to seriously look at total election
563 reform. In the past, only certain sections of the Title 18 would be
564 amended. There are numerous sections in Title 18 that conflict with
565 other sections in Title 18 and other sections that no longer apply

566 due to advancements in technology. In 2015, Senator Gittens
567 alongside other members of the 31st Legislature of the Virgin
568 Islands met with the Board members and staff of the Elections
569 System and reviewed Title 18 in its entity with the intent of revising
570 the whole of Title 18. However, only certain sections, along with
571 some cosmetics in wording were passed by this body which
572 included creating a unified Board of Elections. I appeared before
573 this body a year ago, speaking on creating the laws to prevent a
574 felon from running for the office of the Governor again. To date, no
575 action has been taken by this body.

576 e. Three other measures that need to be addressed in Virgin Islands
577 Code Title 18. First, that the Governor and Lieutenant Governor
578 should be selected from the opposite district, secondly, no one
579 convicted of a felony can run for the following offices: governor,
580 lieutenant governor nor delegate, thirdly, the time to file the
581 Nomination Petitions and Papers is by a certain date by 5 p.m. but
582 the pickup time is by 6 p.m. We recommend the times be reversed,
583 the filing time should be the later time, of 6 p.m. Fourth, the
584 campaign contribution should be increased to \$3,500.00. The cost
585 of everything relative to campaigning has increased, even to a pencil

586 with your campaign slogan on it. These measures must be in black
587 and white, the days of the gentlemen agreement is outdated; we
588 need to codify laws in Title 18 especially in areas where the Revised
589 Organic Act of 1954 is silent. The law mandates that election laws
590 should be changed no later than six months prior to a General
591 Election, however, we prefer to change laws in a non-election year
592 to ensure that voters are educated to make an informed decision
593 relative to the new laws. I can cite many more examples. I have been
594 repeating this plea since 2013, The Virgin Islands Elections Laws
595 are outdated and ambiguous, therefore, I look forward to returning
596 to this body to testify on needed statutory revision of bills. We must
597 acknowledge that, “All change may not be progress, but all progress
598 is the result of change” by John Wooden.

599 f. During the Legislative Session held on Thursday, July 20, 2023,
600 members of the 35th Legislature favorably approved to Bill 35-
601 0036/BR35-318 and forwarded to the Governor for further
602 consideration and action. For the record, the Elections System
603 stated from the beginning Act 8386 was seriously flawed with the
604 dates by the Legislative Sponsors. The Elections System by law
605 must be ready to conduct any “Special” Election and we are. The

606 Elections System of the Virgin Islands awaits the approved Act to
 607 begin preparing for the election of delegates of the Sixth
 608 Constitutional Convention during the 2024 Election Cycle. I thank
 609 Senate President Novelle E. Francis, Jr. as the sponsor and
 610 Senators of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands for approving
 611 this bill.

612 g. Further reduce the number of Provisional Ballots in the St. Thomas
 613 St. John District. We hope to see the fruits of our labor in the 2024
 614 Election Cycle, with the advent of the Voting Centers.

615 h. Training and Travel costs have increased exponentially over the last
 616 fifteen (15) years, while our budget remains stagnant.

617 i. The important dates for the 2024 Election Cycle are:

First day to pick-up Nomination Packages: April 14, 2024	
First day to file Nomination Petitions/Papers: May 14, 2024	
2024 Primary Election	2024 General Election
Last Day to Register to Vote: July 4, 2024	Last Day to Register to Vote: October 6, 2024

Early Voting Dates: July 16-23, 2024	Early Voting Dates: October 14-28, 2024
Election Day: Saturday, August 3, 2024	Election Day: Tuesday, November 5, 2024

618 The Primary and General Election Events Calendar will be published
619 by December 31, 2023.

620 I humbly ask that this body grant us the Fiscal 2024 Budget
621 requested for the Elections System of the Virgin Islands in the
622 amount of \$3,000,000.00 and the Board of Elections in the amount
623 of \$427,860.00 to continue to raise the standards and performance
624 of our organization. ESVI continues to be on the forefront in the
625 elections industry by implementing innovative technology, educating
626 our Board members and staff, and creating and revising election laws
627 to better serve our voters.

628 The Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands would not exist without
629 our agency.

630 I will end as I started with a quote from the esteemed social activist
631 Martin Luther King, Jr. “Our lives begin to end when we become
632 silent about things that matter.”

633 Chairwoman Frett Gregory, I thank you, Members of the Finance
634 Committee, and other Members of the 35th Legislature for inviting
635 us to present our proposed fiscal year 2024 Budget. We are prepared
636 to respond to any questions you may have.

637 “Thriving with Integrity, Elections System Celebrates Sixty!!”

SOME IMPORTANT LINKS TO ESVI’s INFORMATIONAL AND PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS 2022/2023

640

General Elections Early Voting 2022

641 [Media/Videos - VIVOTE - Election System of the Virgin Islands](#)

643

Marking Milestones: Episode One – Notable Virgin Islanders

644 <https://youtu.be/hubSaqj7t3Q?feature=shared>

646

Marking Milestones with Former Governor Kenneth E. Mapp

647 <https://youtu.be/xscmD5g6gSw?feature=shared>

649

Marking Milestones with Former Governor John P. DeJongh

650 https://youtu.be/KGxUZv_af5E?feature=shared

652

Great Debate, An Educational Forum

653 https://www.youtube.com/live/E9Xk_oNOkCs?feature=shared

655

ESVI Women in Politics-Sommer Sibilly Brown

656 <https://fb.watch/maS19c9yxK/>

657

For Consistent Postings About ESVI, its projects, media

658

660 Scan our QR Code or visit.

661 www.facebook.com/vivote.gov

