



Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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CHAIRPERSON
Committee on Budget, Appropriations
and Finance

VICE CHAIRPERSON
Committee on Education
and Workforce Development

MEMBER
Committee on Economic Development
& Agriculture

Committee on Health, Hospitals and
Human Services

The Honorable
Donna A. Frett-Gregory
Liaison to Congress

COMMITTEE ON BUDGET, APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCE FEBRUARY 6, 2024 REPORT

The 35th Legislature’s Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance met on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, at **10:00 a.m. in the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Chambers on St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands**. The hearing convened at 10:03 a.m. The official agenda was as follows:

OFFICIAL AGENDA - REVISED

BLOCK I

Bill No. 35-0133 - An Act amending title 17 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 15, relating to scholarships by adding section 190gg to establish an educational scholarship program to support individuals interested in pursuing a career in the maritime industry in the Virgin Islands.

Invited Testifiers:

Dr. David Hall
President
University of the Virgin Islands

Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington
Commissioner
Department of Education

Dr. Kyza Callwood
Chairman
Virgin Islands Board of Education

Mr. Carlton Dowe
Executive Director
V.I Port Authority

Mr. Oriel Blake
President
Virgin Islands Charter Association

Mr. Richard Difede
President
Gold Coast Yachts

Ms. Jill Hughes
Port Captain
World Ocean School

BLOCK II

Bill No. 35-0218 - An Act amending title 24 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 12 relating to unemployment benefits by reducing the number of weeks that unemployment benefits can be received; increasing the statute of limitations for the collection of overpayments of unemployment benefits from claimants and for delinquent employer contribution; allowing for the implementation of the payroll variation methodology launch in the calendar year beginning January 2024; implementing a 10-year record

retention period for employers; and requiring employers to register with the Virgin Islands State Information Data Exchange System.

Invited Testifier:

*Mr. Gary Molloy
Commissioner
Department of Labor*

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members present at roll call:

Senator Samuel Carrion
Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff
Senator Ray Fonseca
Senator Donna A Frett-Gregory
Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
Senator Javan E. James, Sr.

Excused:

Senator Marvin A. Blyden

Non-Committee Members present:

Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.
Senator Marise C. James

COMMITTEE ACTION:

The Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance heard testimony on two bills separated into two blocks on the agenda. After hearing testimony from invited testifiers, Senators were allotted debate time.

BLOCK I: *Bill No. 35-0133* - An Act amending title 17 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 15, relating to scholarships by adding section 190gg to establish an educational scholarship program to support individuals interested in pursuing a career in the maritime industry in the Virgin Islands.

Testifiers Present:

Ms. Camille McKayle, Provost and Vice President-Academic Affairs, University of the Virgin Islands
Dr. Kyza Callwood, Chairman, Virgin Islands Board of Education
Ms. Sylvanie Rhymer, Financial Aid Coordinator, Virgin Islands Board of Education
Victor Somme, III, Assistant Commissioner, Department of Education
Dr. Renee Charleswell, Deputy Commissioner-Curriculum and Instruction, Department of Education
Dr. Monique Faulkner, State Director, Career, Technical and Adult Education
Mr. Bill Rawlins, Assistant Executive Director, V.I. Port Authority
Ms. Brigitte Berry, Board Member, Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association

Ms. Jill Hughes, Port Captain, World Ocean School
Mr. Richard Difede, President, Gold Coast Yachts

BILL NO. 35-0133 - COMMITTEE VOTE:

Amendment No. 35-538: Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff moved to offer Amendment No. 35-538, his motion was interrupted by a motion to waive the reading of the amendment by Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr. which was seconded and without objection, so ordered. Senator DeGraff then moved Amendment No 35-538 and it was seconded by Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., with no objection, the amendment was adopted.

Bill No. 35-0133: Senator DeGraff proceeded to favorably move Bill No. 35-0133 as amended to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration, the motion was seconded by Senators Ray Fonseca, Novelle E. Francis, Jr. and Samuel Carrión.

Senator	Yea	Nay	Not Voting	Absent
Blyden, Marvin				X
Carrion, Samuel	X			
DeGraff, Dwayne M.	X			
Fonseca, Ray	X			
Frett-Gregory, Donna	X			
Francis, Jr., Novelle E.	X			
James, Sr., Javan E.	X			
TOTAL	6	0	0	1

BLOCK II: Bill No. 35-0218 - An Act amending title 24 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 12 relating to unemployment benefits by reducing the number of weeks that unemployment benefits can be received; increasing the statute of limitations for the collection of overpayments of unemployment benefits from claimants and for delinquent employer contribution; allowing for the implementation of the payroll variation methodology launch in the calendar year beginning January 2024; implementing a 10-year record retention period for employers; and requiring employers to register with the Virgin Islands State Information Data Exchange System.

Testifiers Present:

Mr. Gary Molloy, Commissioner-Department of Labor
Ms. Neshia Christian-Hendrickson, Esq., Assistant Commissioner and Legal Counsel-VIDOL
Mr. Gary Halyard, Director of Unemployment Insurance and Bureau of Labor Statistics-VIDOL

BILL NO. 35-0218 - COMMITTEE VOTE:

Bill No. 35-0218: Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr. moved to approve Bill No. 35-0218 favorably and forward to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration. The motion was seconded by Senators Ray Fonseca, Dwayne M. DeGraff and Javan E. James, Sr.

Senator	Yea	Nay	Not Voting	Absent
Blyden, Marvin				X
Carrion, Samuel	X			
DeGraff, Dwayne M.	X			
Fonseca, Ray	X			
Frett-Gregory, Donna	X			
Francis, Jr., Novelle E.	X			
James, Sr., Javan E.	X			
TOTAL	6	0	0	1

The Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance meeting of February 6, 2024 adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Meeting Clerk:

Ms. Joann Jno-Pierre (floor)

Submitted by:

Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory
Chair, Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance