



# Legislature Of The Virgin Islands

CAPITOL BUILDING, P.O. 1690 ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS 00804

Tel. (340) 693-3515 Fax. (340) 693-3633 Email: senatorcarlajoseph@legvi.org Website: www.senatorcarlajoseph.com

THE HONORABLE  
**Carla J. Joseph**  
LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY  
35TH LEGISLATURE OF  
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

## CHAIR

Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs,  
and Consumer Protection


*Liaison to the United States Department of Interior and  
Office of Insular Affairs*

## MEMBER

Committee of the Whole  
Committee on Rules and Judiciary  
Committee on Education and Workforce Development  
Committee on Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure, and Planning  
Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications

### Memorandum: 24-017

**TO:** Mrs. Kurell A. Sheridan, JD  
Executive Director  
35<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the V.I.

**FROM:** The Honorable Carla J. Joseph   
Chair  
Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs,  
and Consumer Protection

**DATE:** October 28, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Committee Report for Tuesday, October 22, 2024 Meeting

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Please find attached the report for the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs,  
and Consumer Protection (GOVACP) meeting held on Tuesday, October 22, 2024 in the Earle  
B. Ottley Legislative Hall, St. Thomas.

Cc: All Senators  
Chief Legal Counsel  
Archive Division  
Journal Division

**GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND CONSUMER  
PROTECTION  
OCTOBER 22, 2024 COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT**

The Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection held its meeting on Tuesday, September 24, 2024, at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on St. Thomas. The Committee received testimony and considered the following bills:

- Bill No. 35-0316 – An Act honoring and commending Mrs. Juel Turnbull Rhymer-Molloy for years of dedicated service and numerous contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands. This bill is sponsored by Senators Ray Fonseca, Carla J. Joseph, Milton E. Potter, and Angel L. Bolques, Jr.; and
- Bill No. 35-0253 – An Act honoring and commending police officers for the service they provide to the community and to recognize fallen law enforcement officers posthumously. This bill is sponsored by Senator Diane T. Capehart.

Then the Committee received testimony on the operations of the Virgin Islands Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA).

The meeting was called to order by the Committee Chair, Sen. Carla J. Joseph at 10:01 a.m.

**Committee Members Present**

Sen. Carla J. Joseph, Chair  
Sen. Javan E. James, Sr., Vice Chair  
Sen. Samuel Carrion  
Sen. Ray Fonseca  
Sen. Kenneth L. Gittens  
Sen. Alma Francis Heyliger  
Sen. Milton E. Potter

**Office of the Executive Director**

Mr. Charles Brown, Jr.  
Ms. Myrna De-Altier-Pickard

**Sergeant-At-Arms**

Mr. Delvin Fleming  
Ms. Shani Smith

**Public Affairs/Media**

Mr. Omari Hicks  
Mr. Kashief Hamilton  
Mr. Barry Leerdam  
Mr. Jamal Potter  
Mr. Bernard Matthew, Sr.  
Mr. Alwyn Baptiste, Jr.  
Mr. Alvin Burke, Jr.  
Mr. Eustace Browne  
Ms. Melissa Gustave  
Ms. Chaunte Herbert

**Non-Committee Members Present**

Sen. Diane T. Capehart  
Sen. Dwayne M. DeGraff

**Legislative Reporters**

Ms. Tricia Sealey  
Ms. Vashti Berry  
Ms. Joanne Samuel  
Mrs. Nadine Coley-Williams

**Clerk/Timekeeper**

Ms. Khadijah Hodge

**Supporting Staff**

Ms. Knysha Berkeley

**Legal Counsel**

Attorney Nandi Sekou

In block one of the meeting, Bill No. 35-0316 was introduced by Sen. Ray Fonseca. The Honorable James A. O'Bryan, Former Senator of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands; Ms. Sedonie Halbert; Ms. Joanne Barry; Mr. Whitman Browne testified in support the bill. The Honorable Cleone Creque, Former Senator-At-Large testimony was read into the record in support of the bill. Senators proceeded with one (1) round of four (4) minutes each of questioning. Senator Fonseca made a motion to move Revised Amendment 35-987 to Bill No. 35-0316. The motion was seconded by Senators Potter and Francis Heyliger. Senator Potter then made a motion to waive the reading of Revised Amendment No. 35-987. The motion was seconded by Fonseca and Francis Heyliger. The motion to waive the reading was carried. Hearing no objections, the motion to amend Bill No. 35-0316 was carried. Senator Fonseca then made a motion for Bill No. 35-0316 as amended to be approved and forwarded to the Rules and Judiciary Committee for further consideration. The motion was seconded by Senator Potter. Voting in favor were Senators Carrion, Fonseca, Francis Heyliger, Gittens, James, Joseph, and Potter. The motion was carried.

In block two of the meeting, Bill No. 35-0253 was introduced by Sen. Diane T. Capehart. Mr. Sidney Elskoe, Assistant Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department and Mr. Steven Phillip, Chief of Police of the Virgin Islands Police Department STT/STJ District testified on the bill. Senators proceeded with one (1) round of four (4) minutes each of questioning. Senator James made a motion to move Amendment No.35-1028 to Bill No. 35-0253. The motion was seconded by Senators Fonseca, Francis Heyliger and Potter. The motion was carried. Senator James made a motion for Bill No. 35-0253 as amended to be approved and forwarded to the Rules and Judiciary Committee for further consideration. The motion was seconded by Senators Francis Heyliger and Potter. Voting in favor were Senators Fonseca, Francis Heyliger, James, Joseph, and Potter. The motion was carried.

In the final block of the meeting, Honorable H. Nathalie Hodge, Commissioner for the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs; Mr. Horace Graham, Assistant Commissioner for the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs; Ms. Geraldine Vaval, Esq., General Counsel for the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs; Mr. Matthew Padgett, Director of Consumer Affairs for the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs; Mr. Wilburn Francis, Director of Enforcement for the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs; Ms. Myrna George, Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs and Mr. Leon Lafond, Director of Administration and Business Management for the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs testified on the operations to include, but not limited to enabling law and jurisdiction, current agency's challenges, and plan of action to resolve challenges. Senators were allotted one (1) round of seven (7) minutes each of questioning. Commissioner Hodge stated that the department currently has forty-five (45) positions, funded by the General Fund. There are twenty-two (22) positions in the St. Croix district and twenty-three (23) positions in the St. Thomas-St. John District and there are currently seven (7) vacant positions, currently funded at 50%. Commissioner Hodge spoke of vehicle and staffing shortages at the Department, which have affected performance. The ability to conduct on-site inspections has been affected because four inspectors share one vehicle.

**During the meeting, a request for additional information was made through the Chair. The information is as follows:**

- Senator Alma Francis Heyliger asked the DLCA to provide a breakdown of nighttime businesses vs businesses that end at 5:00 p.m.;
- Senator Carla J. Joseph asked the DLCA to provide a list of how many businesses are licensed in the Virgin Islands by district; and

- Senator Carla J. Joseph asked the DLCA to provide a copy of IRB listing of businesses delinquent in paying taxes.

The Chair, Sen. Carla J. Joseph, adjourned the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection meeting at 3:32 p.m.