

*Testimony  
of  
Lisa Maria Alejandro, Commissioner Nominee of the Department of Property and  
Procurement  
Before  
The Committee on Rules and Judiciary of the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands of the  
United States  
July 13, 2023*

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Good morning, Honorable Senator Diane T. Capehart, Chairperson of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, Vice Chair, Senator Milton E. Potter, Committee Members, other Senators present, and the viewing and listening audience.

I am Lisa Maria Alejandro, Commissioner Nominee for the Department of Property and Procurement (“DPP”). I open my Testimony by first, thanking God for this opportunity and the Honorable Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and Lt. Governor Tregenza A. Roach, Esq., for their vote of confidence in my ability to serve the People of the Virgin Islands in this capacity. I further wish to thank and acknowledge those who are present with me today both in chambers and viewing remotely, the employees of the Department of Property and Procurement, members of my senior staff, family, friends, and well-wishers.

I appear before this body and the People of our great Territory, a daughter of Virgin Islands soil. My genealogy not only represents the ethos of Virgin Islands culture but contributes to the rich heritage of our People. I was born and raised on the island of St. Thomas to the late Joseph Henry and Maria Lanclos Henry. Being the eldest of ten (10) children, my mother took the role of parenting quite seriously and instilled in me strong family values and ethics. As a child I witnessed the high regards and stewardship my mother devoted to her parents and her occupation, and how much she strongly believed in and, thus, taught us that one’s reputation is best defined by their actions.



Growing up in a diverse, heritage-rich, and colorful family that saw beyond the boundaries of its own uniqueness taught me to take responsibility, to be accountable, charitable, considerate, and empathetic towards others.

I am also a product of the Virgin Islands public school system and was fortunate to have been taught by some of the greatest educators who understood that the backbone of sustainable development is the infusion of education and culture. One of those heroines was the late Lydia Boschulte, of Evelyn Marcelli School, who taught me to use my talent in the Arts to advance my learning experience. This lesson proved beneficial, as upon graduation from the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, the Virgin Islands Department of Education granted me a scholarship to attend the University of the Virgin Islands for achieving high honors in English and Musical Arts.

While anticipating a career in Special Education, I pondered pursuing a call to ministry, which I did and became a licensed minister in 1990. However, my journey to this occasion would not have been possible without God, and the support and coaching of my husband, Tomas M. Alejandro, who believed in my abilities and encouraged me to continue my education while he took care of our family. As a result, I acquired with distinction a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and Master of Arts in Operations Management. Today, my husband and I celebrate thirty-six (36) years of marriage, and two sons, Tomas Alejandro III, and Theophanies Alejandro.

I consider my professional journey to be one divinely inspired, since from humble beginnings I have been fortunate to work within various facets of a single industry and after twenty-seven (27) years, I remain passionate. As instilled in my upbringing, I strongly believe leading by example is the greatest strategy for earning the respect of those we seek to influence and manage. Moreover, challenging myself to be the best at the task I am given, following the chain of command, and



embracing and valuing people for their uniqueness have been key elements to my professional growth, lifelong friendships, and personal success.

My professional journey began in the private sector where, as an assistant buyer for luxury retailers for twelve (12) years, I was responsible for the overall management of jewelry and watch brand purchases, inventories, and sales. As such, I played a vital role in ensuring the right brands were marketed, negotiated, stocked, and transferred to satellite locations throughout the Caribbean, and Alaska. The overall experience exposed me to the nuts and bolts of supply chain logistics, integrative negotiations, and inventory and property management. One of the greatest experiences that embedded profound insight on the way I view process improvement was being a part of the private sector's point of sale advent. This electronic processing system allowed the company to track real-time transactions of a single merchandise anywhere in the world. From that viewpoint, I learned, change is inevitable and requires a mind shift.

In 2001, I transitioned to public service and was hired as a Special Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner of Procurement at the Department of Property and Procurement ("DPP"). As Special Assistant, I was introduced to the world of public procurement and was exposed to all the central government's procurement functions. At various times, I was tasked with performing the universe of public procurement functions. I was later promoted to the role of Contract Administrator and chaired the evaluation committee for approximately eight (8) years. During those years, I successfully negotiated a few of the Territory's first, and most technical undertakings such as the design, build, and operate wastewater management facilities in both districts, the Virgin Islands Police Department's third-party fiduciary under its consent decree, and the inter-agency



agreement for the development for the State Longitudinal Data System (“SLDS”) known as the Virgin Islands Virtual Information System (“VIVIS”).

After assessing the needs of the Virgin Islands Department of Education (“VIDE”), VIDE’s leadership along with its 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Fiduciary Agent and the U.S. Department of Education, determined that VIDE needed to establish a fully functioning procurement and contract administration office to maintain eligibility for U.S. Department of Education grant funds. Thus, in May of 2011, I was hired by VIDE to establish and manage the Contract Administration Program. During my first year at VIDE, I was given the absolute opportunity to shadow the Department’s legal counsel, where I gained wholistic insight into VIDE’s contractual needs, and compliance requirements, and developed greater proficiencies in contract research and writing. During the subsequent years until my departure from VIDE in 2016, significant milestones and achievements were accomplished including the roll-out of the new division of Procurement and its contract administration program, establishment of the new property leasing and rental forms and procedures, capacity building of the procurement hires, and full obligation of grant funds tied to contracts.

Subsequently, working at the Virgin Islands Port Authority (“VIPA”) added another level of property and procurement proficiencies enabling me to experience the operations of the industry from all facets. During my tenure at VIPA, I had the opportunity of establishing a procurement division which included revision and completion of the Authority’s procurement policies and procedures, management of the division of purchasing and warehousing, and establishment of its inventory and cycle counts procedures. I was also instrumental in the development of the



Authority's asset management policy and contributed to the overall property, procurement, and management of the Authority's operations.

Since returning to the Department of Property and Procurement in February of 2019 under the leadership of former Commissioner Anthony D. Thomas, I was assigned oversight of the divisions of Procurement, Vendor Management, and Central Stores. Being a part of the dynamic core-leadership team of DPP has been my greatest professional experience, and I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to serve with this phenomenal team and share in its achievements. From 2019 until now, the Department of Property and Procurement continues to grow in innovation and competencies and is poised to be named amongst the Nation's 1%, as we prepare for the roll-out of a fully integrated e-procurement system in GVIBUY. My assignment to lead this initiative; as well as DPP's transitioning to its paperless hallmark in Procurement, the roll-out of the Department's new procurement procedural manual, work on proposed legislation which resulted in Bill No. 33-0269, now Act No. 8436 passed by the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, and the Government's membership in the National Association of State Procurement Officials ("NASPO"), showcase my qualifications and experience in property and procurement operations, and propensity for process improvements.

As I draw your attention to the position for which I am before this Body today, I take no reservations in saying that I understand the gravity of the Department's duty to our people and this Territory. This responsibility and the overarching authority that governs DPP's operations are codified in the Virgin Islands Code, under Title 3, Chapter 13, Sections 211 through 221; Title 31, under Chapter 20, Sections 151-169; and Chapter 23, Sections 231-251 and the associated rules and regulations.



I am cognizant of the opportunities and challenges we face as the custodian agency of the Government's fleet, its property, assets, and all acquisitions. Hence, I am purposefully driven to safeguard against asset abuse by tracking data that is useful for the proper management and increased lifespan expectancy of the Government's fleet. As fuel prices continue to soar, negotiating beyond the pump rates is almost impossible due to the logistics that compound rack rate costs. Therefore, managing fleet utilization must become a priority to reduce waste and ensure the GVI's fleet operates at peak performance.

Next, reducing bureaucracies that present their narrative as lawful must be weaned out of the traditional mill to foster a property management and procurement system that is productive, accountable, and transparent while having real-time insights for managing performance and government spend. As we work to improve operations, legislation is again being drafted to support acquisition and property innovations that align with the federal standards and industry best practices and constantly evolving times.

The above initiatives took root after I was placed as acting commissioner in February of this year, as I considered the Department's present conditions, and how we could create a system of sustainable productivity that improves the services we provide to our stakeholders (to include user agencies, vendors, and the public). In looking towards creating that system of sustainable productivity, the following highlights a few short and long-term goals that I believe are the building blocks to achieving greater efficiency.

**Short-Term Goals consist of:**

1. Skill management succession planning. Too recurring are the discussions regarding the lack of skill sets and competencies due to employee retirements or resignations. The nature of



what we do is tied to stringent laws, and policies and experience for the purpose of protecting taxpayers' dollars and the Government's interests. Establishing a plan that commits management to tracking these skillsets, recruiting with focus, mentoring employees to transfer knowledge and expertise and creating standard operating procedures are paramount to building and retaining a skilled workforce.

2. Another short-term goal is focused on completing the e-procurement integration, allowing all agencies to carry out their procurements as well as make payments to vendor through an accounts payable module within one system. Additionally, adding the space management/office space property vendors to GVIBUY for invoicing purposes will enhance the payment process for additional GVI vendors.
3. Next, is to complete an assessment of existing property and procurement laws that will ignite the process of proposing legislation to reflect best practices in procurement and property management.
4. Finally, we remain focused on our short-term goal to complete the Government's fixed assets, and transportation process and procedural manuals. This includes updating the policies and procedures on the acquisition, use, tracking, and disposition of fixed assets and, establishing and implementing a vehicle use policy and procedural manual to extend asset life expectancy.

**Long-Term Goals Consist of:**

1. Developing stronger collaboration between agency stakeholders is necessary to develop a clear understanding of their needs, and compliance requirements. This will increase process



lead time in the acquisition and delivery of goods and services; as well as create a diverse team of contract writers.

2. Secondly, creating a plan for continuous process improvement is transformational and will allow the Department to be agile and functional during times of uncertainty as realized during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
3. Additionally, establishing a system of checks and balances is necessary to audit the agency's performance and prevent recurring errors, and practices that may affect the Government's ability to receive federal funding and other funding opportunities.
4. Lastly, we are strategically working to develop a real property management plan to increase revenue, and drive property improvement towards ensuring the highest and best possible uses.

Although I have outlined what may appear to be far reaching, these are fundamental business practices that are achievable, particularly when employees are empowered to play a role in the decision-making process. Further, given the team of professionals at the Department of Property and Procurement, and with your favorable consideration, I strongly believe we stand on the horizon of reimagining business operations for the next normal. I am excited about the opportunities which lie before us and, if confirmed, I am committed to leading this Department with integrity and innovation. This concludes my testimony, and I thank all the Committee members for your time this morning and your favorable consideration of my nomination. I stand available to answer your questions.

