

Rules & Judiciary Committee

September 28, 2023

Laura Nichols-Samms

Nominee for the Public Services Commission

Good morning Senator Diane Capehart, Members of the Committee on Rules, The Judiciary, Members of the 35th Legislature and the viewing and listening audience.

I would like to thank Governor Bryan for his confidence in allowing me this opportunity to serve our community. I would also like to thank everyone who offered me assistance and showed me their support.

My name is Laura Aline Nichols-Samms. I have been a resident of St. John, USVI for 26 years. I am self-employed and have been doing so for 23 years. I was born in Washington, DC and received a bachelor's degree in business & Management from Maryland University.

My father, James Burrell who is one of the most talented musicians I have encountered taught music in St. Croix and St. Thomas starting in the 1970's. He is the reason I am proud to call these islands my home. One of the things I am passionate about is using my skills to help my community become the best. I am passionate about operating a successful business, cooking, volunteer work, teaching, reading and traveling.

I look forward to becoming a commissioner for the Public Services Commission. Our utility companies are the backbone of our community. To be perfectly frank - when these utilities falter our daily routines come to a screeching halt. The Public Services Commission creates a bridge between the utility providers and the consumers. This bridge ensures the providers receive fair compensation for their services and holds them accountable to their commitments to our community while ensuring the customers pay a fair price for these services on an ongoing basis and are provided full disclosure of the services they receive.

As a consumer of these services and as a business owner, I thoroughly understand the importance of insuring customers are satisfied and receive a high-level service and businesses are efficient and profitable.

For our ferry services – It is important that the owners earn enough money offering these services that they can afford to pay themselves and staff a living wage, maintain their vessels in an efficient and safe manner while making a reasonable profit. This being said – the general public should enjoy timely, sanitary and safe services at affordable prices.

Our Water and Power Authority has always been plagued with controversy for various reasons. As a commissioner – I relish the opportunity to see more of a modernization of our systems and provide additional clean renewable energy sources at an affordable rate thus improving the fuel LEAC (LEVELIZED ENERGY ADJUSTMENT CLAUSE). I would also like to challenge our providers to explore the possibility of reducing operating costs by operating in a more efficient and cost-effective manner thus lowering these additional costs to their customers. When doing this – it is also important to cross-train their current employees to prepare them for new opportunities. I do this every opportunity I can with my own business.

Our Telecommunications System in the Virgin Islands - As a commissioner, I will create a relationship with providers – Broadband VI, Liberty, Vitelcom, etc. to ensure that their services to our community are stellar. I am also looking forward to monitoring the progress of the recent award to Broadband VI to build a new high speed fiber optic network over the next 5 years and keep the public involved throughout the company's progress.

Our Waste Management Department has one of the toughest roles to play in our community. No one wants to discuss our trash or wastewater, especially when it leaves our possession and just

magically disappears in thin air. Virgin Islanders, we need to open our eyes and become the catalyst in assisting this agency. I will see that the Authority keeps growing their recycling efforts in the territory and I look forward to working with them to ensure the public receives a high level of service while being supportive of the needs of this vital organization.

In closing – I think the most important thing you should know about me is that I love a challenge, I am efficient, a hard worker, a good listener, a dedicated problem solver and a true believer that knowledge is power. As a business owner – I create memorable moments for my clients every day because it brings me joy and as a consumer – for my service providers I demand the best quality of service and fairness in pricing. Thank you for this opportunity.