

Mr. Avery Lewis, Senator

Committee on Government Operations, Veteran Affairs and Consumer Protection, Chairman.

36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

St.Thomas, VI USA

January 23, 2026

Greetings to Senator Avery Lewis, Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, Veteran Affairs and Consumer Protection, to the Senators of the 36th Legislature, and to all viewers.

I am Mary L. Moorhead, a community activist. Since 1966, I've been a registered Independent voter. When paper ballot was the only means of voting, and there was absolutely no electronic machines, I poll watched. When I was a public high school educator, I helped to identify and prepare students for Voter Registration Drives at the school. After retirement, I attended ESVI Committee and Board meetings regularly, until COVID made virtual replace in-person meetings.

For my lifetime, I've voted on paper ballot. Electronic voting gives results fast, but should speed be priority in elections? The winners have to wait two months to take their position. Paper ballots provide physical, auditable, records. To actually hear votes called out for election workers to manually tally, exemplifies accountability and transparency that enhance trust and confidence in the Election System. To have a choice to vote on Paper ballot and have those votes counted manually is fair and righteous.

Early 2024, I learned of Title 18, chapter 19, section 517, the mandate for paper ballots to be placed in specific ballot boxes. On November 1, 2024, I emailed Supervisor Fawkes a reminder of that VIC item, but nonetheless Election November 5, 2024, voters were denied the “right to chose” because Voting Centers in the Virgin Islands of the US did not have separate ballot boxes. Many jurisdictions use both mechanical and manual voting so I did not expect and was upset that Virgin Islanders were deliberately denied the right to place paper ballots in a specific ballot box as the Virgin Islands Code ordered.

At COMS Voting Center, when I asked for the ballot box after I voted, the election officials knew my request was worthless because it had been unilaterally decided not to place ballot boxes at the Voting Centers. Every person who voted on paper ballots on November 5, 2024 were made to be violators of 18 VIC § 517. Refusing “to go along”, I was handcuffed and escorted out of COMS Voting Center surrounded by uniformed, armed, police officers. Soon after the incident, Sgt. Kirk Fieulleateau who ordered me handcuffed, did an interview on social media stating Supervisor Fawkes called him to deal with me. The Seargent described me as “very disruptive and belligerent” at the Voting Center. Two witnesses notarized statements denying that characterization. That 2024 election assault caused two things: my appointment every week with a chiropractor to treat my left shoulder, and my request for this legislation. Bill 36-0187 is a solution that millennials and mature voters want; they want to choose to vote on paper ballots and have those votes manually counted at the Voting Centers where they were cast.

In the 70’s, ballot boxes were at every election precinct; they were ballot boxes specific to 18 VIC § 517. The Election System select and train persons who take an Oath of eligibility to work at the Voting Centers; training for manaul vote counting would be included. The Budget for the Election System provides for the paper ballots; the budget provides compensation for the Election poll workers, for their meals, drinks, and snacks; there should be no significant additional cost for implementation of Bill 36-0187.

Many states are switching to paper ballots. States do not use 100% electronic machine since there is no paper trail for a handcount. States are choosing voting system that produces paper record of the votes because it's harder to argue that an election is rigged when there are boxes of proof that it's not. To use paper is not regressive. Recently Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. hailed the efficient use of paper checks for distribution to food stamp recipients. Stenographers are in demand because Courts specify the validity of paper-based records. Paper-based records have the least chance of abuse or misuse. On the other hand, computer technicians have publicly said that any electronic device can be controlled. Supposedly, a cybersecurity professional technician can input data and make an algorithm to produce whatever results are desired.

Opposition to Bill 36-0187 is mostly subjective. The objectors want what's quick, simple and easy. The objectors even ignore the federal mandate that the Delegate to Congress's position must be on a separate ballot. The objectors say it's a problem to program the voting machines for more than one ballot, but there are states voting on electronic machines using more than one ballot. The objectors just prefer to ignore "Right". Offering a choice, Bill 36-0187 aligns constitutionally to make voting all-inclusive. The Bill strengthens voter engagement and participation.

In conclusion, the intent of Bill 36-0187 is to protect the voter's right to vote on paper ballot, and have the votes of those paper ballots manually counted at the Voting Centers where they're cast.

Senator Lewis, Senator Gittens, Senator Francis, Senator Fonseca, Senator Heyliger, and Senator Carla Joseph, we ask that you support and protect voter's right to choose to vote on paper ballot that will not touch electronic machines.

Vote Yes for Bill 36-0187!

Thank you.


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