

THE HONORABLE SENATOR AVERY L. LEWIS

Legislative Secretary

36TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



Chair: Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, Consumer Protection

Vice Chair: Committee on Education and Workforce Development

Member: Committee on Rules and Judiciary

Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, and Parks

Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety

Committee of the Whole

Location: Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

On Monday, June 29, 2026, the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection convened at the Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room on St. Croix to receive testimony on legislative measures affecting government employees, veterans, and the recognition of a distinguished public servant whose contributions have left a legacy in the Virgin Islands. During the meeting, the Committee considered three bills addressing retirement protections for Government Employees' Retirement System members, enhanced services for women veterans, and the renaming of a public roadway in honor of former Senator Alicia "Chucky" Hansen. Following testimony and deliberation, all three measures were favorably voted upon by the Committee and forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary.

In Block I:

Bill No. 36-0250: An act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 27, section 717(c) relating to personal loans made to members of the Government Employees' Retirement System
Proposed by Senator Marise C. James

Invited Testifier:

- Mr. Angel E. Dawson, Administrator/CEO, Government Employees' Retirement System (GERS)

Highlights of Testimonies:

Mr. Dawson testified in full support of the legislation. He explained that the bill originated after a constituent brought to Senator Marise James' attention a previous administrative practice that could permanently reduce a member's credited service when delinquent loan balances were offset against retirement contributions. He informed the Committee that GERS had already discontinued this practice administratively but supported codifying the protection into law to ensure it could never occur again. Mr. Dawson further stated that he worked collaboratively

with Senator James and her staff to revise the legislation and expressed his full support for the amended bill.

Bill No. 36-0279: An act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code by creating the position of Women Veterans Coordinator within the Office of Veterans Affairs *Proposed by Senator Marise C. James*

Invited Testifier:

- **Mr. Patrick Farrell**, State Director, Virgin Islands Office of Veterans Affairs

Highlights of Testimonies

Director Farrell testified in strong support of the legislation, thanking Senator Marise James for sponsoring the measure and recognizing her perspective as a veteran. He emphasized that the Office's responsibility extends beyond processing benefits and includes improving the overall quality of life for veterans. He stated that women veterans represent a growing population with unique needs and deserve a dedicated advocate within the Office of Veterans Affairs. Director Farrell described the proposed coordinator position as an important investment in outreach, advocacy, and support services and respectfully requested the Committee's favorable consideration of the bill.

In Block II:

Bill No. 36-0213: An act renaming Belvedere Road on the island of St. Croix as "Alicia "Chucky" Hansen Road" and appropriating \$10,000 from the St. Croix Capital Improvement Fund to the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works to erect the proper signage *Proposed by Senator Hubert L. Frederick and Co-sponsored by Senator Carla J. Joseph*

Invited Testifiers:

- Mrs. Elizabeth Hansen-Watley, Assistant Commissioner of Dept. of Tourism and Daughter of the Hon. Senator Alicia "Chucky" Hansen
- Atty. Lee J. Rohn, Esq., Lee J. Rohn & Associates, LLC, Attorney and Friend
- Hon. Former Senator Celestino A. White Sr., Friend and Former Colleague
- Mr. Paul Payne, Friend

Highlights of Testimonies

Mrs. Elizabeth Hansen-Watley offered heartfelt testimony reflecting on the life and legacy of her mother, describing former Senator Alicia "Chucky" Hansen as one of the Virgin Islands' most influential public servants whose legislative accomplishments continue to benefit the Territory. She expressed appreciation for the bill sponsor and co-sponsor and stated that renaming Contentment Road was especially meaningful because the former Legislature was located there, where her mother spent much of her legislative career. She expressed hope that t

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the roadway would inspire future generations to learn about Senator Hansen's legacy of public service and dedication to the people of the Virgin Islands.

Additional testimony from Attorney Lee J. Rohn, and Mr. Paul Payne highlighted Senator Hansen's unwavering commitment to her constituents, her fearless leadership, and her lasting impact on the Virgin Islands through decades of public service.

COMMITTEE ACTION: THE VOTE

- Bill No. 36-0250, as amended by Amendment No. 36-770, was passed and forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration.
- Bill No. 36-0279: Passed and forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration.
- Bill No. 36-0213, as amended by Amendment No. 36-690, was passed and forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration.

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members: Senator Ray Fonseca, Senator Alma Francis Heyliger, Senator Kenneth L. Gittens, Senator Carla J. Joseph, Senator Novelle E. Francis Jr., Senator Avery L. Lewis, Senator Franklin D. Johnson

Non-Committee Members: Senator Clifford Joseph, Sr., Senator Marise C. James, Senator Dwayne Degraff, Senator Hubert L. Frederick

Through The Chair:

1. What legal authority does GERS to reduce credited service because of loan default?
– Senator Kenneth L. Gittens