



Legislature Of The Virgin Islands

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THE HONORABLE
Carla J. Joseph

SENATOR

36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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

CHAIR

Committee on Rules and Judiciary

VICE CHAIR

Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, and Parks

MEMBER

Committee of the Whole

Committee on Education and Workforce Development

Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications

Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs,
and Consumer Protection

Memorandum: 25-028

TO: Mrs. Kurell A. Sheridan, JD
Executive Director
36th Legislature of the V.I.

FROM: The Honorable Carla J. Joseph 
Chair
Committee on Rules and Judiciary

DATE: November 17, 2025

SUBJECT: Committee Report for Thursday, November 13, 2025 Hearing

Please find attached the report for the Committee on Rules and Judiciary hearing held on Thursday, November 13, 2025, Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on St. Thomas.

CC: All Senators
Chief Legal Counsel
Archive Division
Journal Division

RULES AND JUDICIARY NOVEMBER 13, 2025 COMMITTEE HEARING REPORT

The Committee on Rules and Judiciary held its hearing on Thursday, November 13, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on St. Thomas. The Committee considered the following Nominations and Bills:

- **The Honorable Venetia H. Velazquez** – Governor’s Nominee for Judge of the Virgin Islands Superior Court, Division of St. Croix
- **Ms. Melanie L. Turnbull, Esq.** – Governor’s Nominee for Judge of the Virgin Islands Superior Court, Family Division District of St. Thomas – St. John
- **Mrs. Jennifer M. Matarangas-King** – Governor’s Nominee for Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism
- **Ms. Bernesha B. Liburd** – Governor’s Nominee to the Virgin Islands Cannabis Advisory Board
- **Bill No. 36-0044** – A Resolution honoring and commending seven-year-old twin brothers Kruz and Stefon Wilson for their heroic efforts and courage displayed when saving a drowning man at Magen’s Bay Beach and for their exemplary conduct as young members of the community. **Sponsored by: Senators Angel L. Bolques, Jr. and Carla J. Joseph**
- **Bill No. 36-0075** – A Resolution honoring and commending Austin A. Venzen posthumously for his unwavering commitment to music education and the arts, through his work in the classrooms, conducting private music lessons, on the concert stages, and by bringing Virgin Islanders together in choirs, bands, and community events, to foster camaraderie, collaboration, and cultural enrichment. **Sponsored By: Senators Ray Fonseca and Carla J. Joseph**
- **Bill No. 36-0148** – An act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 16, section 274 by mandating that the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission implement an electronic payment system. **Sponsored by: Senator Kurt A Violet.**
- **Bill No. 36-0086** – An act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, section 590b, the Caregivers Leave Act. **Sponsored by: Senators Novelle E. Francis and Carla J. Joseph.**
- **Bill No. 36-0196** - An act appropriating excess debt service reserve funds for certain capital projects in the territory and appropriating \$2,000,000 from the St Thomas Capital Improvement fund. Sponsored by: Senators Milton E. Potter, Marvin A. Blyden and Carla J. Joseph by Request of the Governor.

- **Bill No. 36-0135** - An act amending title 29 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 5, section 294 regarding expedited building permits for developers. **Sponsored by: Senator Kenneth L. Gittens.**

The meeting was called to order by the Committee Chair, Sen. Carla J. Joseph at 10:13 a.m.

Committee Members Present

Sen. Carla J. Joseph, Chair
 Sen. Kenneth L. Gittens, Vice Chair
 Sen. Alma Francis Heyliger
 Sen. Avery L. Lewis
 Sen. Angel L. Bolques, Jr.
 Sen. Clifford A. Joseph, Sr.

Office of the Executive Director

Mr. Charles Brown, Jr.
 Ms. Jervon Ottley
 Mr. Isaac Winston

Sergeant-At-Arms

Mr. Delvin Fleming

Public Affairs/Media

Mr. Bernard Mathews
 Ms. Malissa Gustave
 Ms. Africah Harrigan
 Mr. Barry Leerdam
 Ms. Chaunte Herbert
 Mr. Alwyn Baptiste
 Mr. Dequan Milliner
 Ms. Diana Cruz
 Mr. Kashief Hamilton

Non-Committee Members Present

Sen. Novelle E. Francis, Jr.

Committee Member Absent/Excused

Sen. Milton E. Potter

Legislative Reporters

Mrs. Nataya Munoz-Melchoir
 Ms. Tricia D. Sealey
 Mrs. Vashti Gerald-Berry
 Mrs. Nadine Coley-Williams

Clerk/Timekeeper

Mrs. Deleka Callwood Daniel

Additional Supporting Staff

Ms. Shania Nieves

Legal Counsel

Mr. Augustin Ayala, Esq.

In block one of the Agenda, the Committee considered the Governor's Nominations: **The Honorable Venetia H. Velazquez as Judge to the Virgin Islands Superior Court, Division of St. Croix and Ms. Melanie L. Turnbull, Esq. as Judge to the Virgin Islands Superior Court, Family Division, District of St. Thomas-St. John.** Senators proceeded with one (1) round of five (5) minutes of questioning time for the nominees.

Governor's Nominee Name	Position	Placement	Motion	Vote
The Honorable Venetia H. Velazquez	Judge	Virgin Islands Superior Court – St. Croix Division	Senator Kenneth Gittens motioned that the Honorable Venetia H. Velazquez, be favorably voted upon in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senators Avery Lewis, Angel Bolques, Jr., Alma Francis Heyliger, and Clifford Joseph, Sr.	6 yeas— 1 absent
Ms. Melanie L. Turnbull, Esq.	Judge	Virgin Islands Superior Court – Family Division District of St. Thomas and St. John	Senator Avery Lewis motioned that Attorney Melanie L. Turnbull, be favorably voted upon in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senators Kenneth Gittens, Angel Bolques Jr., Alma Francis Heyliger, and Clifford Joseph, Sr.	6 yeas— 1 absent

In block two of the Agenda, the Committee considered the Governor's Nomination: **Mrs. Jennifer M. Matarangas-King as Commissioner for the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism.** Senators proceeded with one (1) round of five (5) minutes of questioning time for the nominees.

Governor's Nominee Name	Position	Placement	Motion	Vote
Mrs. Jennifer M. Matarangas- King	Commissioner	Virgin Islands Department of Tourism	Senator Kenneth Gittens motioned that Mrs. Jennifer M. Matarangas-King, be favorably voted upon in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senators Avery Lewis, Clifford Joseph, Sr., Alma Francis Heyliger, and Angel Bolques, Jr.	6 yeas— 1 absent

In block three of the Agenda, the Committee considered the Governor's Nomination: **Ms. Bernesha B. Liburd for the Virgin Islands Cannabis Advisory Board**. Senators proceeded with one (1) round of four (4) minutes of questioning time for the nominee.

Governor's Nominee Name	Position	Placement	Motion	Vote
Ms. Bernesha B. Liburd	Member	Cannabis Advisory Board	Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr. motioned that Ms. Bernesha B. Liburd, be favorably voted upon in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senators Avery Lewis, Alma Francis Heyliger, and Clifford Joseph, Sr.	6 yeas— 1 absent

In block four of the Agenda, the Committee voted on **Bill Nos. 36-0044, 36-0075, 36-0148, 36-0086, 36-0196, and 36-0135.**

Bill Number	Short Title	Amendment	Motion	Vote
36-0044	A Resolution honoring and commending seven-year-old twin brothers Kruz and Stefon Wilson for their heroic efforts and courage displayed when saving a drowning man at Magen's Bay Beach and for their exemplary conduct as young members of the community. Sponsored by: Senators Angel L. Bolques Jr., and Carla J. Joseph		Senator Avery Lewis motioned that Bill No. 36-0044 , be favorably voted upon in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senators Angel Bolques, Jr. and Clifford Joseph, Sr.	6 yeas—1 absent
36-0075	A Resolution honoring and commending Austin A. Venzen posthumously		Senator Angel Bolques, Jr. motioned that Bill No. 36-0075 , be favorably voted upon in the	6 yeas – 1 absent

	for his unwavering commitment to music education and the arts, through his work in the classrooms, conducting private music lessons, on the concert stages, and by bringing Virgin Islanders together in choirs, bands, and community events, to foster camaraderie, collaboration, and cultural enrichment. Sponsored by Senators Ray Fonseca and Carla J. Joseph.		Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senator Clifford Joseph, Sr.	
36-0148	An act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 16, section 274 by mandating that the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission implement an electronic payment system. Sponsored by: Senator Kurt A Vialet.		Senator Alma Francis Heyliger motioned that Bill No. 36-0148 , be favorably voted upon in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senator Clifford Joseph, Sr.	6 yeas – 1 absent
36-0086	An act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, section 590b, the Caregivers Leave Act. Sponsored by: Senators Novelle E. Francis and Carla J. Joseph.		Senator Clifford Joseph, Sr. motioned that Bill No. 36-0086 , be favorably voted upon in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senators Avery Lewis and Kenneth Gittens	6 yeas – 1 absent
36-0196	An act appropriating excess debt service reserve funds for certain capital projects in the territory and		Senator Avery Lewis motioned that Bill No. 36-0196 , be favorably voted upon in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further	6 yeas – 1 absent

	appropriating \$2,000,000 from the St Thomas Capital Improvement fund. Sponsored by: Senators Milton E. Potter, Marvin A. Blyden and Carla J. Joseph by Request of the Governor.		consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senators Kenneth Gittens, Alma Francis Heyliger, and Clifford Joseph, Sr.	
36-0135	An act amending title 29 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 5, section 294 regarding expedited building permits for developers. Sponsored by: Senator Kenneth L. Gittens.	Senator Kenneth Gittens offered Amendment No. 36-594 , which was seconded by Senators Angel Bolques, Jr. and Clifford Joseph, Sr., the motion was carried.	Senator Kenneth Gittens motioned that Bill No. 36-0135 , be favorably voted upon in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary and forwarded to the full body for further consideration and action. The motion was seconded by Senators Angel Bolques Jr. and Clifford Joseph, Sr.	6 years – 1 absent

The Chair, Sen. Carla J. Joseph, adjourned the Committee on Rules and Judiciary hearing at 4:34 p.m.