

St. Thomas-St. John Federation of Teachers



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Testimony Regarding Amending Bill No. 36-0125

Good morning to Senate President Milton Potter and the members of the 36th Legislature. It is a privilege to appear before this committee for the first time in my capacity as AFT President for Local 1825, St. Thomas/St. John Federation of Teachers.

I come before you today to offer a brief testimony on the Union's concerns with Bill No. 36-0125, which allows members of the Virgin Islands Legislature to collect a retirement annuity for past government service and their legislative salaries.

It is important to note that the Senators in the territory hold a unique position as leaders. As such, they should set a positive example for all citizens in the Virgin Islands; they should discontinue the practice of receiving pension annuities while still working for the VI Government (double-dipping).

The consensus from the Union as to why Bill No. 36-0125 should be amended not to allow our senators to collect a pension and salary simultaneously is:

1. The VI Government is in dire financial straits.
2. GERS expects to run out of assets by June 2037.
3. This bill has created mistrust amongst the community.
4. We have many government employees living at or below the poverty line.
5. Our Senators should lead by example.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to share the concerns of the St. Thomas/St. John Federation of Teachers regarding Bill No. 36-0125. Please consider our concerns and take action to amend this bill. I believe this testimony will help determine the economic fate of our retirement system.

Leontyne Jones
AFT President, Local 1825

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