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Bill to Allow Virgin Islanders to Elect Attorney General Introduced in Senate

Senator Alma Francis Heyliger champions Bill 35-0248 to democratize the selection of the territory's chief legal officer

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After the [resignation of former attorney general Ariel Smith](#) reignited the discussion about the parade of appointees who have cycled through the post in years past, lawmakers have signaled that legislation to allow Virgin Islanders to elect an attorney general of their choice is in the pipeline.

During the March 25 legislative session, Senator Alma Francis Heyliger introduced Bill 35-0248, declaring that it was time to “reduce the politicization of this particular office.”

When the draft legislation is brought to the committee of jurisdiction, lawmakers will decide whether to petition Congress to allow the USVI to elect an Attorney General. A date for that discussion has yet to be announced, but Francis Heyliger asserted that the move is “a long time coming.”

The desire to elect its attorney general is not unique to the USVI. Francis Heyliger reminded her colleagues that “over 40 states have already decided to elect their attorney general.” Residents of the Virgin Islands are no different. “The people of the territory, several years ago, went to the polls with a referendum,” the lawmaker recounted. “Seventy-six percent stated they wanted an elected attorney general. It is time to do so,” Francis Heyliger continued.

Ian Clement is [currently serving as acting attorney general](#), appointed after Ms. Smith spent less than a year on the job. Ariel Smith, who was announced as Governor Albert Bryan Jr.’s pick for the post in March 2023 was herself replacing Denise George, who was [terminated four years](#) after her appointment.