

# After Five Failed Attempts at a VI Constitution, New Bill Seeks Placement of Question on November Ballot

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Voters in the general election in November may have the chance to weigh in on developing a constitution for the Virgin Islands, through a question on the ballot asking whether they agree that a constitutional convention should be convened to adopt the Revised Organic Act as the territory's governing law.

The referendum initiative, advocated for by the League of Women Voters USVI and sponsored by Senator Myron D. Jackson through [Bill 33-0292](#), was passed unanimously by members of the 33rd Legislature during Session two weeks ago, and awaits signature by Governor Albert Bryan.

“In our quest for self-determination a constitution is critical for self-governance. Our status relationship to the United States is an act we must achieve,” Mr. Jackson said.

Bill 33-0292 is an Act providing for referendum vote on convening a constitutional convention to consider adopting the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands or portions of it as the Constitution of the Virgin Islands. It is meant to serve as a first step toward having a working document that can be altered later.

Over the decades, five constitutional conventions have met to develop a Virgin Islands Constitution but have met with challenges.

“Our attempts to have a constitution of our own have not met the constitutional requirements of the United States,” said Mr. Jackson, who announced last week that he would [not seek another term in the Senate](#). “We can agree that over the last 66 years the Revised Organic Act of 1954 has defined our democratic government and relationship to the United States.”

Should the bill become law, the League of Women Voters intends to continue to work with the Legislature and others in the community to lead an education plan to engage the public over the next five months, from June to November, to create enough interest and awareness to drive more than 50 percent of the electorate to answer the question at the polls, Mr. Jackson said.

“The League of Women Voters USVI applauds the 33rd Legislature for its unanimous approval of Bill 33-0292 to place a referendum question on the ballot in the general election of November 2020, an action that was requested by the League in October 2019,” Gwen-Marie Moolenaar, president of the organization, said. “We especially commend Senator Jackson for his leadership in drafting the bill and shepherding it along with colleagues Senators Vialet, Sarauw, Barnes and Gittens to the final unanimous action. Bravo.”

Mr. Jackson urged the governor to sign the bill into law as an important step in the territory’s progress.

“At this present time in our history, we must have a working constitution that we can use to define our realities,” he said. “We want to pose the question to the people, on whether they so choose to take this option to achieve the goal.”