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Former Senator Clement Magras Nominated for PSC, Has Plans for Major Shakeup

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Former senator and PSC nominee, Clement “Caine” Magras. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Unlike the [previous nominee](#), members of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary referred to former senator Clement “Caine” Magras as “fit for the position” of Public Services commissioner. Mr. Magras, with a wealth of public service experience in various roles including former commissioner of Licensing and Consumer Affairs and assistant to the director of VITEMA, said that coming out of retirement to serve on the Public Services Commission was “not an easy decision.” However, he said that he considers the nomination as his “duty to serve my community in this capacity during these difficult financial times in our territory.”

Mr. Magras expressed confidence in his ability to effectively serve on the PSC. “I believe that my broad range of administrative experience as a former senator gives me familiarity with the laws and with the utilities regulated by the PSC. Additionally, as a former commissioner of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, I have regulated and enforced consumer laws and regulations as well as served as the administrative law judge of that department,” he recounted.

As he awaits confirmation, Mr. Magras explained to senators that he has spent some time familiarizing himself with pressing matters before the PSC, including WAPA’s 2021 audit report. He thinks it crucial for all PSC commissioners to “acquaint themselves with the gross mismanagement documented in the report regarding the Vitol contracting process,” particularly because “such alleged wastes can only be recuperated through the rates regulated by the PSC.” Once appointed to the Commission, Mr. Magras promised to ask “whether WAPA has used any of the funds collected through the levelized energy adjustment clause, or LEAC, for anything other than fuel.”

He articulated his suspicion that “[PSC] members are asked to increasingly raise rates to VI consumers to pay for WAPA’s waste and mismanagement under the guise of increased operating and fuel costs.”

Despite referring to the Waste Management Authority as a “well-oiled machine”, it too requires some intervention, Mr. Magras said. “WMA has more than \$15 million in unpaid bills – most of which are to local vendors – the most glaring of which is the \$896,070.31 owed to the Public Services Commission from 2021 to the present, as well as the most recent assessment of \$454,380.51 for the coming fiscal year,” he lamented.

He expressed concern over the absence of these repayments as part of WMA’s 2023-2024 budget and wondered whether “they will continue to refuse to pay assessments to the PSC as required by law.” Mr. Magras called on the Legislature to include the WMA’s payments to the Public Services Commission as a line item in their next budget.

Senator Diane Capehart, seemingly telegraphing the nominee’s confirmation even before the vote, directed Mr. Magras to look into the discoloration and heavy metal contamination of the potable water on St Croix. “I can't be paying for something that I can't use. I think it's unfair that WAPA can still send these individuals a bill,” she told him. In total agreement, Mr. Magras added, “I think the PSC should have been doing their own water testing because part of their mandate is to ensure quality of service.”

By the end of the hearing, all committee members stood assured of his qualifications and commitment and voted favorably to move Mr. Magras's nomination to the full body for consideration. Senator Milton Potter summarized the sentiments of his colleagues, noting, “I think that you are eminently qualified to serve in this position and you will be a strategic addition to the PSC.”