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Three New Commissioners, Two New UVI Trustees Earn Favorable Votes from Legislators

Governor's nominees secure unanimous legislative backing for key usvi positions

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Dr. Louis Peterson Jr. By. V.I. LEGSLATURE

Five individuals nominated by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to fill key positions in the USVI now await his rubber stamp following unanimous support from all fifteen of the territory's lawmakers.

Once past the final hurdle, H. Nathalie Hodge will be the new commissioner of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. She received glowing support from legislators and praise for her commitment to the DLCA, as she has been employed at that agency for approximately twenty years. For his part, Senator Samuel Carrion declared, "I love it when it's someone internally that is

promoted.”

Lawmakers were also generally in support of Dr. Louis Peterson Jr., expected to serve as the commissioner of the Department of Agriculture for a second stint in the position. However, Senator Franklin Johnson, who voted against his nomination when it was before the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, still harbored some concerns. “I had issues with how some of the funding was spent when he was [commissioner] prior. I'm not doubting his qualifications. I also had issues with the livestock that I think have been neglected.” Mr. Johnson ultimately cast a favorable vote for Mr. Peterson.

Two individuals nominated to sit on the University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees earned high praises from senators who openly expressed confidence in their abilities to carry out their role. Dr. Bert Petersen, Jr. and Dr. Donna M. Christensen now await the final sign-off from the governor.

Legislators also voted favorably for the nomination of Kevin McCurdy as commissioner of the Department of Finance, but not without expressing reservations. Senator Donna Frett-Gregory, chair of the Committee on Budget and Finance, said that “we have to be very mindful of how we make our decisions when it comes to these nominations.” She worried that revenue reports for the Department of Finance had not been updated since July 2023. Pointing out that the USVI is currently at the end of the first quarter of the 2024 fiscal year, Ms. Frett-Gregory lamented, “We have yet to see the revenues, but this body is [being asked to approve a line of credit](#). How do we do these things in all good conscience when we can't even get information?”

Nevertheless, she admitted that MrCurdy is a “young man” who “needs an opportunity,” and after encouraging him to “pay attention to what's happening in the Department of Finance,” Ms. Frett-Gregory voted in favor of his confirmation to the post.

Senator Marise James also expressed concerns about Mr. McCurdy's ability to handle the high-pressure role, although she too voted to confirm his appointment. “He needs to realize that if there's one commissioner that the legislature really relies on, it's the commissioner of Finance because we hold the power of the purse,” she said. Ms. James called on Mr. McCurdy to “be very transparent with us so that we can make informed decisions.”

Senator Kenneth Gittens, who also voted “yes” to Mr. McCurdy’s nomination, warned him that “we have a lot of work to do.”