

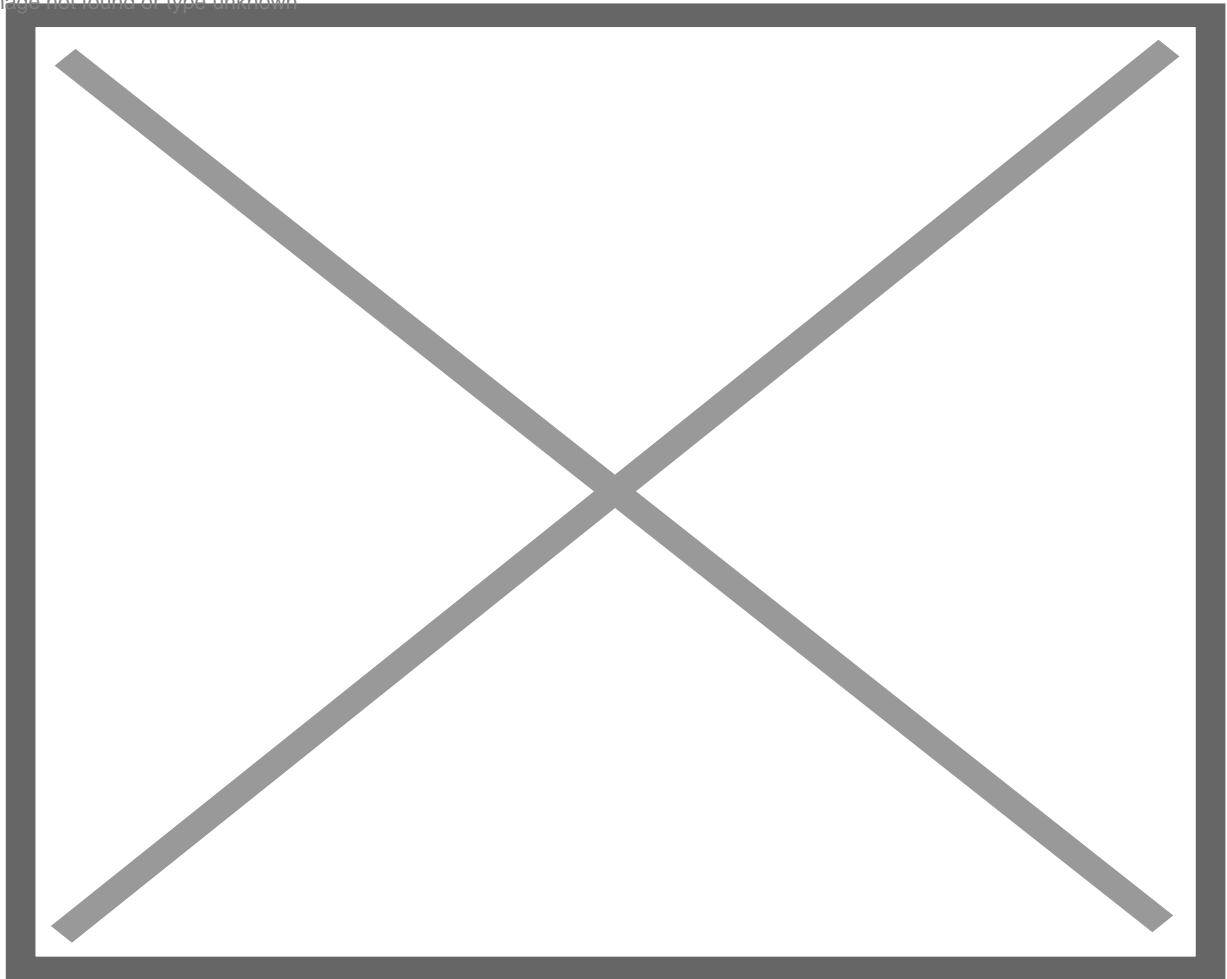
After Voting Against Elected Attorney General Bill, Bolques Says Issue Should Be Addressed By Upcoming Constitutional Convention

Bolques argues that the evolving political and social landscape necessitates a fresh referendum on the election of the attorney general via the Constitutional Convention

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Having [voted to kill a measure](#) seeking Congressional support for allowing the Virgin Islands to elect its Attorney General, Senator Angel Bolques Jr. is now calling for the question to be taken up by the upcoming 6th Constitutional Convention — though the convention, like the five others before it, offers no certainty because it may yet again fail.

"Given that the only referendum on electing the Attorney General in the Virgin Islands was held

in 1998, and we are now in 2024, it may be time to revisit this issue with the electorate to be sure if this is still the intent of the people,” Mr. Bolques said, in a statement issued Wednesday morning. “Over two decades have passed, and the political, social, and legal landscapes have evolved significantly. We must ensure that any changes of this magnitude to such a critical office reflect the current needs and values of our territory,” he argued.

During Tuesday’s debate on Senator Alma Francis Heyliger’s doomed bill, Mr. Bolques opined that an elected attorney general “does not automatically ensure...some sort of independence.” He listed factors such as political affiliations, special interest lobbying, personal relationships, career ambitions, and financial conflicts as some of the ways holders of the office could be unduly influenced in their decision-making.

Rather than seeking legislative redress, the senator said that the next Constitutional Convention is “uniquely suited” to take up the question. “This convention is incredibly important for the Virgin Islands because it allows us to address and fix or amend key governance issues such as this,” he said. “By coming together to draft a constitution, we can create a legal framework that truly reflects our needs and values at this time, not the reflections of individuals of the 1950s who may have never even stepped one foot in the Virgin Islands.”

Using the convention to resolve the question of how to seat an attorney general, Mr. Bolques said, would have positive knock-on effects for the health of the territory’s democracy. “By addressing the election of the Attorney General through a well-thought-out constitutional process, we can strengthen our legal and political systems. This convention is about empowering us to shape our future and build a stronger, more self-determined territory. It ensures that changes are made with careful consideration and broad public input, rather than through rushed legislative measures,” he said.

However, the likelihood of the latest convention being accepted by the U.S. Congress remains uncertain. Therefore, leaving the attorney general issue to be addressed by this convention may result in further delays.

Mr. Bolques reiterated several of the concerns expressed by testifiers and legislators alike about the failed bill during Tuesday’s debate. “There may be significant risks associated with electing an attorney general directly,” he said.

In the U.S., 43 states elect their attorneys general.

Mr. Bolques added, “These include potential politicization of the office, increased campaign costs, and the possibility of diminished independence if candidates align too closely with donors or political parties. An attorney general beholden to electoral pressures might prioritize popular opinion over legal integrity, undermining the very principles of justice and impartiality we seek to uphold.”

A “cautious and thoughtful approach” is the best way forward, the senator argued. That approach, he said, should be via the 6th Constitutional Convention.