

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Urging Compliance With Act 8471, Frett-Gregory Advocates for Qualified Turnaround Management for WAPA

Senator Frett-Gregory emphasizes the need for strict adherence to Act No. 8471 in the selection of a management company to overhaul VIWAPA's operations

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The Randolph Harley Power Plant in St. Thomas, USVI By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

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In a press release issued Monday night, Senator Donna Frett-Gregory emphasized the importance of adhering to the legislative requirements of Act No. 8471 as the V.I. Public Finance Authority prepares to select a turnaround management company for the V.I. Water and Power Authority.

The Act, enacted in August 2021, mandates comprehensive assessments and strategic recommendations to enhance WAPA's operations and financial health.

The selection, driven by the need for operational and financial improvements at WAPA, comes at a critical juncture, especially after the recent resignation of WAPA's CEO, Andrew Smith. Frett-Gregory expressed her relief that the process is gaining momentum but lamented the delay, stating, "We would be in a far better place than we are today had we implemented the legislation when it was adopted."

The senator also stressed the importance of a transparent selection process, ensuring that the chosen firm can meet the specific technical requirements related to water and power generation and distribution as outlined in the legislation. The turnaround company is expected to deliver a preliminary assessment within 120 days, covering the status of WAPA's projects, organizational structure, energy plans, debt management, and water quality and distribution strategies.

Additionally, the firm must propose actionable recommendations for reducing energy costs, incorporating renewable energy resources, and restructuring the organization to improve service quality and consumer protection. "It is my fervent hope that the entity selected is qualified to provide all the benchmarks outlined in the law," said Frett-Gregory, underscoring the urgency of the initiative in transforming WAPA into a reliable and cost-effective utility.

The Public Finance Authority's decision on Wednesday is eagerly awaited as it will set the course for potentially revitalizing a pivotal infrastructure entity within the territory. "With the abrupt resignation of CEO Smith, it is now glaringly obvious that this comprehensive assessment and report is desperately needed now more than ever, to transform WAPA into a well-run, reliable and cost-effective utility," Frett-Gregory concluded.