

Inspector General's Office Stretched Thin with Extensive Audits and Insufficient Budget

With only 11 auditors and 1 investigator, OIG faces a daunting workload as it plans to investigate VIPD, VIDE, OMB, and the Taxicab Commission, while grappling with severe staff shortages and inadequate budget funding

Senate / **Published On July 20, 2024 07:21 AM /**

Nelcia Charlemagne **July 20, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



V.I. Inspector General Delia Thomas By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Complaints of staff shortages remain a recurring theme during the FY2025 budget cycle, with the Office of the Inspector General being the latest government entity to raise the issue.

On Friday, Inspector General Delia Thomas informed the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance that several important audits across a number of government departments must be

carried out with a team of only 11 auditors and 1 investigator. New audits are also being planned, including looking into the contracting practices at the VIPD, Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Education.?

The OIG is also conducting an audit of the Taxicab Commission to determine if VITCC properly issued taxi licenses and medallions, inspected taxi cabs and accounted for collections and expenses from FY2018 to FY2022. “This audit has proven very labor intensive, as the Commission’s records are maintained manually rather than electronically,” reported Ms. Thomas.

With such a tiny staff and multiple concurrent audits to be completed, Ms. Thomas informed legislators that “all ongoing assignments require auditors to be assigned to more than one audit or inspection while ensuring the same quality of due diligence for each project.” It’s a reality that has created a critical need for more staff. “I’m impressed with your listing of the audits you have going on. I can see why you need more staff,” Senator Ray Fonseca stated.

For FY2025, the Office of the Inspector General is requesting a budget of \$2,898,392, just about \$76,000 more than its 2024 allocation. That figure will allow the OIG to maintain 19 staff members, and hire 3 more: two senior special investigators and a Deputy Virgin Islands Inspector General. Personnel costs account for 82% of the Office’s budget, exactly \$2,384,225, with fringe benefits make up \$651,880 of that amount. Supplies are estimated at \$101,938 and other services are estimated at \$340,795. The Office has earmarked \$43,000 for utility services, while capital outlays are expected to cost \$28,448. This sum will cover investigative and computer-related equipment costs.

Much to Ms. Thomas’s chagrin, hiring a senior investigator has been an arduous task. In fact, the Inspector General told Senator Marvin Blyden that the position has been open “for a couple of years now.” A second position for the same role opened this year. A decision was made to shift the position from classified to unclassified after three attempts. “We were unable to recruit anyone with experience for the salary that was being offered.” Despite this, Ms. Thomas assured that she is “optimistic about our hiring plans” and believes that the position will be filled by the end of the first quarter of FY2025.”

“For years, I don’t know that we have funded the Office of the Inspector General at the levels that it should,” Senator Donna Frett-Gregory admitted, referencing the challenges in attracting personnel to fill crucial roles. The committee chair requested that the Office of the Inspector General submit an updated personnel listing to assist the Legislature in its decision-making process.