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Senators Unanimously Override Bryan Vetoes, Allocate Funds for Firefighters and Nonprofits

Lawmakers voted unanimously to override several vetoes, preserving \$25 million for the Crime Prevention Fund, \$250,000 for veterans' travel, and hazardous pay for firefighters

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Despite her passionate push, Sen. Alma Francis Heyliger's attempt to special order Bill 35-0248, which aimed to make the Attorney General an elected position, failed. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Lawmakers have unanimously voted to override several recent vetos from Governor Albert Bryan Jr., including that of Bill 35-0379, which makes various amendments to titles 3, 33 and 20 of the Virgin Islands Code and other previously passed bills.

Having described the bill as a “staggering overreach,” Governor Bryan suggested that it attempted to terminate a legally binding agreement – an action that he deemed inappropriate for the Legislature to undertake.

However, during the Senate's Legislative Session on Wednesday, Senator Donna Frett-Gregory moved a motion to override the bill and won the support of all fourteen members present. By overriding the veto, “we are able to ensure that the Fire Prevention Unit receives the hazardous pay,” explained Senator Frett-Gregory. Section 6 of the bill “included in the land for the Nazareth Sports Complex. We agreed that we will include that portion of the property to support that sports complex,” she added.

Frett-Gregory made special mention of Section 11, which sought to explicitly classify appropriations to public utilities as non-revenue funds. Although the governor deemed the measure unnecessary, the Waste Management Authority continues to complain about being charged a fee by the Public Services Commission on grants WMA receives from the Legislature. “The governor's veto basically noted that it's a grant and it's not considered revenue. However, the interpretation at the Public Service Commission is that it is in fact revenues that they should charge,” she noted.

Lawmakers also voted to override Bill 35-0381, which appropriated \$25 million from the JPMorgan settlement funds to the Attorney General of the Virgin Islands' Crime Prevention/Prosecution Fund for the construction of the Toro building on St. Croix. The measure also established the “GVI/JPMC Charitable Fund,” and transferred over \$5.3 million into that fund for organizations that support vulnerable and disenfranchised individuals. Had the veto stood, Frett-Gregory indicated that legislators “would have to make a huge amendment to reduce all of the nonprofits that we funded in our FY 2025 budget,” as revenue projections from other sources would not have supported that level of funding. Bill 35-0380, which would have distributed the lion's share of settlement funds, and which was one of those [vetoed by Governor Bryan earlier this week](#), was not overridden by the Legislature on Wednesday.

Senator Dwayne DeGraff, meanwhile, moved a motion to override the governor's veto of Bill 35-0087, which created “a special fund designated as the Veterans Mainland Travel Revolving Fund and appropriating \$250,000 for reimbursement for veterans' airfare.” He also received unanimous support.

The decisions to override will all be “sent to the governor for further notification,” said Senate President Novelle Francis.

Sen. Alma Francis Heyliger was less fortunate when she attempted to special order Bill 35-0248, which would have made the territory's Attorney General an elected position. Ultimately, only Senator DeGraff joined his colleague in voting favorably on the measure.