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Senator Heyliger Denounces Raises for Governor and Senators Amid Fiscal Crisis, Calls for Transparency

With salary increases enacted under Act No. 8384, Senator Heyliger questioned the lack of public consultation and proposed measures to reverse the raises, demanding accountability amid the territory's fiscal challenges

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Senator Alma Francis Heyliger on Monday strongly condemned the [recently implemented salary increases](#) for the governor, lieutenant governor, and members of the Legislature, describing them as poorly timed and lacking transparency. The raises, recommended by the Virgin Islands Public Officials Compensation Commission (VIPOCC), were enacted amid ongoing fiscal challenges without public consultation or full disclosure to all lawmakers, Sen. Francis Heyliger contends.

Under the VIPOCC recommendations, the governor's salary increased to \$192,088 and senators' pay rose to \$95,000. These adjustments took effect automatically under Act No. 8384 after the Legislature failed to act within the 90-day review period. Sen. Francis Heyliger criticized the raises as a "blatant disservice" to Virgin Islanders, citing economic struggles, underfunded public services, and deteriorating infrastructure.

"Our community continues to grapple with widespread economic hardships, including limited job opportunities, under-resourced healthcare systems, and deteriorating infrastructure," she Francis Heyliger stated. "Yet those in power have turned their focus inward, awarding themselves higher pay without public consultation or valid justification."

Francis Heyliger expressed frustration at learning about the raises through media reports rather than official channels, calling it an example of a "one-party system" that shields vital decisions from scrutiny. She noted that the commission's recommendations were submitted to the governor and Senate president as early as August 2024 but were not shared with all senators.

"If the Governor and Senate President are content to hide these critical documents and deliberations from a sitting senator, what else might they be hiding from the citizens of this territory?" Francis Heyliger asked, emphasizing the need for integrity and transparency in governance.

The senator proposed several measures to address the issue:

1. Release All Relevant Documentation: Make the full compensation report and supplemental data publicly available for honest discussion.
2. Reverse the Raises: Rescind the salary increases and focus on addressing the territory's fiscal crisis.
3. Demand Transparency and Collaboration: Ensure all major financial decisions involve robust dialogue among senators and the public.

Francis Heyliger also urged voters to remain vigilant and hold elected officials accountable. "The electorate must remain cautious," she said. "Those in power who have no qualms hiding essential information from a fellow senator will not hesitate to hide key facts from the public."

Sen. Francis Heyliger argued that elected officials should demonstrate exceptional performance before seeking raises, particularly during a financial crisis. "When elected officials campaign for office, they do so knowing the salary that accompanies the job," she said. "If they feel entitled to a pay increase, they should first demonstrate superior above-and-beyond performance."

The senator called for leaders who prioritize the community's needs over personal enrichment.