

Senate Majority Leader Rejects Public Officials Salary Increases Amid Fiscal Concerns

Gittens opposes salary increases for public officials, citing unresolved financial obligations, including retroactive wages, unpaid tax refunds, and delayed vendor payments. He also called for legal clarity on the automatic raises

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Senator Kenneth Gittens. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Senate Majority Leader Kenneth Gittens has voiced his firm opposition to recent public officials' salary increases, citing the government's current fiscal challenges. Speaking on Tuesday, Mr. Gittens announced his intention to seek a legal opinion to determine whether these raises, as outlined in the Public Officials Compensation Commission (VIPOCC) report, could lawfully take

effect automatically.

He expressed uncertainty about whether the VIPOCC's recommendations had been properly submitted to the Legislature, a requirement for their automatic enactment under existing law. "It is unclear to me whether these recommendations were properly submitted to the Legislature in order for them to automatically take effect," he said.

Mr. Gittens added that he was personally unaware of the report's completion and criticized the governor's financial team for failing to mention the matter during discussions on the FY2025 budget in the fall. Gittens called on the Legislature's legal counsel to clarify the situation for both lawmakers and the public.

The senator specifically rejected the proposed \$42,000 raise for the governor, which would increase the salary to \$192,088. "I personally would not agree to granting a \$42,000 raise to any Governor," he said, pointing out that the administration has repeatedly sought legislative approval to borrow funds while failing to address retroactive wages appropriated by the Legislature.

The senator also criticized significant salary increases granted to cabinet members over the past two years, highlighting their performance and the government's obligations to address long-standing issues, such as poor school infrastructure, deteriorating roads, and underfunded healthcare facilities.

Senator Gittens emphasized the need to resolve several financial obligations before considering any salary increases. These include retroactive wages for government employees, union-negotiated raises, unpaid tax refunds, and delayed payments to vendors.

He also stressed the importance of addressing the minimum wage, noting that it has been a topic of recent discussion and should be part of any deliberations on wage adjustments.

"These raises must be weighed against our government's existing obligations and the pressing needs of the people we serve," Gittens concluded.