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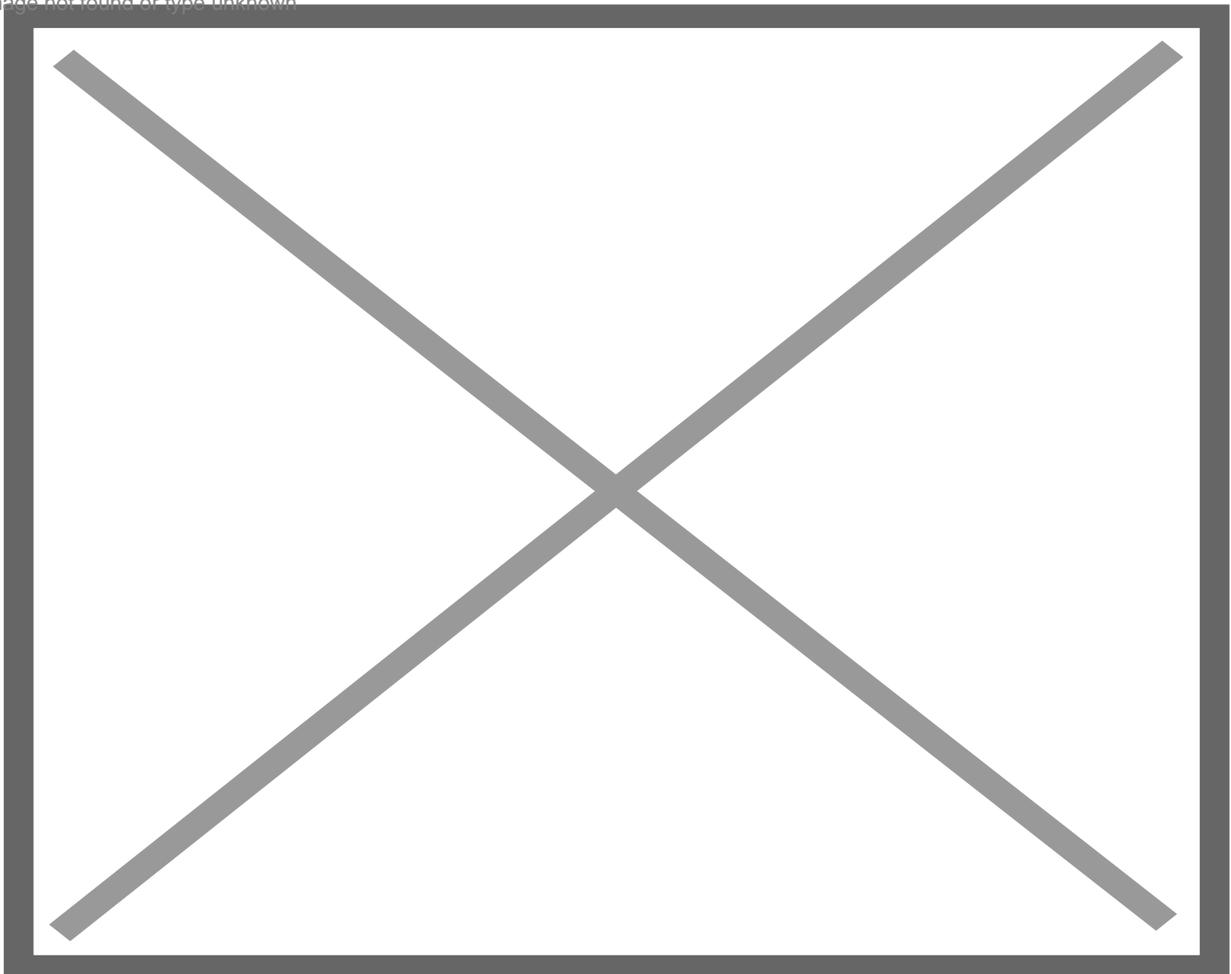
Francis Issues Statement on Public Officials Compensation Study Transmission

Francis denies receiving the emailed compensation report, even as The Consortium verifies the email and confirms his address as a recipient. The Senate president calls for clarity on the handling of the document amid public backlash over salary hikes.

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Ernice Gilbert **January 08, 2025**

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Senate President Novelle Francis Jr. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Senate President Novelle E. Francis Jr. on Wednesday issued a statement raising significant concerns about the process surrounding the Public Officials Compensation Study and its implementation. The senator questioned whether the report was properly transmitted to the Legislature.

His statement comes amidst public backlash over salary increases for public officials and conflicting claims regarding the handling of the report.

In his statement, Mr. Francis said that the Virgin Islands Public Officials Compensation Commission's (VIPOCC) issuance of the report does not constitute an official transmittal to the Legislature. He noted that such an important document should have been formally submitted with a hard copy and signed proof of delivery, neither of which occurred.

“The alleged issuance of the Public Officials Compensation Study by the Virgin Islands Public Officials Compensation Commission should not constitute official transmittal of this document to the Virgin Islands Legislature,” Mr. Francis stated.

His remarks follow [earlier controversy](#) regarding the distribution of the report. The VIPOCC maintains that the report was emailed on August 13, 2024, to Senator Francis, Governor Albert Bryan Jr., along with Supreme Court Chief Justice Rhys Hodge and other officials. However, Francis has denied receiving the email.

The V.I. Consortium [obtained a copy of the email](#), which listed Senator Francis as one of the recipients. Despite this, Francis maintains he did not receive the correspondence. He has not clarified whether he searched his inbox to confirm or refute the claims, adding to public skepticism over the process.

On Wednesday, Mr. Francis described any immediate action on the study's recommendations as “hasty and premature,” particularly as the Legislature transitions to its 36th session. He has requested a legal opinion from the Legislature's Chief Legal Counsel to provide clarity on the matter.

The Senate President also highlighted ongoing financial challenges, including unpaid vendor obligations, retroactive wages, and student scholarships. He criticized the timing of the salary increases for public officials, which took effect on January 1, 2025, amid these fiscal constraints.

“This very charged topic and the public discourse highlight the challenges of the Executive Branch to meet its financial obligations,” Mr. Francis said.

The controversy surrounding the salary adjustments has sparked widespread anger and frustration. The VIPOCC's report recommended significant raises, including increasing the governor's salary to \$192,088 and the lieutenant governor's to \$168,231 — both receiving raises of over \$40,000. Senators received a \$10,000 increase, bringing their base salary to \$95,000. These raises were automatically enacted after the 90-day legislative review period expired without action, as mandated by law.

Mr. Francis expressed confidence that the 36th Legislature will address the VIPOCC's recommendations within the broader context of the government's financial situation. “With the benefit of a legal opinion, I am confident that the members of the 36th Legislature will be prepared to proceed on this matter,” he said.