

## **Bolques Under Microscope After Female Staffer Files Complaint; Ethics Committee Formed to Investigate**

**Senator Bolques, appointed after Steven Payne's removal over harassment claims, is now under ethics review following a new complaint. Sources say the current allegations may not warrant removal but allege he has fostered a hostile work environment.**

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**Senator Angel Bolques Jr. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE**

The 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands announced on Tuesday that it has established a Committee on Ethical Conduct (CEC) to investigate a formal complaint filed against Senator At-Large Angel Bolques, Jr. The complaint, which alleges misconduct within Senator Bolques's office, was received by the Office of the Senate President on March 26 and referred to the

committee on March 28 for review and action?.

Mr. Bolques was first seated as a senator during the 34th Legislature, following [the removal of former Senator Steven Payne](#), which stemmed from a [sexual harassment complaint](#) filed by a staffer, originally reported by the Consortium, and a subsequent series of investigative reports by this publication. According to individuals familiar with the current complaint, it does not appear to rise to the level of misconduct that would result in Senator Bolques's removal from office. However, those familiar with the complaint said Senator Bolques has allegedly fostered a hostile work environment.

Several attempts to reach Bolques for comment were unsuccessful.

The formation of the committee and the launch of its review process were confirmed Tuesday by Senate Vice President Kenneth Gittens, who also serves as Chairman of the CEC. The committee is operating under the authority of Chapter 8, Rule 810 of the Rules of the 36th Legislature, which outlines the procedure for addressing alleged violations of legislative standards of conduct?.

The five-member committee includes Mr. Gittens, chairman; Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff, vice chairman; Senator Kurt Vialet, Majority leader; Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr.; and Senator Carla J. Joseph.

According to Mr. Gittens, the formal complaint has been shared with Mr. Bolques, who has been given an opportunity to respond. The committee is currently reviewing the allegations in preparation for issuing its Advisory Opinion to the Senate President within the 30-day timeframe prescribed by the Legislature's rules. That deadline may be extended if necessary, pending agreement by the committee?.

"We are dedicated to resolving this issue within the timeframe set forth under Chapter 8 of the Rules of the Legislature or by extension if more time is needed," said Senator Gittens. "This is a sensitive matter, and as such, we do not anticipate providing additional details until the completion of the Committee's investigation."

He further assured that the review would be conducted with integrity and professionalism, noting that all involved parties will have the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses for consideration. "I believe each member of the CEC understands the importance of the task at hand and will work diligently to fairly review the facts," Gittens stated?.

The outcome of the investigation will be submitted to the Senate President as an official Advisory Opinion once the review concludes. No timeline for public disclosure of findings has been announced.