

Vialet Reintroduces Bill to Raise Government Employees' Salaries From \$27K to \$32K Starting October 2026

The measure, first introduced in 2022 and vetoed in 2023, would raise the minimum annual salary for full-time government workers. Sen. Vialet argues that rising living costs justify the increase, and the delayed start gives agencies time to adjust budgets

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Nelcia Charlemagne **May 24, 2025**

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Senator Kurt Vialet is again proposing to increase the minimum annual salary for full time employees of the Government of the Virgin Islands, its semi-autonomous agencies and independent instrumentalities from \$27,040 to \$32,000.

The St. Croix senator first introduced the bill in December 2022, one of his final measures as a member of the 34th Legislature. Then [Bill 34-0388](#), the figures were identical to what he now proposes three years later. The [measure was vetoed](#) by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. In February 2023, he was quoted as saying that “a retroactive increase after the conclusion of the government’s budget approval process and without proper cost analyses is simply financially irresponsible...Most government employees are members of collective bargaining agreements, which are negotiated through their union representatives. Mandating pay outside these negotiated contractual agreements would destabilize the government pay systems and create a multitude of inequities.”

Next week, lawmakers will revisit the question. Members of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection are expected to consider [Bill 36-0053](#) when they meet on May 30. More detailed than the last bill, the new draft legislation states that the current minimum wage has “not kept pace with the rising cost of living in the Territory.” It cites high costs associated with groceries, housing, electricity, energy, and “other essential goods and services.”

The “adjustment aligns with the Government of the Virgin Islands’ commitment to fostering a sustainable workforce,” reads one of the clauses. The bill stipulates that if enacted, it would take effect on October 1, 2026.

“I went for the effective date for October 1 to give the budget chair an opportunity and every department to work it into their budget,” Vialet explained during Friday’s meeting of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance, while announcing that his effort to raise minimum wage for government workers would be brought to the legislative floor once more.

The subject formed part of the conversation during the discussion of Bill 36-0032, relating to a [cap on the salary amount](#) used to compute the service retirement annuity for the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor. Mr. Vialet contrasted his quest to raise wages for government workers against the revelation that raises for the top two positions of the executive branch would indeed be processed.

“I want to see how we are not going to use these same concerns: inflation, time, value of money and COLA when we bring that bill to move from \$27,000 to \$32,000,” said the lawmaker, responding to arguments used by the Department of Personnel to explain how a salary cap as considered by Bill 36-0032 was not suitable. “It got to exist for the little person that ain’t making no money. How it gonna exist for one alone?” Vialet asked.

If Bill 36-0053 is passed by the Legislature, that question is one that Governor Bryan will have to contend with as he considers whether or not to assent.