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Legality of V.I. Compensation Commission in Question as Public Fury Grows Over Pay Hikes

The Compensation Commission may have violated laws governing its formation, possibly invalidating pay hikes for top officials. With a GERS employee serving on the board and a chair now appointed to public office, legal and political fallout is escalating.

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Ernice Gilbert **May 27, 2025**

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The Virgin Islands Compensation Commission, established by [Act 7878](#) in 2015 and amended in 2020 via [Act 8384](#), may have been improperly constituted from the start—a revelation that could potentially invalidate the commission's actions, including its controversial recommendations for salary increases for top government officials.

While the commission proposed pay adjustments across the board, only the salary increases for Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach have taken effect so far. Since the recommendations became public in January 2025, public backlash has been swift and intense.

Adding to the public's frustration was the discovery that the commission, chaired by Haldane Davies, submitted its salary report to then-Senate President Novelle Francis 90 days before the public became aware of it. This is significant because, under the law, once the report is transmitted to the Senate president, the Legislature has 90 days to review and amend the recommendations. If the window passes without legislative action, the recommendations automatically become law. Mr. Francis claimed he never saw the email, but The Consortium obtained a copy showing it was sent on August 13, 2024—not only to Mr. Francis, but also to Governor Bryan, Chief Justice Rhys Hodge, and members of the Virgin Islands Public Officials Compensation Commission (VIPOCC).

However, the commission appears to be illegally composed. Subsection 542 of Act 7878 outlines who is eligible to serve on the commission:

"The Virgin Islands Compensation Commission is established within the Division of Personnel for budgetary purposes only. The Commission is composed of nine members, none of whom is an official or employee of the Government of the Virgin Islands, or of any department, agency, or any autonomous or semi-autonomous instrumentality of the Government of the Virgin Islands with the exception of the University of the Virgin Islands. The Governor, the President of the Legislature and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court shall each appoint three members."

The statute clearly bars employees of both central and autonomous government bodies—including agencies such as the V.I. Water and Power Authority and the Government Employees' Retirement System (GERS)—from serving, with UVI being the sole exception. Yet, Aisha Clendinen-Gumbs, who serves as the commission's secretary, is currently employed by GERS and has worked there for nearly a decade.

This violation opens the door for legal challenges that could invalidate not just the raises for Governor Bryan and Lieutenant Governor Roach, but all salary recommendations issued by the commission.

Controversy around the commission further deepened with Governor Bryan's recent appointment of [Haldane Davies to lead the Bureau of Economic Research](#). This appointment may also be illegal, as Act 8384 prohibits commission members from accepting an appointment for public office for two years after their service ends.

The Consortium has reached out to Governor Bryan for comment, including whether he intends to rescind Mr. Davies's appointment. Regarding Davies, Mr. Bryan said, "The law said public officials appointments are illegal. BER is not approved by the Legislature and is a regular job."

Regarding the commission itself, Mr. Bryan argued that one illegal appointment does not invalidate the entire board. "I don't know who appointed Clendinen but one illegal appointment it doesn't make the entire board illegal," he said. "Further, this board just turned in an independent report. It's not like they wrote it themselves. In fact they had to go back to the legislature to get the money appropriated. The legislature made up this law before I even took office. Most of them

in there now voted for it."

Meanwhile, public frustration continues to mount over the approved raises. Hundreds have expressed outrage at the salary increases, which elevated Governor Bryan's pay from \$150,000 to \$192,000, and Lieutenant Governor Roach's from \$125,000 to \$168,000—both retroactive to December 2024.

"So Fire burn part 2? No? I keep telling ayo this ain a real place! Cause ain no way we the people allowing all of this to happen," [wrote](#) one commenter on The Consortium's Facebook page, referencing the [1878 St. Croix labor revolt](#) as a symbol of resistance to injustice.

On Friday, senators [voiced outrage](#) after learning that the raises had already taken effect. "With all that's going on, we found it fitting to grant the governor of the Virgin Islands a \$42,000 raise," said Senator Kenneth Gittens. He directed his disappointment at committee chair Senator Novelle Francis, asking, "How do we justify that?"

Senator Alma Francis Heyliger also criticized the raise, citing population disparities. "The governor of California makes \$234,000 to manage 39 million people, and we're talking about under 90,000 people, and want to pay out \$192,000. For what?"

She also took some accountability. "I don't only blame the executive branch. I blame us. I, as a member of this institution, I'm going to take part responsibility," she said, referring to her previous effort to block the raises. "These raises are not warranted," she added.

In April, Senator Francis Heyliger introduced legislation to halt the pay increases. However, her bill was rejected by a majority of her colleagues, [including Senator Kurt Vialet](#), who moved for the measure to be returned to committee.

Last updated at 6:56 a.m. on Tuesday, May 27, 2025.