

## Vialet Defends Executive Pension Cap Bill Amid Criticism, Urges Colleagues to Act

**Rejecting claims of political motives, Senator Vialet says his bill addresses real fiscal risks tied to automatic retirement increases and invites fellow lawmakers to introduce broader reforms if they believe more action is needed.**

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**Senator Kurt Vialet. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.**

Senator Kurt Vialet is moving forward with legislation that would cap the annuity amounts paid to the territory's top elected officials, citing fiscal responsibility as his primary motive. The bill, No. 36-0032, aims to prevent future runaway pension costs by fixing the base salaries used in retirement calculations for the governor and lieutenant governor at \$150,000 and \$125,000,

respectively.

The measure was filed following the implementation of salary increases for the governor and lieutenant governor, as recommended by the Virgin Islands Public Officials Compensation Commission (VIPOCC). Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s salary rose from \$150,000 to \$192,000, and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach's from \$125,000 to \$168,000.

Under current law, both officials are eligible to receive retirement annuities equal to 80% of their salaries after completing eight years in office. Without legislative intervention, the new salaries will significantly increase their post-retirement earnings—up to \$136,800 annually for the governor and \$117,100 for the lieutenant governor.

Vialet's proposed cap would limit those annuities to \$120,000 and \$100,000, respectively—figures that reflect 80% of the original, pre-increase salaries. While these amounts are still substantial, the senator says the cap will prevent even larger obligations in the future.

“These are not hypothetical numbers — this is exactly what the law allows once these raises take effect,” Vialet said in a press release issued Wednesday. “That’s precisely why Bill No. 36-0032 was drafted: to place a responsible cap on these benefits before they balloon even further.”

The legislation has sparked debate within the Legislature and the broader community. Critics have questioned whether the bill goes far enough, while others have accused Vialet of being politically motivated.

The senator pushed back strongly against that notion. “This bill is not personal. It’s principled,” Vialet stated. “Every senator has the power to draft legislation including those who now criticize this bill. But talk is cheap. Action is what matters.”

Vialet, who rejoined the Senate this term, positioned the bill as a measure of good governance and long-term sustainability. He argued that without intervention, escalating executive compensation could place undue strain on the Government Employees’ Retirement System.

“This bill is not about punishing anyone,” he reiterated. “It’s about putting guardrails in place for the benefit of the entire Virgin Islands community.”

Vialet also pushed back on suggestions that others were preparing similar measures. “I rejoined the Legislature this term and was the first to bring forward a bill that directly addresses gubernatorial pension increases. That speaks volumes,” he said.

He invited his colleagues to engage in substantive legislative action rather than public posturing. “If anyone wants to cap retirement even further or roll back the raises entirely, bring the bill. Let’s vote on it. Let’s get it done. But don’t distort the facts or mislead the public.”

The bill is currently under consideration by the Senate. If enacted, it would preserve the current annuity levels for the top two officials while preventing future increases from inflating those retirement payments further.