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Senators Passe Bill to Repeal Executive Raises; Unanimous Vote Sets Stage for Veto Showdown

With a unanimous vote, senators passed Bill 36-0085 to block automatic salary hikes for executive officials, defending Senate authority and bracing for a likely veto from Governor Bryan, whose earlier comments dismissed the effort as political theater.

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36th Legislature senators on June 4, 2025. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

As some may have anticipated, on Wednesday lawmakers voted unanimously in favor of [Bill 36-0085](#), which seeks to “prevent or rescind any automatic implementation of salary adjustments made pursuant to the recommendations of the Virgin Islands Public Officials Compensation Commission.”

“The Legislature cannot allow its constitutional prerogative to be eroded through procedural oversights or administrative end-runs,” declared Senate President Milton Potter. He argued that the bill, sponsored by Senator Alma Francis Heyliger, “restores the proper balance of power.”

It is expected that Governor Albert Bryan will veto the bill, but with unanimous support in the legislative chamber, lawmakers can easily override the veto. Senators have also signaled their intent to seek the intervention of the Judiciary if need be.

“This bill will likely be challenged. The executive branch may test our interpretation versus theirs in the court, and while I stand firmly on the side of the law, we must also stand firmly on the side of the people,” declared Senator Angel Bolques. He, however, advised all parties involved that “now is not the time to spend millions of dollars fighting a legal battle over raises.” According to the at-large senator, “redirecting scarce public resources to battle in court only deepens the burden on our residents and the quality of life.”

Still, Bolques insisted that the Legislature is simply doing its part to “protect the rule of law, the public trust, and the financial resources of the Government of the Virgin Islands.”

“Let us resolve this, not in a courtroom, but right here, right now, with the power of the Legislature where legislation belongs,” he urged.

Like her colleague, Senator Marise James felt that endorsing the bill “is a step in reasserting our authority.” Legislative authority in setting salaries for the governor, lieutenant governor, and other key leadership positions was [hotly debated](#) during the Committee of the Whole on Monday, when the bill was first heard. Senators James and Kurt Vialet had attempted to dissect, then, the legality of the automatic approval of VIPOCC’s recommendations.

Suitably satisfied that the Legislature was authorized to take the necessary action to rescind the raises, lawmakers again affirmed their intention to act.

“We ain’t gonna make these things personal, but we gonna do what we have to do,” promised Senator Dwayne DeGraff. Similarly, Senator Clifford Joseph promised to “act to protect our institution as well.” He lamented that the governor was not “open to discussion or to compromise” but maintained that as the first branch of government, “we’re supposed to be dictating salaries. Salaries are not supposed to be dictated to us.”

Even with all the firm language from the lawmakers, it was the [Legislature's failure to act](#) within a 90-day review window as outlined in VIPOCC’s enabling statute, that caused the raises to take effect. Governor Bryan has criticized the senators for the [alleged staging of political theater](#).

For most senators, the salary increases are badly timed. “Not only can we not afford it, it is not the right thing to do,” said Senator Francis Heyliger, the bill’s sponsor. “As representatives of the people, we have to be their voice.”

“No one, I believe, works in public service in these positions for the money. We should do it for the people. It’s a purpose, it’s a calling,” maintained Senator Marvin Blyden. “If that’s not what you want, you’re in the wrong profession.”

As Bill 36-0085 moves to Governor Albert Bryan’s desk, Senator Novelle Francis is reflecting on the ripple effects of the salary increase debacle. “What started out as a good intention has been, unfortunately, fatally flawed, and certainly presents some challenges for us moving forward.” He lamented that “relationships have been damaged as a result of this fallout,” but [“the public has](#)

spoken.”

The eyes of Virgin Islanders now turn to the course of action that will follow Governor Albert Bryan Jr.’s expected veto. The governor has called the legislative action “a total waste of the community’s time.”

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