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Senate Panel Advances 17 Bills, Including Pension Cap, Custody Consent Reform, and Sanitation Law Overhaul

Rules and Judiciary approved 17 bills ahead of Friday's session, including legislation redefining consent in police custody, capping gubernatorial pensions, raising sanitation fines, and establishing a Virgin Islands Gun Violence Awareness Week.

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Nelcia Charlemagne **June 26, 2025**

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Seventeen bills previously heard in their relevant committees of jurisdiction were vetted by members of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary on Wednesday. All seventeen measures were successful.

Among them was [Bill 36-0024](#), which amends Virgin Islands Code to declare a person incapable of consent to sexual relations while the person is in police custody. An amendment to that bill, in part, changes the language from police officer to law enforcement official. “That would cover the full spectrum to cover individuals who are working in the penitentiary as well,” explained Senator Angel Bolques Jr., who made the amendment. Additions to the bill also speak to “traffic stops and questioning pursuant to an investigation after persons are detained.”

Bolques also made amendments to [Bill 36-0043](#), which seeks to raise fines for sanitation offenses to as much as \$900 in the first instance. “You’ll notice that the amounts have lowered [from the bill’s original language], so they’re not as high as they were before,” Mr. Bolques stated. “It introduces a risk-based inspection framework. This measure ensures that violations are addressed fairly and proportionately based on the actual threat that they pose to public health,” he declared. The amendment gives the Department of Health “clear authority to act swiftly in the case of an imminent health hazard” as well.

Senator Ray Fonseca, meanwhile, has promised to introduce additional legislation to address “what could be sanitation violations” by the Government of the Virgin Islands.

Lawmakers also gave the stamp of approval to [Bill 36-0032](#), which limits the salary amount used to compute the service retirement annuity for the governor and the lieutenant governor of the Virgin Islands. “I think we ought to look at a comprehensive pension reform, not just the governor and the lieutenant governor,” noted Senate President Milton Potter.

Under current law, both officials are eligible to receive retirement annuities equal to 80% of their salaries after completing eight years in office. If the governor’s battle to keep his salary increase is upheld in a pending court battle, the new salaries will significantly increase Messrs Bryan and Roach post-retirement earnings—up to \$136,800 annually for the governor and \$117,100 for the lieutenant governor.

Sponsored by Senator Kurt Vialet, the proposed cap would limit those annuities to \$120,000 and \$100,000 for Bryan and Roach 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.

The committee greenlit [Bill 36-0027](#), Jah’niqua’s Law, sponsored by Senator Kenneth Gittens. Additionally, Senator Alma Francis Heyliger’s bills relating to automatic expungement ([36-0057](#)) and liability exemption for 911 operators ([36-0031](#)) were forwarded to the next step of the legislative process.

The following leases, bills, and resolutions will also be heard in an upcoming Legislative session.

- [Bills 36-0062 and 36-0098](#), leases between the Government of the Virgin Islands and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Caribbean Buzz LLC, respectively.
- [Bill 36-0035](#) moved the GVI closer to implementing the Stephen J. Beck, Jr. Achieving Better Life Experiences (ABLE) Act, a federal mandate signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2014.

- Bills 36-0050 and 36-0051 relating to the practice of social work.
- [Bill 36-0029](#) honoring the late Sonya Hough, the creator of the Crucian Hook bracelet.
- [Bill 36-0007](#) honoring James Sasso after seventeen years of distinguished service in the mortuary and funeral service industry
- [Bill 36-0090](#) establishing Virgin Islands Gun Violence Awareness Week
- [Bill 36-0012](#) streamlining the disability annuity approvals within the Government Employees' Retirement System (GERS)
- [Bill 36-0097](#) a resolution recognizing the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) on its 50th anniversary

The next legislative session is scheduled for Friday, June 27th.

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