

Violet Pushes for Boost in School Imprest Funds as Lawmakers Advance Amended Education Bill

Senator Kurt Violet's bill to increase school imprest funds from \$50,000 to \$65,000 annually has passed committee, with lawmakers also approving an oversight amendment requiring biannual audits by the Inspector General to ensure accountability.

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Senator Kurt Violet has moved an amendment to his recently presented legislation, Bill 36-0064, that will increase the amount in the imprest fund awarded to each school by \$15,000 annually. It was one of several bills amended during Wednesday's meeting of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary.

Currently, money from the Education Initiative Fund is often not distributed until well into the fiscal year, and nearly every school must make haste to spend all of it before September 30th. If a balance remains in the fund, it is subtracted from subsequent allotments. The [original legislation](#) from Violet allows school administrators to access imprest funds until expended.

On Wednesday, Senator Violet informed his colleagues of an amendment to “increase the amount that is given to schools from \$50,000 to 65,000, and it's also going to increase the amount per student over 500 from \$15 to \$20.” According to the lawmaker, the recommendations for the increases were made by the “superintendent of schools in the St. Thomas district.”

The Government of the Virgin Islands is preoccupied with cost savings. But Violet argued that “it's not going to cost the Government of the Virgin Islands any additional monies because of the number of school closures that we have had over the years.” Because “the amount of money distributed for the fund has significantly decreased,” he argued, “increasing the amount [to] \$65,000 won't be an issue, and there's sufficient monies in the account to be able to fund the increase.”

A second amendment to the bill was authored by committee chair Senator Carla Joseph. It requires the Inspector General to “conduct a biannual audit of each imprest fund checking account and issue a report of the findings to the governor and the Legislature of the Virgin Islands.”

The committee ultimately approved both amendments and passed the bill through to an upcoming legislative session. There, the full suite of lawmakers is expected to greenlight the bill. Then it will be up to Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to decide whether the increase in the imprest fund for each public school is tenable given the territory's current fiscal position.