

Gittens Threatens Subpoena Over Missing Governor Salary Documents Amid Executive Pay Controversy

Senator Kenneth Gittens warned of issuing a subpoena after the Division of Personnel failed to deliver NOPAs tied to controversial raises for the governor and lieutenant governor, amid shifting effective dates and questions over legal compliance.

Government / **Published On June 27, 2025 05:49 AM /**

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Senator Kenneth Gittens has warned that he may issue a subpoena to compel the Division of Personnel (DOP) to produce the Notices of Personnel Action (NOPA) related to the recent salary increases for the governor and lieutenant governor of the Virgin Islands.

The controversy emerged during Thursday's meeting of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance, where the DOP appeared to justify its \$63,364,866 budget request.

Senator Gittens pressed DOP Director Cindy Richardson on the agency's failure to provide documentation he requested weeks ago. "I think it was about June 3 I requested through the chair to receive copies of the governor and lieutenant governor's NOPA. Today is June 26. Why haven't we received those NOPAs?" Gittens asked.

Ms. Richardson responded that her office had not received a formal written request.

That explanation drew a sharp rebuke from Gittens. "You had a request here on the record through the chair, which you stated that you would provide to us. And we said you should get it to us before the close of that business day. And that's gone," he said. "This is why we say that oftentimes we are met with disrespect. Whether or not it was sent to you in writing, it was a request publicly."

Gittens made it clear he would escalate the matter if necessary. "If I have to make a motion for a subpoena tomorrow in session, then so be it. But we ask for that and we have a right to receive it," he said. The full Legislature is scheduled to convene Friday morning to consider bills recently approved by the Committee on Rules and Judiciary.

Ms. Richardson declined to offer further comment on the issue.

However, during the hearing, she did inform Senator Kurt Vialet that the "effective date was changed to January 13, 2025." Lawmakers had previously been told the raises would take effect in December 2024.

Vialet, referencing the enabling legislation, noted that it stipulated any such increases should occur after the next general election. "There's also a portion of the same legislation that states that any increase would be after the next general election, and the next general election would have been 2026 based on that particular report," he said. "I guess the court will figure out all of that as we move on."

Senator Hubert Frederick questioned the funding source for the pay raises. Ms. Richardson explained that the money would come from "the respective office vacancy savings or whatever they already had in their approved budget."

According to her testimony, the total salary adjustment brings the governor's compensation to \$201,692 and the lieutenant governor's to \$176,642.55. "Salary went from \$150,000 to the \$192,088 and then in the second term, you added that 5% and that's how you got to that \$201,692," Ms. Richardson said.

The salary increases have been met with sharp criticism, particularly given the territory's ongoing economic challenges. While members of the Legislature have spoken out against the raises, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has defended the decision, citing the recommendations of the V.I. Public Officials Compensation Commission.