

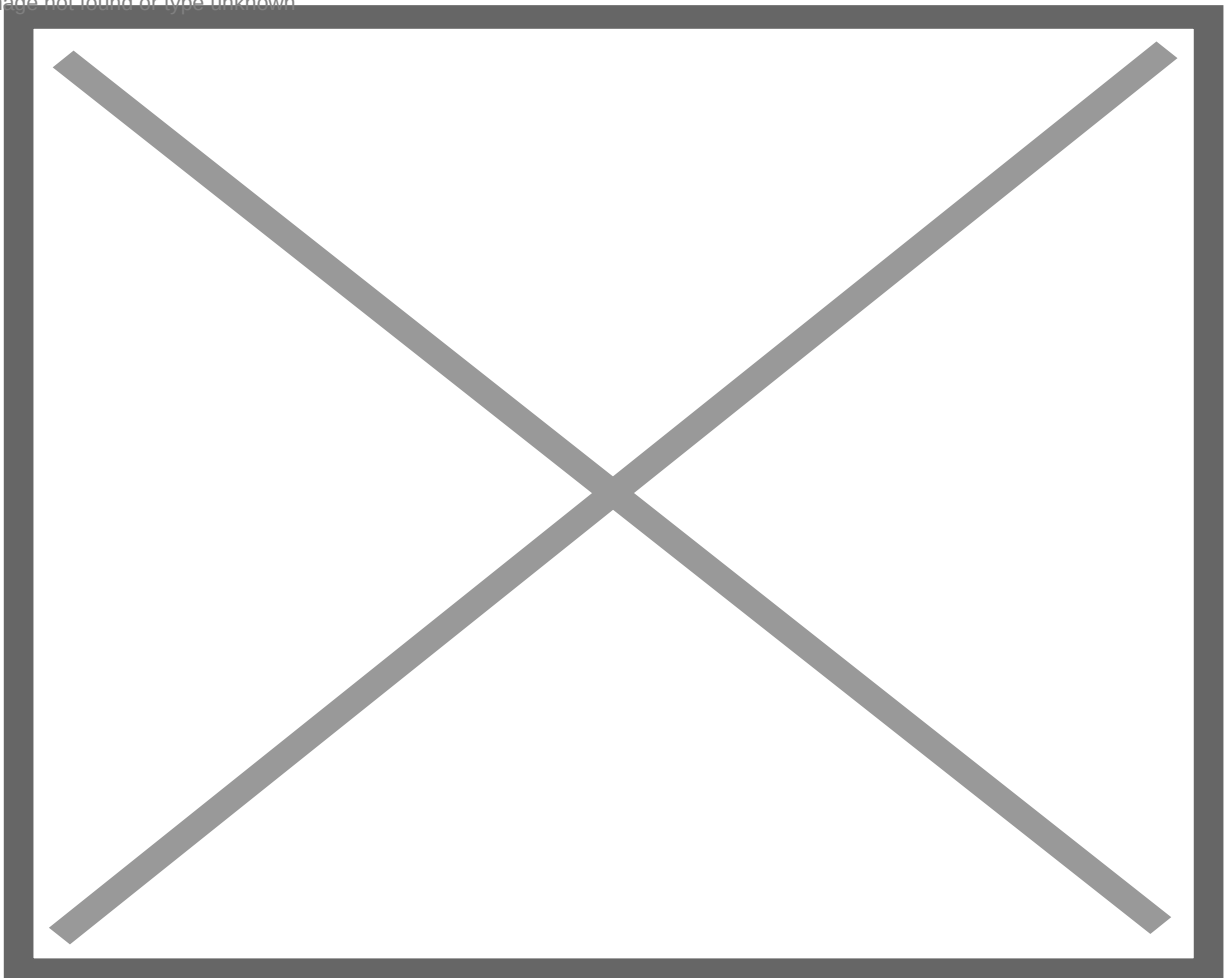
Salary Showdown Ends in Two Overrides as Senators Stand United, Demand Fiscal Answers from Executive Branch

Though Bryan announced he would not sue over the salary rollback, Senator Heyliger raised new concerns about whether overpaid funds would be returned; she criticized what she called the governor's dismissive stance on returning executive increases.

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Senators Alma Francis Heyliger and Kurt Vialet at Friday's session, where they led successful veto overrides on executive pay cuts and minimum wage increases for government workers. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

As promised, lawmakers have overridden Governor Albert Bryan Jr's veto of Bill 36-0053 relating to an increase in minimum wage salaries for government workers, and Bill 36-0085 that rescinds the salary increases awarded to the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. The overrides by the bills' sponsors, Senators Kurt Violet and Alma Francis Heyliger respectively, were among the first orders of business during Friday's Legislative Session.

Senator Violet had first introduced the minimum wage increase in the 34th Legislature where it was also vetoed by the Governor. He [reintroduced it upon his return](#) as a member of the 36th Legislature, and further won his colleagues' support to increase the minimum wage first from \$27,040 to \$32,000, and then to \$35,000.

Shortly after the override vote, while the Legislative Session was ongoing, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. issued a press release condemning the move. Friday's [statement](#) accused the 36th Legislature of abandoning "fiscal responsibility in favor of short-term political convenience." Mr. Bryan's cutting statement said that the Legislature's decision was made with "no financial analysis, no implementation plan, and no consultation with the agencies expected to comply with this law."

"This override represents a return to short-sighted and reckless decision-making. It is official - the inmates are running the asylum," Governor Bryan declared.

Senator Violet was apparently unfazed. "How can you feel comfortable making an argument to receive \$51,000 in a raise to \$201,000, and in the same time craft an argument why somebody making \$27,000 can't go to \$35,000." Mr. Violet continued. "When we make the responsible decision, the inmates are running the asylum. Who does that?...Less than two hours after the bill is overridden there is a press release? What upsets you so much?"

"The body stood up today...we are going to dictate how this government is going to proceed and move forward. Nobody need to be sorry for that. The Legislature is given the ability to control the purse strings. Not the other way around...The \$33 million in Epstein funds that we don't know where it was spent could have covered every single raise we have here today. The \$100 million given to WAPA, and the rates remain the same, could have covered everything," said an impassioned Violet.

He fought back at the governor for making the Legislature seem like "we don't know what we doing." "How can you put out that you don't have a fiscal analysis when you have departments that run fiscal analysis...Let's stop playing games and let's move this government forward responsibly."

All 15 senators voted in favor of both override actions. Senator Marise James, however, would later issue a word of caution. "In a small, struggling economy like ours, every policy choice has ripple effects. A small business owner simply cannot afford to pay \$35,000 for entry level positions." She and Senator Dwayne DeGraff have both emphasized the importance of working with the private sector to achieve "parity." Mr. Violet's bill covers only government employees, however a general minimum wage increase is being considered.

For Senator Kenneth Gittens, both override actions "speaks volumes to our commitment to equity and responsible leadership." On Friday, he made good on his [promise to subpoena](#) Division of Personnel director Cindy Richardson to "produce the current and any adjustment NOPAS within the next 30 days of the governor, the lieutenant governor, and any executive branch leadership whose compensation has been increased." Richardson must do so by noon on Wednesday, July 3rd, 2025.

There was less tension surrounding the decision to override the veto of Bill 36-0085. Minutes before that override action, [Governor Bryan told the Consortium](#) that he would not pursue legal action against the 36th Legislature's efforts to roll back his salary increase. Lawmakers had previously indicated their willingness to fight the matter in the courts. The governor's decision not to oppose the veto override, however, signals that the salary increase saga could soon be at an end.

Despite her legislative victory, Senator Alma Francis Heyliger was not completely satisfied with the current state of play, however. She wanted to know whether any of the "excess" funds that may have already been paid could be clawed back. "The governor said he's not taking us to court...At no point did he say he's going to return anything," said Senator Alma Francis Heyliger, who sponsored the legislation. "His attitude is, 'leave it alone, and until the Legislature makes the decision to verify if I've returned these monies or even does anything, let them be the ones to take me to court'," she stated. "I am a hopeful optimistic. I hope this is not the case."

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