

Lt. Governor's Office Pressed on Vacant \$1.4M Building and Low Salaries Amid Record Revenue Performance

Despite generating over \$132 million in revenue, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor faces scrutiny for underpaying staff and spending \$1.4 million on rent while a purchased government building remains unused due to unresolved HVAC and mold issues.

Senate / **Published On July 29, 2025 06:33 AM /**

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Formerly a FirstBank property, the building on King Street in Christiansted was purchased by the Lieutenant Governor's Office but remains vacant due to mold and HVAC issues. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

The relatively low salaries in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor (OLG) were scrutinized on Friday during its Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance for its FY2026 budget hearing.

In her testimony, Nadja Harrigan, acting Chief of Staff, informed the Committee that the OLG is in need of staff with accounting backgrounds. That level of expertise is especially important to conduct financial analysis of the licensed companies doing business in the territory. It's one of OLG's many goals for the upcoming year. These individuals are needed in the OLG's Division of Banking Insurance and Financial Regulation, where four vacancies exist territory-wide.

Glendina Matthew, head of that division, admitted to Senator Marvin Blyden that salaries are often the "challenge" in filling these roles. "Many times you're competing with other agencies who may have higher salaries, and we're asking for the same requirements," Ms. Matthew said. She is certain that with higher salaries, "we would be able to attract more persons" to fill vacancies, some which have been open for at least two to three years.

Lawmakers repeatedly commended the OLG's revenue generating prowess. The entity was branded as the second highest revenue earner for the Government of the Virgin Islands. The Division of Banking Insurance and Financial Regulation, alone, is expected to collect \$38 million and an additional \$2 million in money transmission fees in the fiscal year. The total estimated revenue collection across all OLG divisions, including transmission fees, is \$132,609,263. For Senator Blyden, the LGO needs to "be creative and find a way to adjust those salaries in order to onboard individuals."

Senator Kurt Vialet also contributed to the salary discussion. He informed Ms. Harrigan and her team that other government entities have similarly titled positions that "don't have the responsibility that the Lieutenant Governor Office have" yet "their salary is literally better."

Senator Marise James was also troubled by the salary disparities across departments. New to the Finance Committee, Ms. James admitted that she was "becoming aware of the salaries within the government as a whole." She used departmental attorneys as an example, explaining that some collect upwards of \$200,000 annually. The Lieutenant Governor, however, has a salary of \$125,000. For Ms. James, there is a problem with paying the "right salary for a high performing agency like the Lieutenant Governor's Office." She praised the OLG's collection rates, with several divisions recording increases over the last fiscal year.

"I am advocating for higher salaries for everybody in the Lieutenant Governor's Office, including the lieutenant governor," Sen. James declared. Referencing the employees, Ms. James noted that "if you think about it, their salaries cannot increase unless his increases." A [now rescinded increase](#) for the lieutenant governor and governor was one of the most controversial territorial developments in the first half of 2025. However, Sen. James maintained that "we're being foolish in this government in terms of compensation, especially when it comes to a high-performing group of people."

A second sticking point for lawmakers was the OLG's office arrangement. On St. Croix, the OLG has relocated several divisions to the Old Caribe Home Center Building in Castle Coakley. In February 2024, the Lieutenant Governor's Office successfully closed on the purchase of the First Bank Building in Christiansted. Both the Office of the Tax Assessor and the Office of the Recorder of Deeds and Tellers are intended to be housed in that building. However, more than a year on, the building remains vacant.

According to acting Chief-of-Staff Nadja Harrigan, the OLG “subsequently discovered that two air conditioning units and a condenser must be replaced.” The OLG is currently procuring these services. Ms. Harrigan assured that the office is “diligently striving to fix these challenges, to complete the relocation to the building as soon as possible.” According to Ms. Harrigan, other moves “had to be prioritized in the interest of workplace health and safety.” For example, the Recorder of Deeds Office had to be relocated from its Christiansted location due to “high mold counts.”

Committee chair Senator Novelle Francis was interested in a timeline for relocation into the First Bank Building. “When we look at your expenditures of \$1.4 million in rentals, I think it's so critical that you're able to move into your own building.” Ms. Harrigan again referenced the need to change out air conditioning units, which she is confident “isn't going to be a long process.” In the upcoming weeks, OLG will undertake another assessment of the building.

“What's taking so long for the assessment?...Before you purchased the building, you had an idea of how you were going to utilize the building. I'm sure you had done a walk-through,” Sen. Francis wondered. He was not satisfied with Ms. Harrigan’s response. She reiterated the need to address mold issues, but promised that “we've begun the process, and we are going to move forward.” Meetings with an architect are underway.

“I think that we could walk and chew gum at the same time,” countered Sen. Francis. “There's some opportunity there for you to minimize that mold exposure by placing them in a decent building,” he advised. Ms. Harrigan insisted that the Recorder of Deeds is “very happy in their new home.”

“You say the employees are happy, but they're happy at the expense of the government paying rent,” Sen. Violet replied. “It's been going on four years that we allocated money for those buildings, just so that we could reduce the rent.” He called the lack of movement “disheartening.”

This year, the OLG's [general fund request](#) is \$7,743,246, \$556,000 more than its FY2025 appropriation. The entire increase is for salaries and fringe benefits, as several positions in the FY2025 budget were not funded at 100%. Union-negotiated salary increases must also be applied in the new fiscal year, accounting for at least some of the increase as well.