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Board of Elections Chair Cites Disrespect, Disorder, and Rancor as Obstacles to ‘People’s Business’

Legislative testimony revealed a Board of Elections unable to reach quorum, plagued by infighting, breaches of protocol, and inactive subcommittees, with lawmakers warning that dysfunction threatens fair and transparent elections in the territory.

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V.I. Board of Elections Chairman Raymond Williams at the V.I. Legislature on Friday, Aug. 8th, 2025. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

The V.I. Board of Elections’ internal conflicts, recurring quorum issues, and inability to conduct orderly meetings were at the center of a tense discussion in the Legislature on Friday. Appearing before the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection,

Board Chair Raymond Williams described a body plagued by dysfunction, breaches of protocol, and ongoing disputes that have stalled its ability to “do the people’s business.”

Mr. Williams told lawmakers that while he was available to participate in Friday’s hearing, he had no official testimony to present on behalf of the board. He explained that a break in quorum during Thursday’s meeting meant there was no agreed-upon statement to share. The meeting itself had been delayed from July for the same reason — a lack of quorum.

“The current board suffers from a lot of issues that basically has not allowed us to quote unquote do the people’s business,” Mr. Williams said. Seeking to curb “disrespect” and “constant consternation among members and the public,” he switched from online to in-person meetings. However, “several members from the St. Thomas district decided” not to travel to St. Croix and were later accommodated virtually.

The change in format, he said, did little to improve decorum. Interruptions and interjections continued, along with what Mr. Williams called serious violations of board protocol. “If we’re in executive session and board members are sharing the link of an executive session, that’s a violation,” he noted.

Mr. Williams said he had proposed a retreat for members to receive training in Robert’s Rules of Order and other protocols, and to address questions or objections to [Act 8690](#), which sought to codify Board and Supervisor roles, address quorum contradictions, and give the Board final decision-making power. The measure failed.

Members, however, declined. Calling for an end to the rancor, he urged the board to “not continue to promote rancor, disingenuousness, to promote this level of disrespect,” but instead to “reconsider their differences, and let’s get the business of the people as our priority.”

Despite lacking a unified position due to the quorum break, board members discussed legislation defining their role in territorial elections. Opinions were split on Senator Alma Francis Heyliger’s unsuccessful bill to redefine political party nomination rules. “We’re supposed to be impartial and non-partisan,” said member Florine Audain-Hassell, while others backed the bill’s goal of establishing clear timelines for primary plans.

Concerns over meeting management persisted. Some members recommended instituting a code of conduct with sanctions, while others encouraged Mr. Williams to more forcefully exercise his authority as chair.

Senate Committee Chair Senator Avery Lewis lamented the situation. “We can’t continue business like this. Each meeting is a cost to the people, whether it's dollar value or informational value or getting the work done,” he said. Senator Carla Joseph, a former board member, agreed training was essential and asked about available disciplinary measures. Censure, Mr. Williams replied, was the only option.

Senator Novelle Francis warned that the board’s dysfunction is “hampering our ability to complete the mission statement, which speaks to a fair, accessible, secure and transparent election system.” He also pointed out that the board’s subcommittees were largely inactive, suggesting that restoring their function could improve the full board’s operations. Senator Franklin Johnson raised concerns about public trust, noting, “people don’t trust the system because they’re not getting the information needed,” and asked how Mr. Williams planned to address the lack of progress.

Mr. Williams said that rancor among members is an issue the board had “grown beyond” in previous years but has now resurfaced “for multiple reasons.” His goal, he emphasized, “is to get a working board to do the business of the people.”

Exactly how to achieve that, however, was left unresolved, as the source of the discord was not clearly identified during the hearing. Senator Alma Francis Heyliger concluded, “We need to figure out what’s happening with this board because unless that part is cleaned up, this infighting isn’t going to stop.”

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