

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Auditor Shortage Slows Inspector General's Probe of WAPA, Education, and VIPD as Lawmakers Push for Action

With only 11 auditors, the Inspector General's Office is struggling to keep pace with high-priority audits, including ongoing WAPA investigations and new probes into Education, VIPD, and OMB, prompting senators to call for faster action and more resources

Senate / **Published On August 19, 2025 05:56 AM /**

Nelcia Charlemagne **August 19, 2025**



Aerial shot of WAPA's Richmond power plant on St. Croix, where multiple audits by the Office of the Inspector General are underway, including investigations into contracting, billing, and a \$2 million offshore payment. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

With only 11 auditors, the small team at the Office of the Inspector General, a critical piece of the government's accountability framework, is being forced to prioritize certain investigations and audits over others, despite all being considered equally important.

Delia Thomas, the territory's Inspector General, appeared before the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance on Monday to defend her Office's request of \$2,898,392 for FY2026.

At the request of Governor Albert Bryan Jr., the Office of the Inspector General has been asked to audit the contracting practices of the Office of Management and Budget, Department of Education, and Virgin Islands Police Department. These audits remain in the planning phase, Ms. Thomas told lawmakers, "due to the unavailability of auditors to devote full-time to this assignment." Currently, 5 of the Office's 11 auditors are "fully engaged" in WAPA assignments, investigating the Vitol propane contract and the "\$2 million offshore payment." Approximately six years ago, WAPA claimed to have [fallen victim to a phishing scam](#), which resulted in them wiring \$2.3 million to a purported vendor which turned out to be phony.

There are three more WAPA audits underway, relating to its contracting practices, billing and collection, and deductions for employees' loan payments, Ms. Thomas noted.

The six remaining auditors are "working on multiple assignments", explained Ms. Thomas. She assured lawmakers that upon completion of the Taxicab Commission's audit, members will move on to new assignments. The Office is currently focused on the TCC's "compliance with the laws regarding approving taxi licences, the sale of and accounting for medallions, the inspection of taxicabs, revenue collections, and expenses of the Taxicab Commission."

Though Ms. Thomas wants to hire more auditors, there are currently only two funded vacancies. Combined personnel and fringe costs for the Office's 22 positions, including the two vacancies, are \$2,384,211, taking up 82% of its total budget request. Until funds for additional staff are allocated, the Office of the Inspector General will have to creatively manage its workload. "I have one auditor on three different assignments," Ms. Thomas explained.

The OIG is also facing external challenges. It is currently contending with timeline delays caused by lags in the provision of key information. In WAPA's case, Ms. Thomas told lawmakers that "we have received some information, although other important supporting data needed have not been received." A meeting is scheduled with WAPA CEO Karl Knight to assess how they can "expedite this process."

Committee chair Senator Novelle Francis expressed frustration over the slow pace of the investigation. "I don't like the idea of this delay, or that information is not being turned in in a timely fashion," he said. He encouraged the inspector general to leverage her authority to issue subpoenas. "I can't think of anything that would help us other than the fact that I would have to take more initiative to issue more subpoenas," Ms. Thomas agreed.

Despite the challenges at hand, lawmakers have applauded the OIG for its continued efforts. Senator Hubert Frederick was pleased to learn of a surprise cash count

conducted at the Eldra Schulterbrandt Residential Care Facility, and encouraged the Office to conduct more checks across the government.

To do so, the OIG must manage its limited human and financial resources effectively. After the lion's share of funding is taken up by salaries, the 28% remaining is divided between supplies at \$101,938; other services at \$340,796; utilities at \$43,000; and capital outlay at \$28,447.

In FY2025, the unexpected failure of the Office's air conditioning unit created a dent in the budget. So did the need to replace the underground sewage line at the Office's Irvin "Brownie" Brown Sr. Street location. The two repair projects cost \$71,600, eating into the \$80,000 annual maintenance budget.