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Formal Review Sought Over Senator Carla Joseph's Conduct Amid "Ongoing Pattern" of Disorder in Legislature

Sen. Kenneth Gittens accused the Rules Committee chair of "unprofessional and disruptive" behavior during Thursday's session, saying her actions violated procedure and eroded public trust. Sen. Alma Francis Heyliger also called the remarks disrespectful.

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Janeke Simon **October 11, 2025**

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Senator Carla Joseph, chair of the Rules and Judiciary Committee, faces a formal complaint over her conduct during a contentious legislative hearing. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

The furore during Thursday's meeting of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary has resulted in a formal complaint about the behavior of committee chair Senator Carla Joseph.

Senator Kenneth Gittens wrote to Milton Potter, President of the 36th Legislature, expressing “deep concern” over the way she handled the business of the committee during what was scheduled to be a hearing on two bills sponsored by Senator Clifford Joseph.

A motion to remove those bills from the agenda [sparked a contentious exchange between lawmakers](#), as Ms. Joseph harshly criticized her colleagues for preventing the assembled testifiers from having the opportunity to speak. “We have representation here from the Attorney General's Office,” Senator Joseph pointed out. “To dismiss them is very unconscionable.”

As it turned out, Sen. Joseph reportedly knew beforehand that the two measures — one dealing with the banning of assault rifles, silencers and suppressors and the other prohibiting several cannabinoid products — were to be sent back to the committee of jurisdiction “to review, revise and strengthen the proposed amendments before proceeding further in the legislative process,” according to Sen. Gittens’s letter. Despite that foreknowledge, Sen. Joseph reportedly allowed the testifiers to convene anyway.

[\[Letter to Senate President: Unprofessional Conduct During Rules and Judiciary Committee Hearing\]](#)

Gittens called Joseph's remarks following her objection to the motion removing the bills from the agenda “entirely inappropriate.” The lawmaker used her point of personal privilege to “publicly demean members of her own committee,” Gittens wrote in the letter. “Her comments were not only unprofessional and unbecoming of a presiding officer, but they also violated established rules of order, specifically, the prohibition against explaining a ‘no’ vote after the fact,” he wrote.

Far from being an isolated incident, Gittens characterized Joseph's behavior on Thursday as an “ongoing pattern of disruptive conduct and misuse of procedural privileges.” He argued that she “continues to erode the decorum of this institution and exposes our proceedings to public ridicule” by her behavior, and claims that it contributes to the erosion of trust in the Legislature by Virgin Islanders.

In his letter, sent on the same day as the fractious committee hearing, Senator Gittens called for a “serious review” of Senator Joseph's conduct.

Senator Alma Francis Heyliger, who also characterized Senator Joseph's comments to be “very disrespectful and disingenuous,” reportedly decided that she would ask to be removed from the Committee on Rules and Judiciary if the chairwoman's conduct is not addressed.