

Judge Dismisses Case Seeking Removal of V.I. Elections Board Chair Raymond Williams, Rejects TRO After Finding No Conflict, No Evidence

Judge Alphonso Andrews Jr. dismissed all claims seeking to remove Board Chair Raymond Williams, finding no conflict of interest or fraud. Williams said the case stemmed from misinformation, while plaintiff Collister Fahie vowed to “speak the truth.”

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Collister Fahie, representing plaintiffs pro se, failed to present evidence supporting claims of conflict and illegality against Elections Board Chair Raymond Williams. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

A civil lawsuit seeking to remove V.I. Board of Elections Chairman Raymond Williams from the board and halt its meetings was dismissed Friday after Superior Court Judge Alphonso G. Andrews, Jr. rejected a request for a temporary restraining order and found the plaintiffs had not presented evidence to support their allegations of illegality, fraud, or conflict of interest.

The case was brought by board members Lawrence Boschulte, Harriet Mercer, and Atanya Springette, along with Collister Fahie, who represented the group pro se. The hearing began at 10:00 a.m. and concluded after 4:00 p.m., with two interruptions caused by disconnections in the virtual setup used by the St. Thomas–St. John–based members participating via Zoom, while Fahie appeared in person in the St. Croix courtroom. Assistant Attorney General Christopher Timmons, civil chief at the V.I. Department of Justice, represented Mr. Williams.

The plaintiffs asked the court to remove Mr. Williams from his position and from the board, claiming the Board of Elections had met without a quorum and that Mr. Williams’s roles as board chair, executive director of the V.I. Lottery, and a commissioner on the V.I. Public Services Commission created a conflict of interest. They also alleged “illegal activities,” fraud, and constitutional violations.

Judge Andrews dismissed all counts, concluding the plaintiffs failed to substantiate their claims. He noted that no documentary evidence supported the wide-ranging accusations; plaintiffs relied on witness statements that did not establish the alleged wrongdoing.

A central dispute involved quorum rules. Fahie argued that a Board of Elections quorum required “at least three members of each district” to be present. Under questioning, he acknowledged conflicting provisions in the law and conceded that it had been at least three years since a rules and regulations meeting had been held.

Judge Andrews clarified that the three-per-district requirement applies only when the board is meeting to promulgate rules and regulations under the V.I. Code, whereas “a majority of the board” constitutes a quorum for other business. The defense also referenced precedent explaining how legislative changes consolidated the election bodies into a single board with two districts, limiting the continuing effect of older provisions tied to separate boards. As framed by the court, the plaintiffs’ theory that every meeting required three members from each district did not align with the statute’s distinct quorum standards.



Assistant Attorney General Christopher Timmons, representing Raymond Williams, successfully argued for dismissal of the case, with the court finding no evidence or legal basis for the plaintiffs' claims. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

On the conflict claim, Judge Andrews examined the Virgin Islands conflict-of-interest statute and the lottery director statute. He explained that the Lottery Code's mandate that the director "devote his entire time and attention" to the office cannot be read to require 24/7 exclusivity; it must be understood in the context of ordinary government service. He also analyzed the statutory ban on engaging in any other "profession or occupation," finding that serving on public boards does not constitute a separate profession or occupation within the plain meaning of those terms.

The court found no evidence that Mr. Williams's other public roles provided a direct monetary gain tied to his board activity, and no authority granting the court power to remove an official

elected by the voting public under the circumstances presented.

During the hearing, Fahie struggled to maintain focus on the case's core claim and to state his requests clearly. Multiple questions were objected to by the defense and sustained by the court for lack of relevance. The board members' testimony included general concerns that meetings had been boisterous or "rambunctious" at times, and that in-person meetings had been instituted after virtual sessions proved difficult to control. The court concluded these points did not substantiate the alleged legal violations.

Williams testified that he has been executive director of the V.I. Lottery for six years (appointed by Governor Albert Bryan Jr.) and was appointed to the Public Services Commission by former Governor Kenneth Mapp. He said Governor Bryan has never asked him to take any action in his favor and that he has not taken such action on his own. He described board practice as quarterly meetings (sometimes more), stipends for meeting days, meetings called by the chair (location at the chair's discretion), and a shift away from virtual sessions because it was hard to control members virtually.

During a recess, Williams spoke candidly with the Consortium, saying that the atmosphere of "misleading information" discourages people from serving in public office. "A lot of people don't want to offer themselves for public service because of situations like this — the misleading information, the continuation of the misleading of information," he said.

Williams emphasized that the Board of Elections operates under established rules, regulations, and bylaws, and that any effort to remove a chair must come from within the board itself. "If you want the chairman out of the position, get the majority of the membership to put him out of the position," he stated. "The court cannot put the chair, or any other member, off the board; it's an elected position."

He also noted that prior recall efforts had failed, saying that "because of a few people in the community who want to see the election system regress, this is why you have these people gather to try to continually put out malicious information, always attempting to undermine people's character."

After a midday Zoom outage disconnected the St. Thomas–St. John participants during Fahie's closing, court resumed around 3:00 p.m. Fahie asked for "a short continuance until Monday," stating the members wanted to "participate." Judge Andrews pressed for a basis for continuance, noting Fahie had largely concluded his remarks and that the court had previously directed parties to be available. When Fahie said the members wanted to "participate," the judge clarified, "you mean listen." Fahie added that the goal was "to have all of us together." The court denied the request, finding no sufficiently compelling circumstances and invited Fahie to finish his rebuttal.

Summarizing the five counts in the complaint, Judge Andrews rejected each as a basis for injunctive relief or removal. He noted the absence of evidence for conspiracy, abuse of authority, constitutional violations, and fraud, and held that the conflict-of-interest theory failed both factually and legally. He also highlighted that the plaintiffs had not shown irreparable harm or a likelihood of success on the merits, as would be required for a temporary restraining order.

More broadly, Judge Andrews remarked that the dispute reflected internal board friction rather than statutory violations tied to Mr. Williams's other public roles. He noted that board members "don't listen to each other" was a theme of testimony, and observed that greater mutual respect and listening might resolve the board's impasse — a resolution that lies with the board and the voters, not the court.

For clarity, the Board of Elections and Public Services Commission stipends are per diem—not salaries—and are set by statute:

- Elections Board members: \$75 per meeting day (or half-day) for official duties, plus travel/subsistence reimbursement. On election or recount days, the stipend increases to \$125 for members and \$150 for the chair.
- PSC commissioners: \$50 per day (or part of a day) for official Commission duties, plus reimbursement for necessary travel and related expenses. The per diem applies to governor-appointed commissioners; the statute does not set a higher rate for the chair.

These amounts reflect the current figures in the Virgin Islands Code and change only by legislative action.

After the hearing, Fahie told the Consortium that while the court had found no conflict of interest, he believed the broader issue extended beyond the law itself. “Even though the law, based on the Judge’s interpretation, says that there is no conflict of interest, it’s the people of the Virgin Islands that must look within themselves and see what is the truth,” he said.

The request for a temporary restraining order was denied, and the complaint dismissed. The Board of Elections remains chaired by Raymond Williams, with meetings governed by the quorum standards clarified by the court.