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Legislature Works Past 1 A.M. to Confirm Judges, Approve Tourism Commissioner and Pass Multiple Bills

The marathon session ended with confirmations for Judge Venetia Velasquez and Attorney Melanie Turnbull, approval of Jennifer M. Matarangas-King and Bernesha B. Liburd, and unanimous support for youth commendations and several key legislative measures.

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Jenifer Matarangas-King (left), Judge Venetia Velasquez (top right), and Melanie Turnbull (bottom right) following their confirmations by the Legislature. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

A marathon meeting of the Committee of the Whole and a subsequent Legislative Session continued well into the early hours of Wednesday morning.

Despite the 1 a.m. end time, Judge Venetia Velasquez and Attorney Melanie Turnbull were present to thank lawmakers for approving their nominations for critical positions in the Judiciary. Their nominations were among several legislative actions taken during the meeting.

A grateful Judge Velasquez thanked several people who have contributed to her success in the legal field. “I will not disappoint you all in the confidence you have just entrusted with me,” she promised. Judge Velasquez will soon assume her position in the Superior Court, Division of St. Croix.

Attorney Turnbull can expect to advance to the position of judge in the Superior Court’s Family Division in the District of St. Thomas-St. John. She was also thankful for the opportunity and emphasized the contributions of several individuals in her life. “It’s humbling. I don’t take it lightly. I don’t take it for granted at all,” she stated.

“Let’s get to work,” Attorney Turnbull said, signaling her dedication to her new role.

Lawmakers also gave the stamp of approval to Jennifer M. Matarangas-King for the post of Commissioner of the Department of Tourism. Bernesha B. Liburd’s nomination to the Virgin Islands Cannabis Advisory Board was also approved by the body.

There was unanimous support for [Bill 36-0044](#), a resolution honoring and commending seven-year old twin brothers Kruz and Stefon Wilson for their heroic efforts and courage displayed when saving a drowning man at Magen’s Bay Beach and for their exemplary conduct as young members of the community.

[Bill 36-0075](#), a resolution honoring and commending Austin A. Venzen posthumously for his unwavering commitment to music education and the arts, through his work in the classrooms, conducting private music lessons, on the concert stages, and by bringing Virgin Islanders together in choirs, bands, and community events, to foster camaraderie, collaboration, and cultural enrichment, also passed.

Several other bills were considered and received support from all 15 senators. Among them were:

- [Bill 36-0086](#): An act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 25, section 590b, the Caregivers Leave Act.
- [Bill No. 36-0135](#) An act amending title 29 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 5, section 294 regarding expedited building permits for developers.
- [Bill No. 36-0148](#) An act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 16, section 274 by mandating that the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission implement an electronic payment system.

The measures now await the signature of Governor Albert Bryan Jr.