

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Subpoena Effort to Compel Republican Party Chair Testimony Fails as Senators Clash Over Authority

Senators debated whether to subpoena Republican Party Chair John Yob after his repeated absences from election-related hearings, with some calling it necessary for balance and others warning that legislative authority should not extend to party operations

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V.I. Republican Party chair John Yob.

Friday's meeting of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection began on a contentious note, as lawmakers debated whether it was wise to subpoena the Republican Party chair to appear before the committee.

John Yob was invited to provide testimony on preparedness for the upcoming election. The invitation was also extended to the Democratic Party, the Board of Elections, and the Supervisor of Elections. All were in attendance, except Mr. Yob.

Mr. Yob did not attend the last meeting he was invited to, either. In August 2025, the Committee held a meeting to discuss [Bill 36-0071](#).

His absence on Friday raised the ire of some lawmakers, among them Senator Ray Fonseca, who wondered whether Mr. Yob submitted correspondence to account for his absence. The answer was negative. Senator Carla Joseph, too, noted that “the chairman of the Republican Party has been a no-show consistently.” She introduced the idea of a subpoena.

“We cannot be that every time this body calls someone in, that they feel that they cannot show up. This is the people’s house,” Senator Joseph declared. She explained that Mr. Yob’s presence would allow for “balance of testimony.”

Senator Alma Francis Heyliger, however, felt that a subpoena was an overreach. Although the Legislature’s legal counsel confirmed that it has the authority to subpoena Mr. Yob, Senator Francis Heyliger remained apprehensive. She advised that the body refrain from issuing a subpoena to a “nonprofit or independent organization that has the legal right to decline.”

“We cannot, as a body, get to the point that we’re just willy nilly subpoenaing people just because it says we can,” Sen. Francis Heyliger argued.

Senator Joseph nevertheless moved to subpoena Mr. Yob. The motion was supported by Senator Ray Fonseca and Novelle Francis, but it ultimately failed to secure the requisite number of votes. Senators Alma Francis Heyliger, Franklin Johnson, and committee chairman Avery Lewis voted against it. Senator Kenneth Gittens was absent.

In a subsequent point of personal privilege, Sen. Joseph said she was “very disappointed.” She argued that having the Republican Party represented would be a “great opportunity for them to inform us, as well as the listening and viewing public, on their process.”

Sen. Fonseca was equally disgruntled. “I need to know about his staffing. If there are any technology, if there are any transparency issues, I want to know what is the Republican party going to do. How are they going to conduct their party internal structure?” he wondered.

Sen. Francis Heyliger, however, maintained her stance that subpoena power should be used responsibly. “You can’t subpoena somebody because we want to feel emotional about how, oh, we want to know how their internal function is,” she countered. “They don’t have to come here and tell us anything...Don’t come on the floor and make it like it’s an obligation they have to do when the court clearly said they don’t have to do it.”

Friday’s debate ended with a comment from Senator Franklin Johnson. He reminded his colleagues that the internal functions of political parties are protected from the opinions of the Legislature. “What are we doing in here? Trying to dictate what the party gonna do?” he wondered.

It remains to be seen whether Mr. Yob will be invited to the Legislature before the upcoming November election, and more significantly, whether he will attend.

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