

Elections Board Says Candidates Can Run for Office and Constitutional Convention; ‘Dorna’ Ballot Name and Party Finance Oversight Debated

During a wide-ranging meeting, the Board confirmed dual candidacy for public office and the Constitutional Convention, revisited the “Dorna” Frett-Gregory ballot name issue, and rejected a motion seeking clarity on political party financial reporting.

Politics / **Published On March 06, 2026 05:52 AM /**

Janeke Simon **March 06, 2026**

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Former Sen. Donna Frett-Gregory at Agrifest 2026 on St. Croix. Her ballot name — used despite her legal first name being “Dorna” — was referenced during a V.I. Board of Elections discussion on candidate naming rules.

ST. THOMAS — The V.I. Board of Elections on Wednesday addressed several issues related to election administration ahead of the upcoming primary election, including candidate eligibility rules, the financial transparency of political parties, and ballot naming protocols.

A key topic was whether an individual can run simultaneously for a traditional public office and as a delegate to the 6th Constitutional Convention. Board member Barbara LaRonde initially raised concerns, citing Title 18, Section 7 of the election code, which prohibits dual candidacy for several major offices, including Governor, Senator, and Board of Education.

Board Chair Raymond Williams presented a legal opinion from the Office of the Attorney General dated June 7, 2024, stating that an aspirant may run simultaneously for a public office and as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, with specific exceptions for some senators. Following the clarification, Ms. LaRonde withdrew her motion seeking additional guidance.

The board also discussed financial reporting requirements for political parties. Member Cleopatra Peter referenced information from Supervisor of Elections Caroline Fawkes indicating that no political parties have filed campaign disclosure reports in more than 20 years. Ms. Peter argued that under Title 18, any group receiving contributions exceeding \$1,000 qualifies as a “committee” and must disclose financial records.

"It is imperative that Supervisor Fawkes follow the law," Ms. Peter stated, emphasizing the need for oversight regarding cash on hand and contributions.

Chairman Williams noted the distinction between a political committee and a political party, while other members noted that local affiliates of national organizations are exempt from registration requirements in the Virgin Islands. A suggestion that the Elections System take on an oversight role regarding political party finances was opposed by Ms. LaRonde, who said such organizations are non-profits registered with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, which holds responsibility for financial oversight.

A motion requesting that the Attorney General clarify whether political parties must be in “good standing” with financial disclosures failed in an 8–3 vote. Instead, the board moved toward directing the Supervisor of Elections to document what qualifies an organization as a political party in the territory.

Members also revisited a long-standing issue regarding candidate names on the ballot, referencing former Senator Donna Frett-Gregory, whose legal first name is “Dorna.” Ms. LaRonde questioned the consistency between legal names used on official documents and the names used for banking or campaign disclosures. Ms. Frett-Gregory has been in the process of changing her legal name to Donna.

Williams and Supervisor Fawkes explained that candidates may legally use a nickname on the ballot if they are widely known by that name. "She's known by that name... that has nothing to do with us," Ms. Fawkes said, noting that Ms. Frett-Gregory had provided a notarized affidavit authorizing the name used on the ballot. Mr. Williams ended the discussion, stating the board could not "go back and litigate" past election cycles.

The board voted to place the primary election date on the calendar for August 1, 2026. The motion passed in a 7–4 vote.

Near the close of the meeting, Florine Hassell read a letter addressed to Chairman Williams announcing her immediate resignation from the Board of Elections. After outlining her

involvement in board matters during her tenure, Ms. Hassell offered recommendations aimed at improving the organization's effectiveness.

"I'm concerned that we seem mired in past grievances and issues that past boards have already addressed," Ms. Hassell said. "Us the board must advance towards a more forward-thinking election system built on trust and integrity. Publicly undermining the confidence in our electoral system only serves to erode the progress we have made."

Ms. Hassell also expressed appreciation for the Elections System staff. "The remarkable efforts of the entire supervisor's office truly exemplifies the backbone of our election system," she said.

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