The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett, Congressional Candidates Urge Legislature to Fund 2026 Primary Election

Plaskett, Teri Helenese, Janelle Sarauw, Delia Smith, and Rashida Francis say a 2024 District Court ruling and a February 2026 attorney general opinion make clear that the Board of Elections must hold a primary and lawmakers must fund it.

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From left to right, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, Teri Helenese, Janelle Sarauw, Delia Smith, and Rashida Francis.

Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett and four Virgin Islands Democrats holding or seeking federal office are calling on the 36th Legislature to appropriate the money needed to

administer the 2026 primary election, arguing that funding the vote is both legally required and essential to protecting ballot access, transparency and public trust.

In a press release issued this week, Plaskett said she joined Teri Helenese, Janelle Sarauw, Delia Smith and Rashida Francis in submitting a formal letter to lawmakers urging them to provide the funding necessary for the Virgin Islands Board of Elections to conduct the 2026 primary.

The release says the letter points to a 2024 ruling by the District Court of the Virgin Islands in Republican National Committee v. Virgin Islands Board of Elections, which it says affirmed that the Board of Elections is required by law to conduct primary elections. It also cites an attorney general's opinion issued on February 27, 2026, which the release says further underscored that responsibility.

"Now is not the time to create obstacles that limit ballot access," the letter states. "At every level of election throughout the United States, Democrats are fighting to protect the public's access to the voting booth."

According to the release, the signatories also rejected any suggestion that public funding of primary elections is unusual, improper or partisan in nature. The letter, it says, notes that the vast majority of states, territories and counties across the country fund their primaries through government appropriation and includes a comprehensive survey of state and territorial laws documenting that practice.

The release further says the letter argues that having the publicly elected Board of Elections, rather than a party organization, oversee primaries is essential to maintaining voter confidence, ensuring transparency and preventing perceptions of bias or limited access.

Among the points highlighted in the release is the argument that Title 18 of the Virgin Islands Code sets forth extensive duties for the Board of Elections and the Supervisor of Elections in connection with primaries, duties the signatories say cannot be fulfilled without government funding. The letter also argues that funding the primary through the election system, rather than through a political party, promotes greater voter participation, transparency and public trust.

Plaskett and her co-signatories called on the Legislature's Democratic majority to act without delay and appropriate the necessary funds in accordance with both the law and what they described as the values of their party.

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