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Joseph Cites Gross Receipts, Hemp and LBJ Gardens as First-Term Wins; Public Safety Results Remain Hard to Measure

Joseph pointed to legislation on contractor tax obligations, intoxicating hemp products and LBJ Gardens relocation, but said his public safety measures need more data before their impact on crime, reckless driving and emergency response can be measured.

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Senator Clifford A. Joseph. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

Senator Clifford Joseph, chair of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, pointed to a broader legislative record during Monday night's V.I. Consortium Election Cycle interview when asked what his committee has produced that residents can see on crime,

reckless driving, emergency response, VIPD manpower, domestic violence and public trust.

Joseph, a first-term senator, has become closely associated with his firearms bill, which is now before Governor Albert Bryan Jr. But when asked what he had delivered beyond that measure in the public safety space, he said his work as a senator is not limited to the committee he chairs.

“Again working in the legislature. Yes, I’m the chairman of that committee, vice chair of others,” Joseph said. “I’m not only restricted to working on public safety issues.”

His clearest example was Bill 36-0063, now law, which closed a gross receipts tax loophole affecting off-island contractors doing business with the Government of the Virgin Islands.

The measure amended the V.I. Code to clarify that contractors must pay gross receipts taxes on work done in or for the Virgin Islands, regardless of where the company is physically located. Joseph said the issue emerged while he was examining ways to help local contractors, who were paying gross receipts taxes while some off-island firms receiving GVI money were able to avoid the tax because services were performed outside the territory.

The bill was especially significant in the context of disaster recovery, where engineering, architectural and construction-related firms based outside the Virgin Islands have received government contracts tied to federally funded rebuilding work. During earlier hearings on the measure, government financial officials supported the legislation, warning that the territory risked losing revenue if the law was not clarified.

Joseph said during the interview that the measure ensures companies receiving GVI funds contribute to the territory’s revenue base, even if they are headquartered elsewhere. He argued that the policy will become increasingly important as billions in disaster recovery projects continue moving through the territory.

The explanation gave Joseph one of his strongest moments in the interview. Unlike some areas where he pointed to future oversight or agency execution, the gross receipts measure allowed him to identify a specific problem, explain the inequity between local and off-island contractors, and point to a legislative fix that has already become law.

Joseph said gross receipts collections have increased since the loophole was closed, though he did not provide specific figures during the interview.

He also cited his hemp legislation, framing it as a response to federal action that narrowed the definition of hemp and addressed intoxicating hemp products that had been sold under the prior federal framework. During the interview, Joseph said the federal government had “closed a loophole” involving intoxicating hemp, and that his local legislation was intended to ensure such products are no longer sold casually at gas stations and convenience stores.

“I shouldn’t be seeing any more any hemp product or any green leaves or whatever, selling at gas station and convenience store,” he said.

The measure Joseph referenced, Bill 36-0105, was previously revisited by lawmakers after a sweeping federal redefinition of hemp changed the national regulatory landscape. The bill deals specifically with intoxicating hemp products and THC derivatives, including tetrahydrocannabinolic acid, delta-6 THC, delta-8 THC and delta-10 THC products.

Under the proposal as discussed by lawmakers, territorial law would be aligned more closely with the new federal direction by clarifying which products fall outside the definition of hemp and by assigning responsibilities to agencies such as the Industrial Hemp Commission and the Office of Cannabis Regulation. The policy debate has centered on whether intoxicating hemp derivatives should be removed from ordinary retail settings and placed under a more controlled regulatory structure.

Health officials have supported stronger restrictions, citing public-health concerns about unregulated intoxicating products, youth access, labeling, potency and enforcement. At the territorial level, the issue has also raised questions about which agency should regulate the products, how enforcement should work, and whether the territory's cannabis and hemp frameworks should be better coordinated.

For Joseph, the hemp measure gave him another example of legislation he says is aimed at public safety and consumer protection. But unlike the gross receipts measure, which he could point to as a completed revenue fix, the hemp discussion was more regulatory in nature, tied to federal changes, public-health concerns and the territory's still-developing cannabis marketplace.

Joseph then pointed to his work on LBJ Gardens, saying he is pursuing compensation for residents and homeowners who need to be relocated. He said the effort includes funding for legal assistance to help resolve probate and title issues that have complicated ownership for some families.

Asked what he has delivered on housing as vice chair of the Housing, Transportation and Telecommunications Committee, Joseph said he was working on the LBJ Gardens measure, which he described as an effort to compensate residents based not merely on the existing value of their homes, but on the cost of replacing comparable square footage in today's market.

He said lawmakers also set aside funding for legal help because some residents face probate and title issues tied to how properties were originally transferred. Joseph said some of those ownership matters were not fully completed, creating another barrier for families who need to be relocated.

But when the discussion returned to public safety outcomes, Joseph offered fewer measurable results.

Asked about legislation advanced through his committee on domestic violence, traffic penalties and the VIPD impound lot, Joseph said he would need to see data before determining what had changed.

"I will have to wait until I hear from somebody from the Women's Coalition to see if the numbers have changed any," he said, referring to domestic violence trends.

Joseph said people must learn to control themselves and stressed that no one, male or female, should be abused.

The interview also touched on Joseph's background in emergency response. Before joining the Legislature, Joseph served as director of the V.I. Fire Service, and he was asked whether he had delivered anything as a lawmaker to support his prior career field.

Joseph said many of those deliverables are tied to FEMA and agency management rather than legislation. He said his management style in the fire service was aggressive and focused on constant follow-up to ensure projects and resources moved forward.

“...Either you’re going to manage or you ain’t going to manage,” he said. “Just leadership.”

Joseph said he expects to question the police commissioner in July about cameras and law-enforcement technology. He argued that the territory should already have the technological capacity to track vehicles and respond more effectively to crime, given its small size and the money available for public safety tools.

“We have the money, we need to make sure these technologies are working,” Joseph said.

The exchange highlighted a central tension in Joseph’s first-term record. He was able to identify legislative work on firearms, gross receipts, hemp regulation and LBJ Gardens, with the gross receipts measure standing out as a completed accomplishment tied to revenue collection and fairness between local and off-island contractors. But when asked for visible public safety outcomes — including crime reduction, reckless driving enforcement, VIPD manpower, emergency response and public trust — his answers leaned more heavily on future oversight, agency management and the need for additional data.