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Bill to Create Women Veterans Coordinator Advances With Full Committee Support

Marise James said women veterans often face needs not fully addressed by existing systems, including healthcare tailored to women and disability claims tied to military sexual trauma; Bill 36-0279 would create a dedicated coordinator in Veterans Affairs.

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Nelcia Charlemagne **June 30, 2026**

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Senator Marise James. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

The Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection has advanced legislation that would create a Women Veterans Coordinator position within the Office of Veterans Affairs, establishing a dedicated advocate for women who served in the armed forces.

Bill 36-0279, sponsored by Senator Marise James, received the favorable vote of the entire committee and now moves to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration.

Senator James said the measure recognizes that women veterans often return to systems that do not fully account for their experiences.

While women have served in every branch of the armed forces, “too often, when they return home, they encounter a system that was not designed with their unique experiences and needs in mind,” she said.

She added that women veterans “frequently face challenges that differ from those of their male counterparts.” Those challenges may include accessing healthcare “tailored to women” or “navigating disability claims related to military sexual trauma.”

“This legislation ensures that women veterans in the Virgin Islands have a dedicated advocate...” Senator James said.

Under the measure, the coordinator would serve as a liaison between the Office of Veterans Affairs, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and other stakeholders.

Senator James said the bill does not create “unnecessary bureaucracy,” but is “about recognizing that women veterans have unique needs and ensuring that the government is responsible, responsive to those needs.”

Patrick Farrel, director of the Office of Veterans Affairs, supported the measure and described it as a meaningful step for a growing segment of the veteran community.

He said Bill 36-0279 is “an investment in the well-being of a growing population of veterans who have served our nation with distinction and who deserve a dedicated advocate within our agency.”

Creating the position through legislation is the first step, Mr. Farrel told lawmakers. A salary has not yet been determined, but he said he is in contact with a “network of other women veteran coordinators across the nation... so I’m gonna get a feel from them and see which direction we really need to go.”

He said he is aware that the national average is “between \$50,000 and \$75,000.”

The Legislature’s legal counsel clarified that although the position would be titled Women Veterans Coordinator, it cannot legally be restricted to women only.

Even so, Mr. Farrel said the position should ideally be filled by someone with firsthand understanding of the population being served.

“I strongly suggest that the position is filled by a woman veteran, so that we have someone in the position that understands the community of people that they are about to serve,” he told lawmakers.

Bill 36-0279 now heads to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary.