

Inspector General Seeks Staff Boost as OIG Probes WAPA, Taxicab Commission and Resident Account Withdrawals

OIG says its audit and investigative teams are overwhelmed, and its most senior investigator can retire at any time. Delia Thomas wants \$276,438 more for three entry-level hires and pay adjustments while several major reviews continue across government.

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Nelcia Charlemagne **August 12, 2026**

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Inspector General Delia Thomas testifies before the V.I. Legislature, where she warned that OIG is understaffed and requested an additional \$276,438 for staffing and pay adjustments. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

Inspector General Delia Thomas is asking lawmakers for an additional \$276,438 above the Office of the Inspector General's approved fiscal year 2027 budget ceiling, warning that its investigative division is significantly understaffed while the office manages a growing slate of audits and investigations across the government.

Thomas also warned that "our most senior investigator can choose to retire at any time."

OIG's approved FY 2027 budget ceiling is \$2,898,392. If lawmakers approve the additional request, \$234,344 would be used to create three entry-level positions — two investigators and one auditor.

The remaining \$42,094 would fund salary increases for unclassified, non-union employees because of "discrepancies resulting from the new GS pay plan effective October 1, 2026."

Thomas told Sen. Clifford Joseph that staffing levels are already insufficient for the office's workload.

"we do not have the complement of staff to handle all the investigative workload that we have, and we are inundated and overwhelmed with what we have on the audit side."

Despite those staffing constraints, OIG continues to work on audits and investigations involving several government entities, with some reviews identifying questionable financial and administrative practices.

Taxicab Commission Review Finds Licensing and Revenue Problems

At the V.I. Taxicab Commission, OIG found an absence of "significant improvements in its responsibility to maintain accurate medallion registries and implement biannual taxicab inspections."

The audit covered fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

OIG determined that the commission did not follow established procedures governing medallion auctions and did not approve taxi licenses in "accordance with established laws, rules, and regulations."

The commission also "failed to appropriately safeguard and account for revenue collections in accordance with best business practices."

During the audit period, Thomas said the commission "approved ten taxi licences to seven applicants who failed the exam and to three applicants for whom there is no evidence that they took the written exam."

Commission officials also failed to timely deposit \$44,622 into the government's bank account and did not timely post \$258,342 in revenue to the government's enterprise resource planning system, according to Thomas.

OIG Preparing DOJ Referral Over Resident Bank Accounts

Another review at the Eldra Schulerbrandt Residential Care Facility raised concerns about the handling of money belonging to residents.

A surprise cash count conducted during summer 2025 uncovered “inadequate controls and documentation for \$2,652 in residents’ cash and cash equivalents, including \$767 owed to five former residents,” Ms. Thomas shared.

More significantly, OIG “identified at least \$17,005 in unexplained withdrawals from two residents’ bank accounts, with no documented justification or reimbursement.”

Thomas said the findings raise concerns about “potential misuse and/or fraudulent activity.”

The office is “preparing the necessary transmittal to the Department of Justice for further legal review.”

WAPA Review Delayed by Missing Documents

OIG is continuing work on six assignments consisting of investigations or audits.

Among them is a review of contracting practices at the V.I. Water and Power Authority.

Thomas said progress has been slowed because “the inspection has been plagued by delays, primarily because the documents promised on multiple occasions were not received.”

A separate review of WAPA’s billing and collection practices also depends on OIG “receiving and analyzing the information without any new obstacles.”

Thomas told Committee Chairman Sen. Novelle Francis Jr. that obtaining records from the utility has been difficult.

“it's been extremely frustrating dealing with obtaining certain documents from WAPA,” she said.

OIG continues working with WAPA leadership to address those delays as they occur.

Three Subpoenas Issued to GESC Board

OIG has also issued three subpoenas seeking information from the Government Employees Services Commission Board.

The office is attempting to determine whether the board spent funds in compliance with established laws, rules and regulations.

Most of the requested information has been submitted, and OIG expects to receive the remaining material soon.

At the request of Gov. Albert Bryan Jr., the inspector general is also auditing contracting practices at the Office of Management and Budget, Department of Education, Virgin Islands Police Department and Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation.

The workload is being handled with only 10 auditors currently on staff.

Francis Says OIG May Need 'More Teeth'

Francis said lawmakers should consider whether OIG needs stronger mechanisms to compel agencies to provide information.

He suggested the office could benefit from “more teeth.”

“I think it's important that we look at that as a body and see if there is an additional mechanism that we could put in place to allow for enforceability of these requests,” he said.

While OIG has subpoena authority, enforcement of those subpoenas is largely handled through the Department of Justice.

Thomas Warns of Government Resources Are at Risk

Thomas closed her discussion of OIG’s challenges by raising broader concerns about the pressure facing government employees and the potential consequences for public resources.

She said those pressures “ may encourage someone to rationalize bad behavior, so they will retaliate against our government. They will retaliate because they can't afford certain things.”

“Those are the things that concern me. I feel the temperature is extremely high in the Virgin Islands right now, and I feel that the resources of the government is at risk,” she warned.