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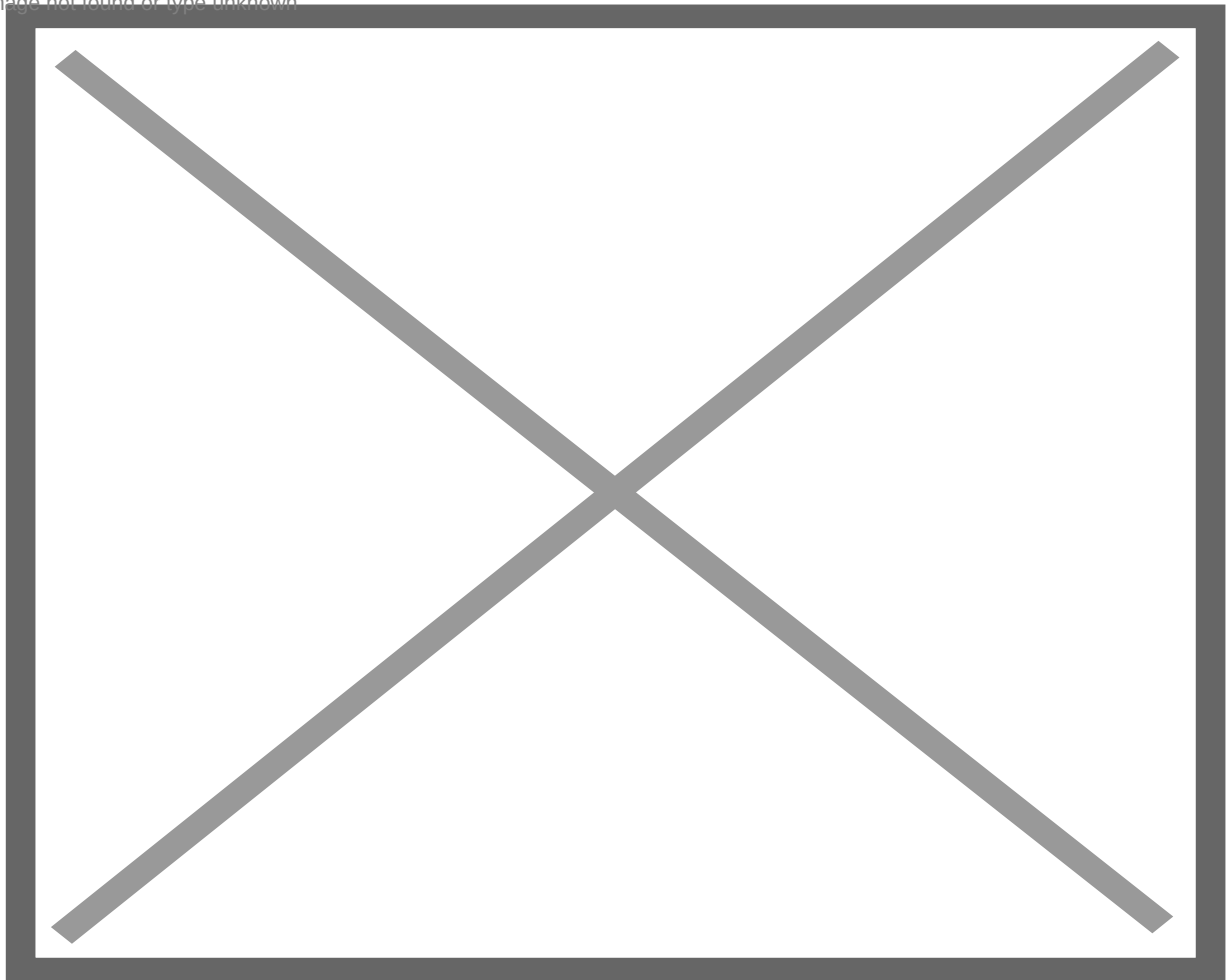
Superior Court Rejects Bid to Split Delegate Race From Local Ballot; Unified Ballot Stands

Judge Venetia Velazquez denied Mary Moorhead's bid to require separate delegate and local ballots. Election officials say changing the ballot now, with military voting beginning Sept. 19, could disrupt the process and cost the system as much as \$600,000.

Election / **Published On September 01, 2026 04:31 PM /**

Janeke Simon **September 01, 2026**

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The V.I. Superior Court on St. Croix. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Superior Court Judge Venetia Velazquez has rejected Mary Moorhead's attempt to force the Elections System of the Virgin Islands to place the Delegate to Congress contest [on a ballot separate from local races](#), clearing election officials to continue preparing the unified ballot traditionally used in the territory for the November 3 general election.

Judge Velazquez on Tuesday denied Ms. Moorhead's petition for mandamus, injunctive and declaratory relief. Ms. Moorhead had argued that language in local and federal law required a separate ballot for the delegate race and left election officials without discretion to combine it with territorial contests.

The judge's written judgment had not yet appeared on the public docket as of press time. Following the hearing, however, Board of Elections Chairman Raymond Williams and Elections Supervisor Caroline Fawkes spoke with Consortium journalists about the arguments they said weighed against Ms. Moorhead's request.

"I think that the primary reason...was because it did not meet the four tenets that are required to show that burden," Mr. Williams said. "At the end of the day, it spoke to where the greater harm would be caused."

Ms. Fawkes pointed to the election calendar, which begins weeks before voters go to the polls on November 3.

"The election starts on September 19," she said, referring to the distribution of military overseas ballots. "Then we begin absentee, then we begin early voting way before we get to November 3."

Election officials argued that forcing a ballot redesign at this stage would disrupt preparations across the territory and create substantially more harm than leaving the existing format in place.

The court also considered congressional records dating to 1972 that election officials said provided additional context for the statutory language requiring a "separate ballot," potentially making the requirement less absolute than Ms. Moorhead argued.

"I think those are the foundations," Mr. Williams said. "There's a lot of other pieces to include the financial burden that could be brought on the election system."

Ms. Fawkes estimated that changing the ballot at this point could cost as much as \$600,000 through reconfiguration of voting machines, additional materials and other changes necessary to implement a separate-ballot system.

She also noted that American Samoa, which election officials said operates under similar statutory language concerning its congressional delegate, uses a single ballot containing both delegate and local races. That comparison was also presented to the court, according to Ms. Fawkes.

With the Moorhead challenge resolved for now, election officials remain involved in several other pending cases involving candidates and the upcoming election.

Stephen Frett's request for preliminary and permanent injunctions blocking his disqualification was scheduled to be heard Tuesday but was postponed after Ms. Fawkes told Judge Velazquez that she had not been served with notice of the hearing until Monday afternoon.

Mr. Frett orally asked to continue the matter until the end of September, but that request was denied. Both sides were instead instructed to be prepared to argue the merits when the case reconvenes on Friday, September 4.

The Elections System is also facing litigation in Superior Court involving electoral hopeful Jed JohnHope, while separate federal cases brought by Ida Smith and Matthew McClafferty remain pending in District Court.

