

The Virgin Islands Consortium

No More Pension Payments To Wives Of Deceased Governors, De Jongh Cries Foul

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Moving swiftly on Thursday, senators voted to override Governor John de Jongh's veto on a bill that abolishes pension payments to the wives of deceased Governors and Lieutenant Governors; however, Governor de Jongh saw the move as "vindictive," stating in his veto letter that the bill was nothing more than "personal politics."

The senators, although not fully united on this action, still managed to move quickly on bill number 30-0356, which was sponsored by Senator Kenneth Gittens. Of the 15 senators voting on the move to override, 10 senators voted yes, four voted no and one was absent.

The results are as follows:

1. Senator Craig Barshinger — Yes
2. Senator Judi Buckley — Yes
3. Senator Diane Capehart — Absent
4. Senator Donald G. Cole — No
5. Senator Kenneth Gittens — Yes
6. Senator Clifford Graham — Yes
7. Senator Alicia “Chucky” Hansen — No
8. Senator Myron Jackson — Yes
9. Senator Shawn-Michael Malone — Yes
10. Senator Terrence “Positive” Nelson — Yes
11. Senator Nellie Rivera-O’Reilly — Yes
12. Senator Clarence Payne — Yes
13. Senator Tregenza A. Roach — No
14. Senator Sammuel Sanes — Yes
15. Senator Janette Millin Young — No

Ever since its introduction, bill number 30-0356 has been heavily criticized by Governor de Jongh, who has consistently maintained that Senator Gittens' efforts weren't built on sound policy, but rather on a divisive mindset.

"Senator Gittens can continue to claim that this legislation was not targeted at me and at my wife but a close reading of the bill reveals otherwise," de Jongh [said in August](#) when he vetoed the bill. "Essentially, one individual, Mrs. Luz Luis, (wife of Governor Juan F. Luis) is protected and anyone after the effective date of this bill's passage, namely my wife and Mrs. Cheryl Francis, the wife of Lt. Governor Gregory Francis, are left out."

De Jongh continued: "What other motivation can Senator Gittens explain for this legislation other than he clearly intended to target my administration? His claims about the dire financial situation of the territory amount to nothing more than political rhetoric as there are far deeper issues concerning the financial viability of the Virgin Islands that the 30th Legislature, inclusive of Senator Kenneth Gittens, has not even begun to address."

Sen. Gittens has denied the bill was crafted because of ill-intent toward the Governor; instead, the senator has argued that, in a time when the territory is struggling to pay its bills and the government has been forced to lay off employees, the wives of deceased governors should not be eligible to receive a portion of their husband's pension from the government.