

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bennett Says He Has A Master's Degree; University Says He Does Not, Sen. Gittens 'Taken Aback'

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Acting Property and Procurement Commissioner Randolph L. Bennett.

ST. CROIX -- Senator Kenneth Gittens, chairman of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, said he was taken aback after receiving information from the Registrar's Office at Liberty University, that while Property and Procurement Acting Commissioner Randolph Bennett is currently pursuing a master's degree at the institution, he has not completed all the requirements for conferment.

But Bennett, testifying under oath during a [Monday session](#), told senators that all he needed to do was "walk across the stage" to receive his certificate because he had already earned the degree. Liberty University, however, said Bennett must complete his internship program successfully before receiving the master's degree certificate. The program is expected to be completed on September 15.

"I was really taken aback during the confirmation hearing on Monday as a result of Mr. Bennett's responses to questions about possessing a master's degree," Gittens said through a press release issued this afternoon. "He had stated on his questionnaire that the degree was pending, but during his live testimony, under oath, he repeatedly said that he had already earned the degree -- he even further stated that he just didn't have the certificate because he had not walk across the stage."

Gittens said a master's degree is not required for the office that Bennett seeks, however the importance of finding out the truth on the matter was a test to the nominee's character and credibility.

"Mr. Bennett, based on his experience alone is certainly qualified to be the commissioner of the Department of Property & Procurement. Therefore, his qualifications are not in question.

"But when there is a situation where someone seems to be stretching the truth, I certainly take exception to that and have to consider how many other partial truths may have been given. So in this case his credibility and character is what's in question," the second-term senator added.

Gittens, along with the [remaining members of the Rules and Judiciary Committee](#), bar Sen. Janet Millin Young, voted in favor of Bennett and forwarded his nomination to the full body for its ratification. Nonetheless, Gittens said members of the committee he chairs, along with his staff, take seriously the responsibility to completely vet every candidate sent before them by the governor.

Feature Image: Randolph Bennett, acting commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement.

Image Credit: 31st Legislature.