

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bennett Responds To Master's Degree Mix-Up

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Property and Procurement Commissioner Randolph Bennett

ST. THOMAS -- Acting Commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement Randolph Bennett, in a letter addressed to Chairman of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, Sen. Kenneth Gittens, attempted to clarify the discrepancies in comments he made during a [Monday](#) session by providing documents serving as evidence that he has indeed completed the necessary courses for his master's degree at Liberty University.

Gittens had sought and received information from the Registrar's Office at the university, which revealed that while Bennett has been pursuing a master's degree at the institution, he has not completed all the requirements for conferment.

Bennett, however, contends that all required work to obtain the degree has been completed.

"Although I have completed the requirements for the internship portion, it is not reflected because the term has not ended," Bennette wrote in the letter, dated July 15.

"Notwithstanding, I am still in completion of the graduate requirements as shown in the audit report stating "Graduate". The next window of diploma processing will be in September and my diploma will be sent then."

But that was not the story Bennett told at the Senate hearing. Bennett said all he needed to do was "walk across the stage" and the master's degree diploma would be sent. The acting commissioner never made mention of September as the date he would officially receive the degree; nor did he explain why the diploma was not simply mailed to him if, indeed, all necessary work was completed. Bennett did not mention the ongoing internship program, either.

Nonetheless, Bennett stated in the letter that he has sent a request to Liberty University asking that his conferment process begin "since all of my requirements have been met."

He added: "Upon receipt of that approval, I will send it to you. I do hope that the wait will not have to be until September, but as it stands today, all of the requirements on my part for a degree at the master's level for this degree have been met. That, primarily, is what I was responding to," Bennett concluded.

For his part, Gittens said he never questioned Bennett's qualifications for the position. The question at hand according to the senator is one of integrity.

"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.

Bennett was given a favorable nod in the Rules committee, however he's fate remains unsure in the full Senate.

See Bennett's letter to Gittens, along with Liberty University documents [here](#).