

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Treatment Of School Lunch Employees By Dept. Of Education Is An 'Abomination,' Violet Says

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ST. CROIX -- Senator Kurt Violet had been advocating tirelessly for low-wage earners, who work at the territory's schools serving lunch to students before finally getting a breakthrough. After [lobbying Governor Kenneth Mapp](#) to support his efforts in allocating funds that would see these employees receiving a raise of \$6,000 annually -- making them full-time government employees eligible for benefits received by other DOE workers -- a bill was passed that included \$1.2 million to satisfy the commitment.

But the Department of Education, Mr. Violet said through a press release issued this afternoon, has failed to pass on the increase in wages to these employees, even as they continue to provide an indelible service to the territory.

Bill no. 31-0190, "An Act establishing appropriations for the operation of the Government of the Virgin Islands during the fiscal year October 1, 2015, to September 30, 2016," was enacted by the 31st Legislature on September 29, 2015, and included a line item of over \$1.2 million specifically for the DOE's food service employees (School Lunch Program).

Mr. Violet said that he was "disturbed" that despite the monies being available, DOE continues to drag their feet as it relates to transferring the present food service employees to full-time NOPA employees.

According to the first-term Democrat, food service employees endured yet another Christmas break without a paycheck, health insurance or the ability to participate in GERS. He said as plans move forward to transform DOE, "it is imperative that we begin with the food service employees who on a daily basis for the past two years have been serving breakfast and lunch to thousands of students."

Mr. Violet believes that the way these food service employees are being treated is an abomination, and is urging DOE to provide their plan of action in resolving this matter.