

The Virgin Islands Consortium

School Lunch Workers To Become Full-Time Employees On February 22

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Ernice Gilbert **February 09, 2016**



ST. THOMAS -- After incessant pressure from Senator Kurt Vialet, who, in a recent press release said it was an "abomination" that the Department of Education had failed to pass on a funded increase in wages to school lunch workers, the department revealed during a Senate hearing at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall on Monday that as of February 22, school lunch employees would become full-time D.O.E. workers -- a move that adds an extra \$6,000 annually to their pay.

At the hearing, Mr. Vialet commended D.O.E. Commissioner Sharon McCollum for moving on the issue.

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 D.O.E.’s food service employees (School Lunch Program).

In the release, issued last month, Mr. Violet said he was “disturbed” that despite the monies being available, D.O.E. officials continued to drag their feet as it relates to transferring the present food service workers 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 D.O.E., “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.”