The Virgin Islands Consortium

Quick Note | 29 Bills To Fund Government Approved In Finance Committee

VIC News / **Published On September 13, 2018 09:02 AM /**

Staff September 13, 2018

ST. THOMAS -- Lawmakers on Wednesday approved all 29 bills in the Committee on Finance to fund the various government arms as part of the fiscal year 2019 budget.

Senator Kurt Vialet, chairman of the committee, said this year's budget is lower than the governor's original proposal, but that was because of vacancies, and funding may increase on the basis of need upon request.

“Collectively, when you review the entire budget and the final numbers, overall it is lower than the governor’s recommended budget requests," Mr. Vialet said. "The reduction of the budget was because of the vacancies. However, agencies will still have an opportunity to hire new employees by petitioning for more money to fill them. There are sufficient funds to fill requested vacancies. The budget will be online by October 1st, and the vacancies will remain unoccupied until January 1st. The timeframe represents a quarter of the fiscal year."

The four Finance Committee senators who attended the meeting -- Mr. Vialet, Marvin Blyden, Neville James and Dwayne DeGraff -- all voted to forward the measures to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, chaired by Mr. Francis. (Mr. Francis was present for the Committee on Finance meeting, but he is not a member of the committee and therefore could not vote on the bills.)

Some budget highlights include $19 million lump sum to the Government Employees' Retirement System for outstanding employee contributions; and $200,000 for the Virgin Islands Board of Education scholarship programs.