

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Audit Of Senate Is Wide-Ranging, Will Be Made Public, Gittens Says

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Following the reorganization of the Senate majority, which removed Senator Kenneth Gittens from the Senate president position as well as Senator Donna Frett-Gregory from the chairmanship of the Committee on Finance, Mr. Gittens issued a statement contending that the action was an attempt to cover up the impending results of an Inspector General audit of the 31st and 32nd Legislatures' finances.

During an interview with The Consortium on Thursday, Mr. Gittens doubled down on his insistence that the coup was in reaction to the audit, and he gave more details on what to expect.

According to the senator, the audit request was wide-ranging -- all the finances of members of the 31st and 32nd Legislatures. He said he requested the investigation after finding questionable spending.

Asked if the results of the audit would be made public, Mr. Gittens said that was the intention when he first requested it. "The 31st and 32nd Legislatures operated beyond the bounds of both ethics and the law and every effort is being made to orchestrate a cover up," Mr. Gittens said in his statement.

The senator on Thursday said the reorganization session that occurred on Wednesday afternoon after he had adjourned the session, was not in conformity to the Senate's rules, and therefore cannot be deemed legitimate. "After session is adjourned, they can't reconvene a session just like that. That's it. If a new session is coming, we have to give the public a week's notice with an agenda and new session date. It's against the rules," he said.

Mr. Gittens was quickly rebuked by the Majority. "Nothing that was done in reorganizing the Legislature violated the laws of the Virgin Islands, as interpreted time and time again by our courts, and I challenge you to provide a single provision of the V.I. Code or the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands in the process. Additionally, the courts have made clear that the rules of the body are separate and distinct from the law, and that when it comes to the internal operations of the Legislature, no act of a majority of members will be scrutinized or interfered with by the courts except if a violation of law, not the rules, has occurred. I refer you to *Brown v. Hansen*, *Mapp v. Lawaetz*, and *Bryan v. Liburd* as the local cases which have firmly established this principle in the territory," Majority Leader Marvin Blyden wrote in a response letter.