

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Senator Heyliger Proposes Bill to 'Punish and Convict' Testifiers for Knowingly Lying to Legislature Following Recent VITEMA Testimony

Government / **Published On February 23, 2021 07:04 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **February 23, 2021**



**Senator Alma Francis Heyliger By. VI LEGISLATURE**

For Freshman Independent Senator Alma Francis Heyliger, expressing frustration last week during a hearing where senators said VITEMA Deputy Director Bruce Kelly [was caught lying during testimony](#), was not enough. Ms. Heyliger continued to fume at the apparent disingenuousness of Mr. Kelly Monday, and announced that she has proposed legislation aimed at promoting institutional integrity.

The crux of the matter? During a Committee of Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety hearing Wednesday, where it was revealed VITEMA had no Spanish-speaking 911 operators, committee chairman, Sen. Steven Payne, asked about the process if a solely Spanish-speaking person were to call 911. Mr. Kelly responded that there was a third-party software translation service that would be utilized to handle the translation. However, Senator Franklin Johnson, during a point of information asked Mr. Kelly why then, didn't the 911 employees know about this software.

Mr. Kelly had to back-track his comments. "I stand corrected. We are currently looking at several companies that offer translation services, not software but translation services to be utilized as a stop-gap measure while we are actively trying to recruit that bilingual population of the community to be represented," he later stated.

Senators pounced, and Mr. Kelly was temporarily blocked from testifying.

On Monday, Ms. Heyliger said Mr. Kelly's misleading information during the Senate hearing was unacceptable. "One of the things that I fought eight years to get here for was to protect and serve the people of this territory ... I literally feel like somebody kicked me in my chest right now," the senator said.

She added, "The only thing we ask of the different agencies and departments that come here is to tell us the facts so we can ... change laws (and) implement policies to help the people of this territory. But when you come and tell us a bold-faced lie and now it potentially could cause people their lives, you will never get Alma Alicia Francis Defreitas Heyliger to accept this kind of craziness ... You do not have the right or the authority to come into this First Branch of Government and lie to any of the 15 senators here. You do not have that right. None."

Ms. Heyliger said she sent correspondence to VITEMA Director Darryl Jaschen asking what form of disciplinary action, if any, he planned to levy on Mr. Kelly. Additionally, to reinforce her attitude towards Mr. Kelly's actions, Ms. Heyliger said she has notified Gov. Albert Bryan, Lt. Gov. Tregenza Roach, Virgin Islands Police Department Commissioner Trevor Velinor and each member of the 34th Legislature of her legislative stance and intentions.

The senator continued, "For far too long, too many testifiers have come before the Legislature and said whatever they believed Senators wanted to hear without fact-checking information," said Senator Francis Heyliger in a February 18 letter to members of the 34th Legislature. "As an Institution, it is time for us as elected senators to stand up and conduct ourselves as if this is the First Branch of Government and hold accountable the individuals who come before us to testify.

"We cannot allow testifiers who come before this body to continuously disrespect and disregard the Legislative Branch and expect the People of the Virgin Islands to respect us."

The submitted legislation would "convict and punish testifiers who knowingly lie before the territory's legislative body."

© Viconsortium 2026