

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Not a Single Citation for Illegal Lotteries Issued in Last Three Years, V.I. Lottery Boss Reveals

Crime / **Published On August 22, 2021 06:34 AM /**

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V.I. Lottery Executive Director Raymond Williams made known during a Friday Senate hearing that the V.I. Lottery had not issued a single citation or warning for the illegal selling of lottery tickets in three years, though Director of Security and Investigations Lamar Jacobs said results would be seen "in short order."

The matter was brought up by Senator Janelle Sarauw, who asked Mr. Williams for information on citations relative to the illegal activity. His response was, "We haven't collected nothing because we haven't engaged in any activity yet."

Ms. Sarauw was displeased with the response. "Mr. Williams, you're here for three years and you come back with the same story. We haven't collected nothing, no citation whatsoever?"

Mr. Williams then stated, "Until my staff is trained up and ready to hit the street, I ain't subjecting nobody to hit the street to put them in any harm's way. We are moving in that direction."

Sen. Sarauw said, "We have bars galore in St. Thomas selling illegal tickets from the time you have been the director and you're trying to tell me not one citation went [out]? Nobody could walk in and issue a citation? You need a trained officer with a gun to do that? You can't get one citation?"

Mr. William's response of "we haven't" led Ms. Sarauw to ask if a warning had been issued. Mr. Williams said it had not. The senator then said, "Oh come on, father Jesus."

"You cannot be the main enforcement agency of lottery tickets and you're going to tell me we are waiting for [trained officers]. What are we paying officers for the last three fiscal years if they do nothing?"

Mr. Williams explained that these officers have other assignments such as dealing with money transfers.

Mr. Williams also said "patience is a virtue," which agitated Ms. Sarauw even more. "I am really peeved, colleagues, about the fact that we have had no enforcement for lottery in three years. Patience is a virtue? Government moves in real time, this is not about patience, it's about moving in real time and doing what we are statutorily demanded to do..." She said enforcement officers must be given the authority to enforce and cite those with illegal tickets.

Chairmen of the Committee, Senator Kurt Vialet, asked whether there was a tentative timetable to get enforcement officers out. Mr. Jacobs said a team had already been deployed. "You will see results in short order," he said. "We have several cases that are pending; I cannot divulge details but they are out and you will see some results pretty soon."

Mr. Williams said Mr. Jacobs has only been with the V.I. Lottery for "a few months."

Mr. Vialet also asked Mr. Williams whether he was aware of illegal sports gambling taking place in the territory. Mr. Williams acknowledged that he knew of the issue.

Mr. Vialet said he had legislation in the pipeline that would allow sports gaming to be taxed, but as it stood the activity remains illegal in the territory.

Senator Marvin Blyden said it was unfortunate that no warnings were given for illegal gambling. He said if warnings were given, "those individuals would know we are serious."

