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Senators Who Make Up Ethics Committee Investigating Blyden Scandal Revealed

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Senator Marvin Blyden By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

ST. THOMAS — The ethics committee tasked with reviewing the conduct of Senator Marvin Blyden met this week to establish a course of action and evaluate potential disciplinary measures related to his alleged violation of health directives after testing positive for Covid-19, a V.I. Legislature release issued Thursday afternoon has made known.

Pursuant to the Rules of the 34th Legislature, Senate President Donna FrettGregory has appointed five senators to evaluate allegations that Mr. Blyden acted inappropriately after testing positive for the Covid-19 virus by failing to quarantine.

Members of the Committee on Ethical Conduct (CEC) are Senators Milton E. Potter, Kenneth L. Gittens, Kurt A. Vialet, Carla J. Joseph, and Dwayne M. DeGraff. Mr. Potter, who is leading the inquiry as CEC chairman, said the committee is taking the allegations very seriously.

“Given the danger coronavirus poses to our community and the many lives lost to this terrible virus, we must thoroughly evaluate all evidence and the complaint before us,” Mr. Potter said. “I can assure the public that this matter is being carefully reviewed.”

CEC Vice Chairman Gittens noted the need to hold elected officials to a higher standard.

“Here at the Legislature, we are bound by a code of conduct and our sworn oath of office,” Mr. Gittens said. “Our Rules state that Senators must act in a manner complimentary to the Senate and with dignity and respect for the office. We are expected to set an example.”

According to the release, a formal complaint was lodged against Mr. Blyden on September 20 and amended on September 21 by officers of the 34th Legislature, including Ms. Frett-Gregory, Vice President Novelle E. Francis, and Legislative Secretary Genevieve Whitaker.

According to Mr. Potter, the CEC met Tuesday to review the complaint and have found it “in accordance with the Legislature’s Rules.”

Mr. Blyden has been issued a copy of the complaint and was also advised of the CEC’s plan to move forward with the administrative process established to review his conduct. Mr. Blyden will have an opportunity to respond to this complaint and to offer any evidence or witnesses he deems relevant.

“We ask for the public’s patience as we do our best to fairly evaluate this matter,” Mr. Potter said. “We promise to keep you informed.”

Senate action was spurred after the Consortium [reported that Mr. Blyden had flouted Dept. of Health Covid-19 protocols](#) when he went to an event with scores of people in attendance two days after testing positive for Covid-19. Mr. Blyden said he was first tested at the Legislature on Tues., Sept. 14 and refused to believe he was positive, so he sought another test at the V.I. Dept. of Health, which also returned positive Wednesday, Sept. 15. The senator said he was advised by D.O.H. to quarantine for 10 days. However, instead of following the health department's protocols, Mr. Blyden said he tested at home several times after and those tests came back negative. That prompted the senator to attend the function at Tillet Gardens using government-owned, Legislature-issued, LEG 5 vehicle Saturday night.

The senator [issued an apology](#) acknowledging his disregard for the territory's Covid-19 rules, stating, "I should have followed the guidelines set by the Department of Health and the CDC. Plain and simple, regardless of my intentions, my actions were wrong. I am deeply sorry, and I humbly apologize to the people of the Virgin Islands."

He further stated, "I committed this error, I apologize for it, and pledge to grow and learn from it. I also ask your forgiveness and your support as we continue to work together for a better quality of life for all Virgin Islanders."

Mr. Blyden on multiple occasions stressed he did not knowingly place anyone in danger. "Although I acknowledge and apologize for my error in violating the isolation guidelines, I want to make it clear that at no time did I act in a manner that I believed would endanger the public or any individual," he said.

The senator said he attended the Tillet Gardens event Saturday night to meet with investors he had invited to the territory. It was not clear why the meeting could not have been conducted virtually. The senator also hasn't produced results from the home tests that he maintains show he was Covid negative. The one test result he provided to the Consortium showed a manually written date of July 16, 2021, with Mr. Blyden's name also manually written on the Abbott Covid test kit as well.

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