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Nomination of Police Commissioner and Others and Several Bills Head to Governor After Senate Approval

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New Legislature Building on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ VI CONSORTIUM

Five months after Governor Albert Bryan announced Ray Martinez as his nominee for commissioner of the V.I. Police Department following Trevor Velinor's departure, senators on Thursday unanimously approved him for the post.

The approval was among several that came during the Senate session. The body also approved multiple measures.

Senator Alma Francis Heyliger said she had several one-on-one conversations with Mr. Martinez since he was announced as the nominee, and following those conversations, she was convinced that the former director of the Virgin Islands Law Enforcement Planning Commission is fitting for

the job.

“I spoke to him about the importance of his department excelling, and that officers understand that they need to have a lot more community involvement,” she told the lawmakers while pointing out that there are some people who are of the belief and opinion that they can be victimized while engaging with the police department.

“I spoke with Mr. Martinez and encouraged him to deal with the moral of these very officers in these agencies because these are the people that are the gatekeepers and the protectors for the people of this territory. Ultimately the police department is here to protect and serve,” she said.

Also expressing his strong support for Mr. Martinez was Senator Franklin Johnson, who also disclosed that he held several conversations with him since Governor Bryan made the announcement in July.

“I have had many conversations with him. I am very comfortable with the discussion I had with Mr. Martinez, I believe strongly that he has a mountain to climb but I also believe that if the men and women who surround him, support him with his initiatives, his plans, and everything that he put in place as to how that agency is going to go forward, the Virgin Islands is going to see some progress in crime-solving, people being arrested, people being charged, citations being handed out,” he told the session.

At the time of the announcement for the job, Mr. Martinez said, "My leadership selections are based on experience, leadership skills, respect among their peers, and an ardent desire for positive change that promotes our police department."

Mr. Martinez was one of six nominees who were considered and approved in the legislative session. The others are Dr. Denese Marshall, Psy.D. to the V.I. Board of Psychology Examiners; Semaj J. Johnson, Esq to the V.I. Board of Medical Examiners; William Newbold to the V.I. Historic Preservation Commission; Laurence J. Richards, P.E., MBA to the V.I. Board of General Construction Contractors and Oran Roebuck to University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees.

Bills approved during the session include the following:

[Bill No. 34-0078](#) - An Act that allows [the V.I. Port Authority to acquire former Addelita Cancryn School land](#) and pay a percentage of the profits from its development into the Department of Education's School Maintenance Fund.

[Bill No. 34-0145](#) - an Act [approving the conveyance of VICORP Land in Estate Lower Love](#) to the University of the Virgin Islands' Research and Technology Park Corporation because it is a unique opportunity for mixed-use economic development.

[Bill No. 34-0040](#) - an Act amending title 27, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new subchapter Va. establishing the Nurse Licensure Compact to create a multistate nursing license.

[Bill No. 34-0053](#) - an Act amending Virgin Islands Code to establish the Emergency Medical Services Program, the Emergency Medical Services High School Program Fund, and making a \$160,000 appropriation from the Centennial Special Fund to the Department of Education to fund the Emergency Medical Services basic EMS education program.

[Bill No. 34-0097](#) - which makes corporal punishment [illegal in USVI schools](#).

[Bill No. 34-0047](#) - an Act requiring the Department of Agriculture and the University of the Virgin Islands [to create a plan to develop a community seed banking program](#) to store and preserve seeds for preservation against climate change, natural disasters and other situations that could lead to the total annihilation of crops, plants, and other fauna and flora.

Bill No. 34-0099 - An Act that allows police officers, firefighters, and correction officers [to continue working up to age 65](#) once they are willing and capable.

[Bill No. 34-0081](#) - an Act amending title 27 of Virgin Islands Code relating to barbering and cosmetology services to reflect the barbering and cosmetology services that are being currently offered and to rename the chapter and the Board to reflect the changes.

[Bill No. 34-0085](#) would see lawbreakers being fined up \$10,000, instead of the previous strict "not less than \$10,000" fine codified by [a prior measure](#) for importing snakes and other non-indigenous invasive species into the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The measure also seeks to amend VI Code relating to the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Fund to extend the fund to include the regulation of the importation and control of non-indigenous invasive species.

[Bill No. 34-0069](#) redefines a definition for the term "capital improvement project." The bill also seeks to amend title 31, chapter 1 of V.I. Code relating to the functions of the commissioner of Public Works. The new subsections would direct the D.P.W. commissioner to maintain a master contract for providing governmental entities with architectural and engineering service for construction, expansion, renovation, major maintenance, rehabilitation, or replacement projects that cost less than \$500,000 over the life of the project.

[Bill No. 34-0053](#) seeks to [establish](#) an Emergency Medical Services High School Program.

[Bill No. 34-0062](#) - an Act amending Virgin Islands Code relating to filling vacancies on boards and commissions to require memberships on boards and commissions to be gender balanced.

Bill No. 34-0051 - an Act that [seeks to establish a full dental program in public schools](#) while lowering the required minimum amount of fluoride in fresh water distributed for public consumption.

Bill No. 34-0089 - an Act appropriating \$920,000 to the Virgin Islands Port Authority for the construction of an aesthetically pleasing Cruz Bay fish market and to modify the existing concrete boat ramp and bulkhead at the Little Cruz Bay Dock, Cruz Bay Quarter; and appropriating \$580,000 to the Department of Public Works for the construction of a boat dock and slipway at Enighed Pond on the island of St. John.