

Senators Call For Activation of Civil Rights Commission in USVI to Address Discrimination

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Some senators who make up the Committee on Education Workforce and Development want to see the Commission on Civil Rights become functional because of the role they say it must play in tracking matters of discrimination against people in the Virgin Islands.

Senator Milton Potter made the call to activate the commission while debating an Act during a hearing Tuesday [related to hair and racial discrimination](#). Senator Genevieve Whitaker also voiced her support.

“It’s not operating for 15 to 20 years; the governor needs to send the names for the Senate to approve the people for this commission,” Mr. Potter said while expressing the view that data about acts of discrimination would be easily accessible if the commission was functional.

The law governing the Commission on Civil Rights says the commission must be composed of seven members who shall be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Legislature. Membership on the commission shall represent the pluralistic nature of U.S. Virgin Islands, the law says.

Among other things, the civil rights commission is to establish and maintain a central repository and develop a procedure to monitor, record, classify and analyze information relating to crimes committed that violates one's civil rights, including incidents directed against persons or groups based on their race, religion, color, national origin, sex, ethnicity, handicap or political affiliation.

Commission members are to summarize and analyze the information received and file an annual report with the governor and the Legislature, and shall make it available to the V.I. Police Department to the extent that such information is reasonably necessary or useful in carrying out its duties.

It will also, "hold fact-finding hearings, conduct major investigations and research projects, and sponsor conferences to gather and disseminate information relating to human rights, and human rights problems. Additionally, the commission has the power to impose sanctions or to provide specific remedies in individual cases," says the law.