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Amendment to Pay GERS Retirees \$3.4 Million in Annual Bonuses Not Seen Since 2018 Moves Forward

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Senators Donna Frett-Gregory and Novelle Francis have sponsored an amendment that provides government retirees with annual bonuses put on pause since 2018.

The bonuses, made possible through Act 7070, requires the V.I. Lottery each year before July 15 to transfer \$2,270,000 to the Gov't Employees' Retirement System, which in turn provides the funds as annual retirement bonuses to retirees.

However, according to a release from the Office of Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory, over the past several years the V.I. Lottery has not been able to transfer the minimum sum as required by law due to the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria and the global Covid-19 pandemic.

Senators Frett-Gregory and Francis this week offered amendment 34-558 to Bill 34-0167 to pay retroactive the shortfalls for fiscal years 2018, 2019, and 2020 by September 30, 2022. The total sum the [amendment approves](#) is \$3.4 million.

Ms. Frett-Gregory said the shortfalls for fiscal year 2021 and 2022 will be considered during the deliberations for the fiscal year 2023 budget. “In reviewing revenue collections for this fiscal year, it became apparent that we have the ability to address the shortfall, and begin to make retirees whole,” she said. “The adoption of this amendment is critical and timely, as the cost of living continues to rise in the territory.”

Ms. Frett-Gregory also offered an amendment of \$1.5 million to support the construction of a cricket field in Estate Nazareth. The closure of the Cancryn field since the storms of 2017 halted cricket and this funding will allow for the return of the sport to the territory, according to the senator. She thanked her colleagues in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for supporting both amendments. The amendments will be considered by the full body during the upcoming legislative session before being sent to Governor Albert Bryan for consideration.