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Fahie Could Soon be Off Gov't Payroll as House Speaker Denies Second Leave of Absence, Endangering His District Seat

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Former BVI Premier Andrew Fahie

“As such, I am minded not to grant leave to the Honorable member for this sitting, or any subsequent sitting, for such time as the circumstances of his non-attendance remain the same’.

Those were the words of the Speaker of the House of Assembly of the British Virgin Islands, Corine George-Massicote, telling members that their colleague Andrew Fahie, currently confined to his daughter’s Florida residence as he awaits trial, is at risk of losing his seat in the House.

Under BVI House of Assembly Rules, if Fahie misses three consecutive sitting without a written leave of absence and, importantly, consent from the Speaker, the former premier will be removed as the representative of the BVI's First District, [and off the government's payroll](#).

On Tuesday, Speaker George-Massicote, having announced to House Members a second notice of absence from Fahie, addressed the sitting of the House and said that it was public interest in Fahie's status as a member of the House which prompted her to provide her reasoning and ultimate pronouncement on the matter at this time.

The first notice from Fahie came on June 23, Speaker George-Massicote said, ahead of the June 30th House of Assembly meeting. At that time, she says she granted him leave, in part due to the start date of his trial, which at the time was scheduled for July 18th.

"This appeared to me to be a temporary circumstance, and on this basis I granted the Honorable Member leave from the fourth sitting of the fourth session of the fourth House of Assembly of the Virgin Islands," the Speaker said.

The notice of absence from Fahie for Tuesday's session indicated that he would also be missing the next sitting - the sixth - again citing his bail conditions as the reason. When considering whether to grant leave, Speaker George-Massicote said she had to contend with the former Premier's new trial timeline.

Following a successful application from Fahie's defense counsel for a continuance of proceedings until January 18th, the House Speaker declared the 1st District's representative's absence from House proceedings for the next six months or more to be "not in the public interest", and on that basis denied him leave to be absent.

George-Massicot strongly hinted that Fahie's fellow members of Parliament could take action to prevent the former Premier's now almost-certain ejection from the House after the third missed sitting.

"For ease of application in the future, it is my polite recommendation that consideration is given to amending Standing Order 84 to clarify the requirements and/or conditions for members being granted leave by the Speaker but until then I remain guided by the Standing Orders."

Whether Parliamentarians in the BVI will amend the House of Assembly's standing orders to save the seat of a colleague awaiting trial on US federal drug trafficking and money laundering conspiracy charges remains to be seen.