

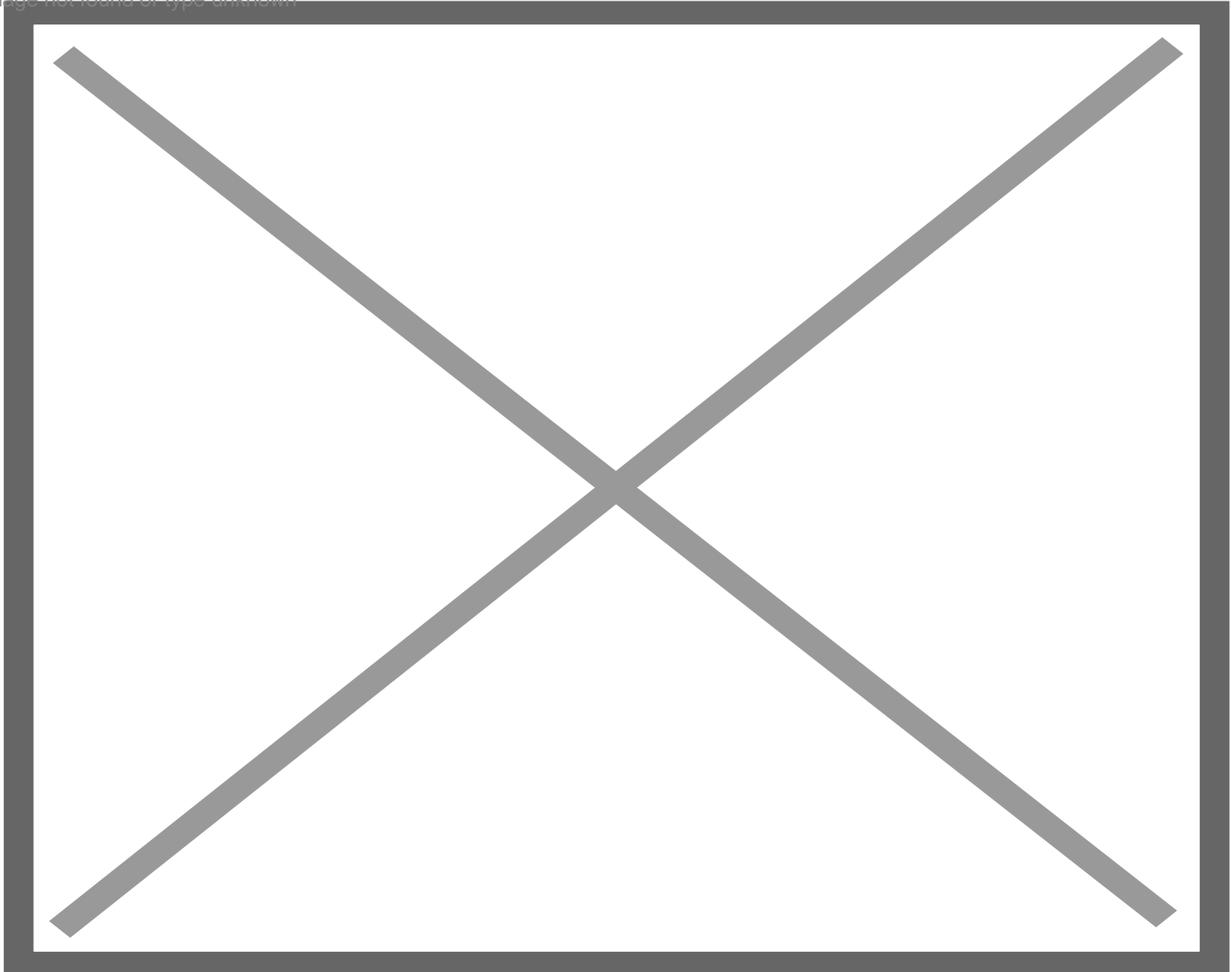
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Democrats Meeting Today to Choose Payne's Replacement

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Aerial shot of the Earl B. Ottley Legislature in St. Thomas, taken in 2015 By. ERNICE GILBERT, VI CONSORTIUM

Leaders of the V.I. Democratic Party will meet today to choose a replacement to serve out the remainder of former Senator Steven Payne Sr.'s term, after Mr. Payne was expelled from the 34th Legislature on Thursday following multiple accusations from three women of either sexual harassment or sexual assault.

The leaders are expected to meet at 10:00 a.m., with officials from both districts participating via conference call, say people with direct knowledge of the matter.

According to one of the people, there was growing consensus around choosing Angel Bolques Jr. as the replacement, though another person with direct knowledge of the dealings told the Consortium that consensus had not been reached on a selection.

According to Virgin Islands Code Title 2, Chapter 8, Mr. Payne will be replaced by the Democratic Party since he is a Democrat, and since his removal took place less than one year before the next election cycle. The 2022 General Election is set for Nov. 8.

The law, seen [here](#), reads, "If prior to the one year immediately preceding the date of the next general election, a vacancy occurs in the office of a member of the Legislature, the Governor shall call a special election in said district, or at-large, as the case may be, within thirty days following the day on which the vacancy occurs. Said special election shall be held no later than sixty days after the call, and the person elected shall hold office for the remainder of the unexpired term of his predecessor.

"When the vacancy occurs within one year prior to the general election, the President of the Legislature, upon the written recommendation of the territorial committee of the political party of which the previous office holder was a candidate, shall appoint the person so recommended; provided, however, that if the previous office holder was not a candidate of a political party as defined by law, the Legislature by a two-thirds majority of its members shall elect a person from said district, or at large, as the case may be, to fill the vacancy."