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Angel Bolques Jr. Sworn in as At-Large Senator in 34th Legislature

Government / **Published On July 25, 2022 06:00 PM /**

Janeka Simon **July 25, 2022**

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Angel Bolques Jr. was sworn in as the At-Large Senator of the 34th Legislature on Mon. July 25, 2022 by Judge Kathleen Y. Mackay after Steven Payne Sr.'s expulsion from the body on Wed. July 20th, 2022. By. THE V.I. LEGISLATURE

Angel Bolques, Jr. was sworn in as a member of the 34th Legislature on Monday afternoon in the Earl B. Otley Legislative Chambers, days after the expulsion of Steven Payne Sr. on Wednesday last week.

Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory made the decision to install the former educator upon the written recommendation of the Territorial Committee of the V.I. Democratic Party. She commended the party for swiftly submitting the recommendation to fill the vacant seat caused by

Mr. Payne's departure, and Elections Supervisor Caroline Fawkes for working through the weekend to ensure that Mr. Bolques was seated today Monday.

Ms. Frett-Gregory said it was important to ensure that the territorial position, particularly the community of St. John, was properly represented.

For his part, in a nod to the circumstances of his predecessor's departure, Mr. Bolques promised to, in his service, uphold the dignity and integrity of the Legislature. "I know that the turn of events has been very difficult," Mr. Bolques said. Calling his appointment a "blessing," he asked the people of the Virgin Islands to monitor and evaluate his performance in the position over the coming months, and use the information gleaned to make a good decision when it is time to vote on the At-Large senatorial seat for the upcoming 35th legislature, which Mr. Bolques hopes to capture.

The expulsion of Steven Payne Sr. follows exclusive reporting from the V.I. Consortium which prompted the Senate to launch an investigation after a staffer in Mr. Payne's office accused him of sexual harassment.

The senator was already being investigated by the Senate Committee on Ethical Conduct when the Consortium reported on two other incidents of alleged sexual harassment and assault. Although the Ethics Committee recommended a term of suspension for Mr. Payne, an amendment to the censure motion co-sponsored by several senators called for his expulsion instead. That motion was ultimately approved by every senator except Payne.

Mr. Bolques, who will face Mr. Payne in the Democratic Primary in August, will now serve as At-Large senator for the remainder of the former senator's term until January 9, 2023, representing the entire U.S. Virgin Islands.