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# Marijuana Regulation Progress Halted in USVI Due to Board Quorum Crisis

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During Monday's meeting of the V.I. Cannabis Advisory Board, members discussed the conundrum the body has found itself in since [the departure of Richard Evangelista](#) from the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. The former commissioner, now chief legal counsel to Governor Albert Bryan, left the Cannabis Advisory Board without a quorum.

No quorum, no ability to vote for the board, not even on a new budget. And a new budget is desperately needed, as the fledgling agency has expended all the money that had been allotted to it.

That money had been spent on developing regulations and guidelines tailored to the legalization of medicinal marijuana, work that now has to be redone since the passage of Act 8680 – the

Cannabis Use Act – signed into law in January 2023. The new legislation completely replaced the Medical Cannabis Patient Care Act of 2019, and provides for the medicinal, sacramental, and recreational use of cannabis. It also requires regulating the production, distribution, and use of cannabis in the territory.

These requirements necessitate the hiring of additional personnel, said board chair Catherine Kean. But having expended previous budgetary allocations, with no ability to approve a new budget because of the lack of a quorum, things are at a standstill. “As a board, our hands are tied,” said Ms. Kean.

In March of this year, legal advisor to the governor on cannabis legislation Kye Walker [told lawmakers](#) that the timeline for legal cannabis sales would be affected by the level of financial resources provided to the Office of Cannabis Regulations (OCR). Mr. Evangelista at the time noted that the board had a “bare quorum,” emphasizing its fragility.

Now that Evangelista and the quorum are gone, remaining board members were left to wonder, during Monday’s meeting, whether the rules could be interpreted to allow for relevant office-holders, such as the current acting DLCA commissioner, could be automatically added to the board instead of requiring Senate confirmation.

Until that question is decided, until the acting DLCA commissioner is confirmed or another board member appointed and confirmed, the work of turning a former illegal narcotic into an agricultural and economic boost for the territory remains largely on hold.