

## COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY APPROVES ALL FOUR NOMINATIONS

Date : March 1, 2019



ST. THOMAS- Members of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary chaired by Sen. Alicia Barnes, convened in a meeting at the Capitol Building on Thursday, and voted favorably for three out of four nominations sent to the Legislature by Governor Albert Bryan; set forth from Section (16) of the Revised Organic Act of 1954, and Title 3, Section 65a of the Virgin Islands Code. All items approved will be forwarded to the Committee of the Whole for further consideration.

The approved nominations are Anthony Thomas, Commissioner Nominee of the Dept. of Property and Procurement, Joel Lee, Director Nominee of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, and Barbara Jackson McIntosh, Director Nominee for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Sen. Alicia Barnes stated that while it is the authority of the governor to fill his cabinet with who he deems as qualified individuals, it is the responsibility of the Legislature to conduct a detailed vetting process before approving each nominee.

The Department of Property and Procurement (DPP) Commissioner Nominee Anthony Thomas earned a master's degree in Business Administration. His short-term goals for DPP are to review contracts, leases MOU's to ensure they are current and to improve employee morale. Sen. Marvin Blyden inquired about the strategy used to boost employee morale. Nominee Thomas stated that ensuring employees know that the administration values them is a step in the right direction. Nominee Thomas's long-term goals are inclusive of developing a sustainable procurement capacity throughout the government agencies, managing government vehicles, fixed assets, and properties. Sen. Janelle Sarauw requested the nominee to expound on a plan to limit the number of funds spent on rent for government agencies. Nominee Thomas noted that leasing a contract is cheaper than owning a building. The transition from renting to owning a building is costly.

Joel Lee, Director Nominee of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree with a major in Accounting. He is also a Certified Public Accountant in Virginia and the United States Virgin Islands. Nominee Lee owned an Accounting firm since 2014. His primary focus as Director is to pursue tax collection by ensuring that tax returns are filed, and payments are made. To-date, there is an estimated \$360 million in outstanding taxes to Government of the Virgin Islands and \$125 million owed to taxpayers; out of that over \$50 million was processed. Sen. Dwayne DeGraff inquired about the collection strategy. Nominee Lee stated that vacancies for qualified personnel would be heavily advertised and it is a necessity to replace outdated equipment with modern technology.

Barbara Jackson McIntosh, Director Nominee for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, earned a master's degree in Public Administration. She holds additional degrees in Marketing Management & Sales and Organizational Management. Nominee McIntosh has certificates in the Council of State Government Henry Toll Fellow Graduate, Certified Grants Manager, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Commercial Motor Vehicles. Her primary goal is to develop and implement a Strategic Performance Plan. It will serve as a means of monitoring shortfalls, progress, activities and performance evaluations.

Although the above mentioned received a favorable recommendation, senators voted to hold in committee the nomination of Raquel Berry-Benjamin, Commissioner Nominee of the Dept. of Education. Collectively, lawmakers noted that the nominee had a "superficial" and "shallow" approach in addressing critical issues plaguing the Department of Education. Nominee Benjamin earned a master's degree in Educational Administration and Supervision. She has served in leadership positions in various capacities to include a Mathematics Coach, Reading Coach, and the School Improvement Team. She gained work experience as a Director for the Division of Cultural Education, and Deputy Superintendent of the St. Thomas-St. John District. Some of her goals are to partner with all stakeholders to focus on student academic achievement to include vocational learning, to develop a sound-systematic communication system to be a portal to exchange vital information amongst stakeholders and to design modern learning facilities while maintaining existing structures.

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