

## COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY APPROVES NOMINEES AND BILLS

**Date :** December 14, 2017

St. Thomas - The Committee on Rules and Judiciary, chaired by Sen. Novelle Francis, held a meeting on Thursday, at the Capitol Building to receive testimony from nominees who were appointed by Governor Kenneth Mapp to serve on various boards and to vote on three bills.

“The confirmation process of the nominees who were appointed by the governor was delayed due to Hurricane Irma and Maria hitting the Territory, technical difficulties and other challenges,” Sen. Francis.

The nominees are as follows: Vaughn P. Hewitt to serve as a member of the Virgin Islands Housing Board for the District of St. Croix. Lee Steiner to serve as a member of the Virgin Islands Port Authority Governing Board for the District of St. Thomas. The Re-appointment of Johann A. Clendenin to serve as a member on Public Services Commission for the District of St. Croix.

Hewitt worked at the Virgin Islands Department of Education for thirty years. He was employed in the capacities of a teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal and currently, is the Deputy Superintendent for the schools on St. Croix. Hewitt would like to accomplish developing educational programs to keep young people in the housing communities engaged in positive activities. He would also like to assist with developing additional housing communities.

“Considering that you are a deputy superintendent of schools, where will you find the time to serve as a member of the V.I. Housing Board?” inquired Sen. Francis. Hewitt said, “I like being active and involved in various activities. I do an excellent job of managing my time.”

“In the wake of Hurricane Irma and Maria, what ideas do you have to address the emergency housing shortages?” asked Sen. Jean Forde. In response, Hewitt said, “I would recommend continuing the Housing Choice Voucher Program because it assists with relocating homeless residents. I also would encourage private landlords to participate in the program as well.”

Steiner has worked in the real estate industry in the past twelve years. He has secured the franchise of Sotheby’s International Realty. Previously, he owned a small water sports business in which he worked as a fisherman. One of his primary goals for serving on the board is to transform ports in the Territory to be competitive worldwide.

Sen. Myron Jackson asked Steiner to expound on the statement “Worldwide, ports are in essence a barometer for a community’s sophistication and the Virgin Islands deserves to have a system of them that operate on the world-class level.” Steiner stated that to improve the ports in the Territory,

a five-year plan to upgrade them to a world-class level needs to be established and implemented.

“How will you maintain an independent attitude, especially when confronted with pressures from personnel and/or management?” inquired Sen. Tregenza Roach. Steiner said, “As of right now, no one asked me to do anything other than to serve on the board. In the private sector, I've made tough decisions. I intend to make decisions that will benefit the people of the Virgin Islands.”

Alfred Clendenin recently ended his term as the PSC Commissioner in April 2017. Clendenin remains the Commissioner until replaced. Some of his goals are to learn how the Commission sets utility rates, examine the Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause and the critical impact it has on small business and consumers and to research U.S. National and International public policy issues and solutions for efficient public utilities.

“Can you expound on the process of change?” inquired Sen. Forde. Clendenin said, “When I say the process of change, I mean strategically moving the PSC Commission forward. One way this can be achieved is by holding special meetings in preparation for the detailed understanding of our dockets.”

Ultimately, senators voted favorably for all nominees. Lawmakers also voted and approved the following:

- Bill No. 32-0132 - An Act amending Title 15 Virgin Islands Code, Part III to add a chapter 65 enacting the Uniform Fiduciary Access to Digital Assets Act; and for other purposes related thereto.
- Bill No. 32-0136 - An Act amending Title 29 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 23, the Hotel Development Act, clarifying existing provisions and by adding sections 1312 through 1316
- Bill No. 32-0137 - An Act amending Title 29 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 22 pertaining to Tax Incremental Financing and for other related purposes

All nominees and bills approved will be forwarded to the Committee of the Whole for further consideration.

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