

## **FY2017 HEALTH INSURANCE PROPOSAL DISCUSSED DURING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE; RATES WILL NOT RISE FOR ACTIVE EMPLOYEES IN 2017**

**Date :** September 22, 2016



ST.THOMAS—The Committee of the Whole, chaired by Sen. Neville A. James, convened to receive testimony from officials regarding the Government Employees Renewal of Group Health, Life and Dental Insurance Wednesday, at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall.

“We have, as per the norm, a health insurance package before us. Today is September 21st. I want to say on the record that originally I was against holding this hearing because we have, on a consistent basis, asked the players that be to not submit the health insurance package in the waning days of the existing contract. Unfortunately, it continues to happen on a consistent basis,” he said.

“We owe it to our constituents and to the people of the Virgin Islands to at least hear from these

key players who play a part in determining our health insurance package, going forward,” he added.

Beverly Joseph, Chair of the Government Employees Services Commission (GESC) Health Insurance Board of Trustees testified.

“Essentially we are looking at a ‘rate pass’ for Active Employees and for pre-Medicare Retirees (who are insured by Cigna) for FY2017 in all benefit areas, which means no increase to members of the government. For Medicare Retirees (those over the age of 65), who are covered by United HealthCare, we are looking at small rate increase of 2 1/2 % for the Medicare supplement portion only, and not effective until April 1, 2017.”

Sen. Janette Millin Young reiterated the “good news” for government employees.

“The rate pass translates into no increase to members,” she said. Sen. Millin Young also sought further clarity regarding the dollar amount and what it would translate to for retirees over the age of 65, who would be affected by the 2 1/2% increase.

Maureen Venzen, Chief of Group Health Insurance at the Division for Personnel, explained that depending on the coverage level for the retiree, as several plans are available, the increase would amount to between \$2 to \$3 per pay period.

At press time, no action had been taken on any measure though the committee engaged in a discussion with members of the governor’s financial team relative to Bill No. 31-0447, a measure to authorize the issuance of bonds, notes or other evidences of indebtedness to provide funding for capital projects and operating expenses of the Government of the Virgin Islands, not to exceed \$292,000,000.

Later, the full body will rise out of committee of the Whole and resume the Legislative Session to act on both measures.

All members were present.