

LSVI, PERB, AND VILMC RECEIVED FY 2020 BUDGET DECREASES

Date : July 31, 2019

ST. THOMAS--The Committee on Finance, chaired by Senator Kurt A. Vialet, convened FY 2020 budget hearings Tuesday morning in the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall, St. Thomas with the Legal Services of the Virgin Islands (LSVI); Public Employees Relations Board (PERB); and the VI Labor Management Committee (VILMC).

Attorney Shelby King Gaddy, Executive Director and CEO, LSVI said in her testimony that for FY19, the Governor's budget included \$1,322,000 for Legal Services and the FY 2020 request is \$1,277,050. She added that the decrease represents \$70,000 appropriated in FY 2019 for mitigation damages caused to the LSVI property from the hurricanes of 2017.

According to Atty. Gaddy, the sum of \$1,277,050 is the amount that was included in the miscellaneous section of the FY 2020 budget. This sum, she pointed out, will allow them to maintain the status quo at their present level of service delivery. Moreover, LSVI is at the lowest staffing level in its history. She said there has been a net loss of three (3) attorneys, and during 2018-2019, LSVI has been in a continuous rebuilding posture to replace the experienced attorney resources.

Atty. Gaddy told the Committee that they are still seeking to engage a fundraiser/development person to allow them to hire at least one additional attorney in each office to handle the ongoing types of cases they traditionally handle. Furthermore, they are constantly in search of other funds to meet the unmet legal needs of the community.

Pierina Jacobs-Feldman, Chairman

of PERB said the Governor's FY 2020 recommended budget is \$1,475,301. However, they are requesting an additional amount of \$172,066 which brings their total requested for FY 2020 budget to \$1,647,367. According to Jacobs-Feldman, the mission of the PERB is to provide for an orderly and constructive relationship between public employers and their employees, and union representatives in a neutral environment.

Zandra Petersen, Executive

Director, Certified Officer, and Mediator to the PERB said in her presentation, that the breakdown of their budget request in the amount of \$1,647,367 is as follows: Personnel Services-\$720,280; Fringe Benefits-\$279,22; Capital Outlays-\$75,000; Office and Operating Costs-\$59,720; and Other Services and Charges-\$496,145.

According to Petersen, during FY

2020 PERB will continue to do what is necessary to meet its statutory duties, within its budgetary constraints, especially as it relates to effective management of their caseload.

Aubrey A. Lee, Executive

Director, VILMC said the primary focus of VILMC is on the development of an Agency's Labor Management Committee to provide employees involvement with management, in addressing and recommending resolutions to workplace issues and problems, not directly related to the Collective bargaining Agreement, but impacts the workplace.

Yirah Tutein, Assistant Director,

VILMC said the Governor's recommended budget for FY 2020 is \$172,890. Last year FY 2019 budget was \$175,000. With this deduction, she added, the over all cost of operating business in the VI, they see the need for an increase of \$180,000 to help defray the increase cost of fringe benefits, operating supplies, professional services, and utilities.

According to the Assistant

Director, the breakdown is as follows: Personnel-\$104,000; Health Insurance and Fringe Benefits-\$16,200; Office Supplies-\$5,000; and Services and Other Charges-\$54,800. She added that, the plan of operation has been developed using expertise within the VI Government and its instrumentalities, labor organization, the federal government and private institutions were necessary.

This approach, she pointed out, is aimed at prudent use of budget funds to obtain maximum results and benefits. A total of \$180,000 is being requested to continue the program from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020.