

Senator Marise James Launches Solo Legislative Inquiry Into Epstein's Ties to USVI Agencies

During Friday's Economic Development hearing, Sen. James said she would question agencies and departments about Jeffrey Epstein's dealings with the territory, framing the issue as a broader test of governance, vetting and institutional accountability.

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“I believe we need an investigation. And I think everybody in this room knows the type of investigation I think that we need,” said Senator Marise James on Friday, sparking what appears to be a one-woman legislative probe into the interactions of Jeffrey Epstein with government entities and agencies in the territory.

The lawmaker's remarks come weeks after former Senate President Adlah "Foncie" Donastorg [wrote](#) to the current holder of the office Senator Milton Potter urging the 36th Legislature to convene a "full, public investigation" into Jeffrey Epstein's activities in the USVI.

Sen. James began her contribution in the meeting of the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture by drawing on her experience in the military, declaring that she was taught during her service that "we do not ignore uncomfortable facts, and we do not protect systems at the expense of truth."

She contextualized her desire for inquiry by noting the sustained spotlight on the deceased sexual offender's business and personal relationships, but insisted that what was most important was a holistic review. "This broader and more important question is institutional. What does this reveal about our systems of governance?" Senator James asked. "This is not a comfortable conversation, but a necessary one."

The lawmaker promised to "look at every single agency and department that I believe needs to look at itself when it comes to the Epstein matter," as agency representatives come before her. On Friday, she noted that several relevant agencies were present to provide updates, pointing out the Economic Development Agency, the University of the Virgin Islands, the Office of the Attorney General, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, the V.I. Police Department, the Election Systems of the Virgin Islands, and the V.I. Port Authority.

"You can all agree that we cannot fix what we refuse to examine," Senator James continued.

She began by asking questions about how beneficiaries of EDA and RT Park programs are currently vetted. Both RTPark's Executive Director Eric Sonnier and EDA's Executive Director Wayne Biggs outlined their organizations' processes for conducting background checks on applicants, and for removing beneficiaries who act in a way detrimental to the reputation of the agencies. "I wasn't there when – I mean, no excuse – the Jeffrey Epstein application went through, so I can't really speak to that particular application," Mr. Biggs said, emphasizing that the EDC has since moved to strengthen its scrutiny of prospective and current beneficiaries.

"My concern is moving forward," Senator James responded. "If we immediately know that someone is a sex offender and is registered nationally, federally, they should not continue to receive the benefits of this territory."

Towards the end of the eight-and-a-half hour session, Senator James returned to the topic, directing a question about permits to DPNR Commissioner Jean Pierre Oriol.

Referencing the permitting applications undertaken by Jeffrey Epstein shortly before his death, Senator James asked whether those were transferred along with the sale of his property by his estate. "If it was an application that was in process, those die automatically," Mr. Oriol answered. "A permit that was issued can in fact be assigned and transferred, but there was no request to assign or transfer any of the permits."

If none of her colleagues decide to align their fact-finding questions with Senator James, who outright declared that "I'm the only one conducting this solo Epstein investigation," then the probe will come to an end when she demits office, as the lawmaker has decided [not to seek reelection](#). No matter what happens afterwards, however, Senator James has vowed to continue the investigation until her final days in office in December 2026.