

Who Controls VI Elections? Board Members Press for Clarity as Authority Dispute Persists Ahead of Mediation

As the Board of Elections heads into court-ordered mediation with the Democratic Party over the 2026 primaries, members again clashed over Act 8690, questioning whether the supervisor or the board holds final authority to manage and certify elections.

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With the V.I. Board of Elections headed into [court-ordered](#) mediation with the Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands over how this year's upcoming primary elections will be managed, board members on Wednesday again confronted a central unresolved issue: how current election law divides responsibility between the Supervisor of Elections and the board itself.

The issue resurfaced during a meeting that included several agenda items, among them the formal introduction of new board member Franz Christian Jr. to his official duties. After a lengthy executive session, board member Cleopatra Peter again sought clarity on the current state of election law.

“I want to know who is in charge, or who has jurisdiction over the 2026 election,” she asked.

Board chair Raymond Williams said he had already written to the Legislature to ask whether an upcoming hearing in early May could include discussion of Act 8690 on the agenda.

“We’re talking about court cases and all of that,” Mr. Williams said. “But if we don’t get clarity, the bigger problem becomes exactly what you just asked – who, quote unquote, operates and manages elections.”

He urged fellow board members to press their elected representatives for a clarifying discussion about the law’s provisions.

“We need the resolution. We cannot have conflicting legislation that gives supervisors the same power as a board.”

Board member Barbara LaRonde, however, argued that the matter had already been addressed by the attorney general. She pointed to a legal opinion from the territory’s chief legal officer stating that “the Board shall be the policy-making body of the Virgin Islands Election System, and shall exercise chief advisory control through the Supervisor of Election, who shall be responsible for executing the mandate of the board,” Ms. LaRonde said.

Mr. Williams countered that the attorney general’s written opinion, like the statute itself, remained open to interpretation.

Ms. LaRonde then pointed to what she described as inconsistent practice in recent elections. “What we’re having here in the 2024 election...is Carolyn Fawkes is a signatory on the end of this election, on the certification.” At the same time, she said, the 2022 election reflected a different approach.

“There’s board member signatures for that election. So what are we doing? I don’t know.” Supervisor of Elections Carolyn Fawkes then said the most recent law should control. “So yes, the supervisor’s office certifies the election,” she declared. “That’s why we signed it in 2024 and we will sign it in 2026 unless the law changes.”

Board member Cleopatra Peter said she remained troubled by that arrangement. “Now we have our unelected employee certifying the election.... This is why I keep telling ‘yall, we have a problem here with Act 8690, and it needs to be resolved.”

Williams said that was the reason he has continued pushing lawmakers for clarity. “That’s why I’m pressing continuously on the Legislature to clarify what their intents are,” responded Mr. Williams. “I can sit here and methodically try to answer the question, but I think the clarification has to come from the Legislature.”

Earlier in the discussion, he said there had been little response so far to his efforts to reach out to senators.

