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JohnHope and Frett Disqualified as Elections System Reviews McClafferty Petition Ahead of Friday Ballot Position Drawing

Supervisor Caroline Fawkes said JohnHope fell short of signature requirements and Frett's ticket was disqualified over his running mate's voter status, while independent petitions, including Brett McClafferty's, remain under review before June 2.

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From left to right, Jed JohnHope and Stephen "Smokey" Frett.

Two prospective 2026 candidates have been disqualified from the ballot, while the Elections System of the Virgin Islands continues reviewing independent petitions ahead of the June 2 certification deadline and prepares for Friday's casting of lots for candidates in the Democratic

Primary.

Election Supervisor Caroline Fawkes told the Consortium that Jed JohnHope did not meet the minimum signature requirement for non-party or no-party candidates seeking office. Such candidates must submit 100 signatures per district. According to Ms. Fawkes, Mr. JohnHope submitted only three signatures in the St. Croix District and 25 in the St. Thomas-St. John District, falling short of the threshold required to proceed.

The Elections System also disqualified the gubernatorial candidacy of former Senator Stephen “Smokey” Frett after determining that his running mate was not a registered voter. Ms. Fawkes said that issue made the candidacy ineligible.

The developments come as election officials continue vetting nomination petitions submitted for the 2026 election cycle. Ms. Fawkes said petitions for political party candidates must be reviewed first because those candidates are seeking placement in the August primary. That sequencing, she said, explains why she could not yet provide a final response on whether the petition submitted by Brett “Mac” McClafferty is legitimate.

Mr. McClafferty is running as an independent, and Ms. Fawkes said independent candidates must be certified by June 2. She said information on his petition should be available soon.

The question surrounding Mr. McClafferty’s candidacy follows previous attention on his eligibility for public office. The attorney general earlier issued an opinion concluding that Mr. McClafferty was ineligible to run for the Legislature because of prior convictions, though eligibility requirements for other offices may differ. For now, the Elections System’s review of his independent petition remains pending.

Ms. Fawkes said she is traveling to St. Thomas today to personally review additional petitions that deputies and staff have already examined. She is expected to remain there through Friday.

On Friday, May 29, Democratic Primary candidates are scheduled to participate in the casting of lots, the process used to determine ballot position. The event is set to begin at 5:30 p.m. sharp.

The disqualifications of Mr. Jedhope and Mr. Frett’s ticket are the latest changes in a filing season that has already seen several candidacy questions arise as the Elections System works through party and independent submissions ahead of the statutory deadlines.