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Francois Confirmation Gives V.I. Supreme Court Full Five Justices for First Time as Andre Is Confirmed to Continue on Superior Court

Denise Francois was confirmed to the Supreme Court, giving the high court five justices for the first time, while Renee Andre was confirmed to continue Superior Court service as senators urged faster movement on long-delayed cases.

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From left to right, Judge Denise Francois and Attorney Renee Andre.

Legislators are hopeful that Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s nominations for the Superior and Supreme Courts will help move the needle in getting resolutions in the territory's backlog of cases.

On Thursday, the 36th Legislature unanimously supported the nominations of Honorable Denise M. Francois as a Justice, Supreme Court of the Virgin Islands, and Renee M. Andre, Esq. as a Judge in the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands.

At their confirmation hearings, lawmakers expressed significant confidence in the nominees' qualifications and experience. The high praise continued during Thursday's session. Senate President Milton Potter stated that a strong judiciary is "foundational to the rule of law here in the US Virgin Islands." He shared his gratitude to the governor for the "quality and the caliber" of the nominees.

Senator Kurt Vialet was among those who hoped that confirmation to their respective roles would have a meaningful impact. He lamented that community members who are facing gun charges "for years" have "fallen on the wayside." He added, as well, that cases "languish, whether it is a court or the attorney general's office." Mr. Vialet warned that "at some point, we're going to have to be able to get it together, that these cases are expedited and resolved."

Addressing Renee Andre, Senator Noevelle Francis said, "All I ask is that she continue to move her docket and make sure that we're doing this in a timely fashion, because we want to make sure that these cases are moved quickly."

The confirmation of Francois is particularly notable, as Senator Ray Fonseca confirmed via Chief Justice Rhys Hodge that it is the "first time the Virgin Islands will have the full five Supreme Court justices on the bench." He qualified this update as "amazing."

The pair affirmed their commitment to the Judiciary.

Francois promised to "work hard for the continued success and strength and operation and good work of the Supreme Court of the Virgin Islands." Ms. Andre pledged to "serve with fairness, integrity, impartiality, and a steadfast dedication to the administration of justice."