GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Premier Wheatley Highlights Extensive Consultation Behind Elections Amendment Act 2026

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Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, has said that the proposed Elections (Amendment) Act 2026 is the result of extensive consultation and careful review of recommendations from multiple stakeholders.

“This is the Elections Amendment Act 2026, following extensive deliberations with a number of entities, including a committee of the House (of Assembly) who looked at recommendations of various observer missions that came to The Virgin Islands,” he stated as he introduced the Bill during the continuation of the Second Sitting of the Third Session of the Fifth House of Assembly of The Virgin Islands on Tuesday 22 April 2026.

The Premier noted that the process also built on work undertaken by the previous House of Assembly of The Virgin Islands, as well as input from key offices. “Also, the last House of Assembly looked at a number of recommendations that were forwarded through the Deputy Governor’s Office and the Office of the Supervisor of Elections.”

He emphasised that the proposed amendments were shaped through thorough engagement and discussion. “We had very extensive discussions about amendments to the Elections Act, and of course, those recommendations were used to make this Amendment Act. This received its first reading some time ago, and now we are here to debate this Elections Act, so that it can therefore become law.”

Premier Wheatley further indicated that the Bill introduces revolutionary changes that require careful consideration.

Modernising the Electoral Process

The Elections (Amendment) Act, 2026, seeks to strengthen the Territory’s democratic framework by introducing several key reforms:

- Enhanced Voter Access: The Act introduces modern voting methods, including mobile and curbside voting for those with physical limitations, and formalises the use of assistive technologies for voters with disabilities.

- Institutional Strengthening: It establishes a dedicated Department of Elections and an Elections Advisory Committee to oversee continuous voter registration and ensure operational efficiency.
- Campaign Accountability: New provisions introduce a formal Code of Conduct for political parties and candidates, alongside stricter regulations for political finance and campaign donations.
- Administrative Integrity: The Bill clarifies residency requirements for registration and introduces measures to prevent incumbency advantages during the election period, such as restrictions on the announcement of major grants or projects just before an election.

The updates to this Bill, which had its First Reading and will be referred to Committee when the House of Assembly resumes 30 April 2026 at 10 am, aim to ensure that The Virgin Islands' electoral system remains transparent, inclusive, and aligned with international best practices.

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About:

The Government of The Virgin Islands is committed to promoting good governance and the sustainable development of the Territory with a view to ensuring a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society. The Premier's Office serves as the focal point for coordinating cross-sectoral policies and programmes and promoting the sustainable development of The Virgin Islands to ensure a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society.

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Additional Documents or Media

- elections_act.pdf