TITLE 48 - TERRITORIES AND INSULAR POSSESSIONS
CHAPTER 12 - VIRGIN ISLANDS
SUBCHAPTER III - LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

§ 1572. Legislators

(a) Terms of office

The term of office of each member of the legislature shall be two years. The term of office of each member shall commence on the second Monday in January following his election: Provided, however, That the term of office of each member elected in November 1958 shall commence on the second Monday in April 1959 and shall continue until the second Monday in April 1961, and the term of office of each member elected in November 1960 shall commence on the second Monday in April 1961 and continue until the second Monday in January 1963.

(b) Qualifications of members

No person shall be eligible to be a member of the legislature who is not a citizen of the United States, who has not attained the age of twenty-one years, who is not a qualified voter in the Virgin Islands, who has not been a bona fide resident of the Virgin Islands for at least three years next preceding the date of his election, or who has been convicted of a felony or of a crime involving moral turpitude and has not received a pardon restoring his civil rights. Federal employees and persons employed in the legislative, executive or judicial branches of the government of the Virgin Islands shall not be eligible for membership in the legislature.

(c) Appointment of electoral officers; popular election of members of boards of election

All officers and employees charged with the duty of directing the administration of the electoral system of the Virgin Islands and its representative districts shall be appointed in such manner as the legislature may by law direct: Provided, however, That members of boards of elections, which entities of government have been duly organized and established by the government of the Virgin Islands, shall be popularly elected.

(d) Immunity of members

No member of the legislature shall be held to answer before any tribunal other than the legislature for any speech or debate in the legislature and the members shall in all cases, except treason, felony, or breach of the peace, be privileged from arrest during their attendance at the sessions of the legislature and in going to and returning from the same.

(e) Compensation and allowances

Each member of the legislature shall be paid such compensation and shall receive such additional allowances or benefits as may be fixed under the laws of the Virgin Islands. Such compensation, allowances, or benefits, together with all other legislative expenses, shall be appropriated by, and paid out of funds of, the government of the Virgin Islands.

(f) Limitations on holding other office

No member of the legislature shall hold or be appointed to any office which has been created by the legislature, or the salary or emoluments of which have been increased, while he was a member, during the term for which he was elected, or during one year after the expiration of such term.

(g) General powers; parliamentary rules

The legislature shall be the sole judge of the elections and qualifications of its members, shall have and exercise all the authority and attributes, inherent in legislative assemblies, and shall have the power to institute and conduct investigations, issue subpoena to witnesses and other parties concerned, and administer oaths. The rules of the Legislative Assembly of the Virgin Islands existing on July 22, 1954 shall continue in force and effect for sessions of the legislature, except as inconsistent with this chapter, until altered, amended, or repealed by the legislature.
(h) Vacancies

The Legislature of the Virgin Islands shall by law provide the procedure for filling any vacancy in the office of member of the legislature.


References in Text

This chapter, referred to in subsec. (g), was in the original “this Act”, meaning act July 22, 1954, ch. 558, 68 Stat. 497, as amended, known as the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1541 of this title and Tables.

Amendments

1973—Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 93–130 substituted provision authorizing the Legislature of Virgin Islands to provide by law the procedure for filling vacancies in the membership of the Legislature, for provisions authorizing the Governor of the Virgin Islands to fill any such vacancy by appointment of resident of the district from which the member whose office became vacant was elected if the vacancy is that of a Senator and of resident of any part of Virgin Islands if the vacancy is that of a Senator at large, and that such appointee shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

1972—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 92–389 reduced the age qualification for membership of legislature from twenty-five years to twenty-one years.

1968—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 90–496 inserted proviso requiring members of boards of elections, duly organized by the government, to be popularly elected.

1965—Subsec. (e). Pub. L. 89–98 substituted provisions empowering the government of the Virgin Islands to fix and pay legislative salaries and expenses for provisions which specifically fixed these salaries and expenses and which required the United States Government to pay them.


Subsec. (e). Pub. L. 86–289, § 2(b), changed the date of payment of salaries, increased the per diem from $10 to $20, and provided that the per diem paid to members of the legislature for official travel outside the Virgin Islands should not be at rates in excess of those paid Federal Government employees.

Effective Date of 1973 Amendment

Section 2 of Pub. L. 93–130 provided that: “The amendment made by the first section of this Act [amending this section] shall apply with respect to vacancies occurring on or after the date of enactment of this Act [Oct. 19, 1973].”

Effective Date of 1968 Amendment

Amendment of provisions of section necessary to authorize the holding of an election for Governor and Lieutenant Governor on Nov. 3, 1970, effective Jan. 1, 1970, and all other amendments of provisions of section, unless otherwise expressly provided by Pub. L. 90–496, effective Jan. 4, 1971, see section 16 of Pub. L. 90–496, set out as a note under section 1591 of this title.