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Bill to Honor Former Governor Mapp with Proposed Road Naming and Medal of Honor Introduced

Legislation proposes naming Route 75 on St. Croix after former Governor Kenneth Mapp and awarding him the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor

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Former Governor Kenneth Mapp. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Former governor Kenneth Ezra Mapp could soon be honored tangibly, as Senator Franklin Johnson — [a former senior policy advisor to Mr. Mapp](#) — successfully introduced legislation to celebrate his many years of service to the United States Virgin Islands.

Bill 35-0229 seeks to name Route 75 on the island of St. Croix from Bassin Triangle intersection at Route 70, Estate Richmond and ending at Krause Lagoon the “Gov. Kenneth E. Mapp

Highway”. The bill would also bestow the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor on former governor Mapp.

Before being discussed in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary on Thursday, the bill had already received supporting signatures from Senators Donna Frett-Gregory, Milton Potter, Samuel Carrion, Javan James Sr., Kenneth Gittens, and Diane Capehart.

Mr. Johnson, emotional throughout much of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary hearing, told his colleagues that he was confident Mr. Mapp had “done his due service.” He was one several individuals with nothing but glowing commendations for Mr. Mapp. Among them was Mona Barnes, who led the V.I. Territorial Management Agency during Mr. Mapp’s tenure. She described him as having the “qualities and skills attributed above to a true visionary and leader.” Ms. Barnes, who contested for the gubernatorial seat against Mr. Mapp and other candidates in 2014, had nothing but praise for her one-time political opponent. “Throughout his life, in whatever role he played, Governor Mapp stood out like a shining star,” she rhapsodized.

Pedro Cruz, a lifelong friend of Governor Mapp and a former commissioner of the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation, supported her comments. He commended lawmakers for introducing legislation recognizing “one of the most outstanding governors in the history of the United States Virgin Islands.” He referred to Mr. Mapp as “a patriot that truly cares and loves the U.S. Virgin Islands and its people.”

Margaret Guarino worked with Mr. Mapp when he served as the director of Finance and Administration at the V.I. Public Finance Authority during the Charles Turnbull-led administration. “His legacy continues to inspire us all, reminding us of the importance of service, resilience and community engagement,” she said. She testified that conferring the Medal of Honor on Mr. Mapp “is [a] fitting acknowledgement of his tireless work on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands.”

Meanwhile, Attorney Peter Hiebert credited Mr. Mapp for the “infusion of billions of dollars in federal and private funds that facilitated and accelerated the territory’s recovery” after hurricanes Irma and Maria. He contended that “Governor Mapp’s leadership was also on full display during the aftermath of two of the most destructive hurricanes in the history of the Virgin Islands.”

Praises for Governor Mapp continued as lawmakers commented on Bill 35-0229. “He is worthy of the honor,” affirmed Senator Marvin Blyden. “He’s a good example to follow,” he added. According to Senator Potter, Mr. Mapp “rose to the occasion at times when this territory was at its lowest point,” referring to his tenure as Lieutenant Governor during the passage of Hurricane Marilyn. Senator Novelle Francis, though in support of the honor, told his colleagues that he was hoping for something grander than a road naming. “With his contribution, his 40-plus years of service, we needed to find something a lot more significant to name after him.” Nonetheless, he promised to support the legislation.

Mr. Francis joined his colleagues in favorably moving Bill 25-0229 to the full body for further consideration. Senator Carla Joseph was the only discordant note in the chorus of adulation for Mr. Mapp on Thursday. Unlike her Senate colleagues, she did not shower Mr. Mapp with praise during her allotted time to speak, instead raising questions about allegations of conflicts of interest during Mr. Mapp’s tenure. She referenced an article published in 2018 which suggested the use of taxpayer dollars went to the care of an elderly relative, and also pointed out that she “didn’t see anything delineated in this piece of legislation, which speaks to the governor’s work outside his public service that he was paid to do.”

Senators Javan James and Kenneth Gittens were openly displeased with their colleague's pointed criticism, with Mr. Gittens apologizing to Mr. Mapp for Ms. Joseph's statements. "During our discourse here in this body, we must always be respectful," he said. "I really wish certain things would have not been said on the record here today," lamented Mr. James.?

Nonetheless, Mr. Mapp told the members of the 35th Legislature that he was grateful "to have had the honor to serve...I'm not one that runs after honors, but I'm happy and humbled by this honor that the Legislature is working to bestow upon me."

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