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## Police Should Have Arrested AFT President Rosa Soto-Thomas, Governor Bryan Says

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**Police officers, Rosa Soto-Thomas and Carlos McGregor work toward an amicable solution on Friday, Feb. 28, 2020. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ VI CONSORTIUM**

ST. CROIX — While the community [roasted](#) St. Croix Superintendent of Schools, Carlos McGregor, for calling police to remove St. Croix District American Federation of Teachers President, Rosa Soto-Thomas from the Arthur A. Richards K-8 School campus on Friday, Governor Albert Bryan said she should have been arrested.

Mrs. Soto-Thomas was allowed to stay in the meeting, which was called by Mr. McGregor to update the school's staff on the plans for students following the Friday closure because of a foul odor that has caused both teachers and students to fall ill. Mrs. Soto-Thomas contended that as the

president of the AFT on St. Croix, she has a right to be present at meetings affecting her members.

But Governor Bryan, during an interview with the Consortium Monday night, said police should have handcuffed the AFT president and remove her from the premises.

"They should have arrested her," Mr. Bryan said swiftly. "The union has their role, and one of their roles is not in a staff meeting advocating for their members. If there is an instance where the union feels they have a need to step up, then they call a meeting with the superintendent and they have a meeting with them. If she wants to bring her staff members, that's fine. But you can't come into a meeting that the manager has called with their staff and represent your self as the union. That's not how this works," Mr. Bryan said.

"We allow a lot of things to go on in the Virgin Islands," Mr. Bryan added. "...We can't allow people to come into government staff meetings and be disruptive. That's just uncalled for."

Mrs. Soto-Thomas, however, said she was not being disruptive during the meeting, because the meeting had not started when the incident occurred. Also, the meeting included other individuals along with some parents, but they were not pressured to leave, Mrs. Soto-Thomas said.

When the meeting finally started, it went smoothly with Mrs. Soto-Thomas sitting among teachers.

Known to be a witty and fiery AFT leader, Mrs. Soto-Thomas struck back at the governor for stating she should have been arrested. "I think that the police commissioner needs to arrest the governor for dereliction of his duties and not doing the people's work. Clearly he's falling short. He made a lot of campaign promises and very little has been done since he's been sitting in that seat. So he need not cast darts at me because clearly I'm not the issue. The issue is I hit him hard and he's simply firing back," she said.

"He sounds just like Trump, 'lock her up, lock her up,'" the AFT president added, referring to a chant during the 2016 U.S. presidential election that had become a mainstay of Mr. Trump's rallies.

"I think it's a disgrace because his administration is always talking about labor management and forging those relationships, and clearly this is anti that and contrary to that statement which was made during the campaign while trying to reach out to unions," she said.

On the matter of the meeting, Mrs. Soto-Thomas said she has been invited to many staff meetings in the past to speak to members. "And this wasn't your usual staff meeting because I know protocol. I don't ever go into regular staff meetings, but this was as crisis situation," she said. "This was a crisis meeting. It wasn't like the staff was at school and they knew of this meeting. They heard about it in the early morning [when the press release](#) was issued by [Cynthia] Graham, that's when they learned about it."

Below, a video of the encounter: