

Territory's Consultants in Washington Tout Republican Connections as USVI Seeks Federal Support Under Trump Administration

During a PFA board meeting, Washington consultants from Squire Patton Boggs emphasized their relationships with key Trump administration officials, assuring board members of their advocacy efforts.

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The Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. By. GETTY IMAGES

The Republican control of the White House, Senate and House of Representatives was a topic of discussion as the V.I. Government's Washington advisors and consultants presented updates to the V.I. Public Finance Authority during Wednesday's board meeting.

“We are particularly well-suited to help the territory now with President Trump back in the White House, Republican majorities on both side of the Capitol,” said Bill Schuster, senior policy advisor at Squire Patton Boggs (SPB) and former Republican representative from Pennsylvania who served as chair of the House Transformation and Infrastructure Committee. Mr. Schuster touted his personal relationships with Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy, EPA administrator Lee Zeldin, and Kristi Noem, Secretary of Homeland Security.

“She's a great selection for Homeland Security, and I'm sure she's going to be interacting with the islands in the coming days and months,” Mr. Schuster predicted. He also called Mehmet Oz, President Trump's pick to lead the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, “a good friend.”

“As I go through President Trump's new cabinet, I think there's someone at SPB who has a personal connection to just about every one of them,” Mr. Schuster boasted. He sought to reassure PFA board members that the federal government would not lose interest in supporting the Virgin Islands. “President Trump can be unpredictable, but there's one thing to be sure he understands, is the strategic importance of the territories of the United States,” Mr. Schuster said, referring to the Republican campaign platform which holds U.S. territories as “vital to national security.”

According to Mr. Schuster, the interest of national security requires “a U.S. Virgin Islands economy that is strong and vibrant and resilient...you can count on us to be making those points loudly and clearly to everyone who will listen,” he declared.

Board member Dorothy Isaacs questioned how Squire Patton Boggs planned to approach perhaps the biggest aspect of the relationship Virgin Islanders have with the federal government. “If we are so important to the federal government security, why are we still constantly treated as second class citizens?” Ms. Isaacs asked. Mr. Schuster responded by highlighting the firm's advocacy work on behalf of the territory. “We're up there on the Hill, in the halls of Congress every day, talking about the priorities of the territory with every legislator on both sides of the aisle,” he remarked.

"That's all well and good to say," retorted Ms. Isaacs before citing several disparities between the U.S. Virgin Islands and the mainland. "We have no representation in the Senate, we have a non-voting delegate in the House," she pointed out.

Ms. Isaacs expressed frustration over the lack of political influence for U.S. territories, particularly when trying to voice concerns about policies from the Trump administration. "I have been wanting to call about some of the crazy things that the Trump administration is proposing... and there is no one that I can call that gives a damn, maybe because I don't vote," she continued.

She further emphasized the broader issue of disenfranchisement, stating, "Until Washington takes a hard look at why almost 4 million people are totally disenfranchised in our country, none of this means a darn thing to me." Isaacs also reminded those present that President Trump did not visit the Virgin Islands in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

Despite her criticisms, it is worth noting that Trump's support for the USVI following the hurricanes [was substantial](#), with former Governor Kenneth Mapp consistently praising the administration's responsiveness. Mapp had direct conversations with President Trump after the storms, requesting federal aid for recovery efforts. Since then, federal support to the USVI has grown significantly, with Governor Albert Bryan Jr. stating that [\\$22 billion in recovery assistance](#) has been allocated.

Additionally, Mr. Schuster reminded Ms. Isaacs that a delegation of lawmakers did visit the territory, even though the president did not. “There are members of Congress that do care about

the U.S. Virgin Islands, and that's our job to make sure we're putting you front and center,” he told her. Noting that the Virgin Islands and other territories have the highest per capita enrollment in the armed forces, Mr. Schuster was confident that federal policymakers were indeed sensitive to the needs of the territory. Squire Patton Boggs intends to ensure that it stays that way, the team made clear.

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