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Virgin Islands Mourns Former Senate President Ronald E. Russell

Government House, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett and the Democratic Party remembered Russell as a St. Croix attorney, former Senate president, constitutional delegate, musician, athlete and civic advocate.

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Former Senate President Ronald E. Russell is being remembered across the Virgin Islands as an attorney, legislator, constitutional delegate, civic advocate, athlete, musician, and longtime voice in the public life of St. Croix and the wider territory. Statements from Government House, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, and the Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands reflected on his decades of service, his roots in Frederiksted, and his continuing role in public affairs at the time of his passing.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. described Mr. Russell as “a son of St. Croix” whose work touched many parts of Virgin Islands society.

“On behalf of the Government of the Virgin Islands and the people of this Territory, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the family, friends, colleagues, and loved ones of former Senate President Ronald E. Russell.

“Former Senator Russell was a son of St. Croix whose life and work touched many corners of Virgin Islands society. He served our community as an attorney, senator, Senate president, trustee of the Government Employees’ Retirement System, advocate for Frederiksted, and a deeply engaged voice in the civic and cultural life of our Territory.

“He was a man of strong conviction, deep community concern, and unmistakable presence. Whether in the courtroom, on the Senate floor, or in the community, Ronald Russell was never a passive observer. He believed in public service, in strong institutions, and in the responsibility of Virgin Islanders to speak up and help shape the future of these islands.

“His service in the Legislature included leadership as vice president of the 26th Legislature and president of the 29th Legislature. He brought to that work the perspective of an attorney, the passion of a Crucian, and the confidence of a public servant who understood that democracy requires debate, discipline, and principled engagement.

“Beyond elected office, former Senator Russell remained active in matters affecting retirees, government, historic preservation, athletics, cultural memory, and the revitalization of Frederiksted. Through his work with Our Town Frederiksted, he continued to advocate for a town that honors its history while pursuing renewal and opportunity.

“Ronald Russell’s passing is a loss for St. Croix and for the Virgin Islands. His was a life lived in the arena, and our Territory is better for the years he gave to public service, the legal profession, and community advocacy.

“May his family find comfort in the legacy he leaves behind, and may his soul rest in eternal peace.”

Lieutenant Governor Tregenza A. Roach said he joined a saddened Virgin Islands community in mourning Mr. Russell, calling him “an accomplished attorney, musician, athlete, and political activist.”

Mr. Roach said he and Mr. Russell shared several paths in public service. Both were admitted to the Virgin Islands Bar around the same time, and Mr. Russell later provided legal counsel to the Virgin Islands Board of Education when Mr. Roach served as executive director. Both men also served in the Legislature, though in different terms.

Mr. Russell was elected president of the 29th Legislature, while Mr. Roach began his legislative service in the following term as a member of the 30th Legislature.

According to the lieutenant governor, Mr. Russell was also elected as a delegate to the Sixth Constitutional Convention. Mr. Roach said the two were often involved in conversations about the future of the Virgin Islands, the territory’s status, and issues of political development.

He noted that Mr. Russell practiced civil litigation and administrative law at The Russell Law Firm LLP, was a culture bearer, had a deep interest in music and the humanities, and was a former

sprinter who represented the Virgin Islands in several international athletic competitions.

“Senator Russell will always be remembered for his leadership, advocacy, and many contributions to the Virgin Islands,” Mr. Roach said.

He extended sympathies to Mr. Russell’s wife, Royette Russell, Esq., whom he described as a colleague and fellow University of the Virgin Islands alumnus, as well as to Mr. Russell’s children, family, friends, and members of the Virgin Islands Bar.

Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett also issued a statement mourning the former Senate president.

"It is with a heavy heart that I share my deepest condolences on the passing of former Senate President Ronald E. Russell Esq., a man whose life was a testament to the profound impact one person can have on an entire community.

"Ronald Russell was, in every sense, a son of these islands. Raised by his beloved grandmother, the legendary educator Eulalie Rivera, he carried her commitment to education and community throughout his life. His public service was deeply shaped by his roots in Frederiksted, his education as an attorney, as an athlete representing his home, and a belief in service to Virgin Islanders at every level of government. From his work as legal counsel to the Board of Education, the Public Services Commission, the Coastal Zone Management, and the Judicial Ethics Commission, to his distinguished tenure in the Legislature, culminating in his service as Senate President of the 29th Legislature, Senator Russell gave the best of himself to his people.

"As Delegate to Congress, I was proud to work alongside him as he demonstrated his intellectual rigor and deep humanity. His passing leaves a void in our public life.

"To his wife, Royette, his children, his family, his colleagues at the V.I. Bar, and the community of Frederiksted that shaped him and that he served so faithfully, please know that you are my and Jonathan's prayers. May God grant you comfort and peace, and may Senator Russell's legacy continue to inspire the next generation of Virgin Islanders called to serve. May he rest in eternal peace."

The Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands also mourned Mr. Russell, remembering him as a dedicated public servant, respected attorney, constitutional delegate, musician, athlete, and longtime advocate for the people of the Virgin Islands. The party noted that he served as president of the 29th Legislature and, beyond elected office, acted as trusted legal counsel and advisor to the party.

According to the DPVI, Mr. Russell helped guide the organization through important moments in its history while championing democratic participation, civic engagement, and principled leadership. At the time of his passing, he was continuing his public service as a member of the Sixth Constitutional Convention.

DPVI State Chairwoman Carol M. Burke said her own work with Mr. Russell during his time as Senate president allowed her to see his approach to leadership firsthand.

“Serving as Chief Advisor to Senate President Ronald Russell allowed me to witness firsthand his diligence, discipline, and unwavering stewardship as a legislator,” Burke said. “He approached public service with seriousness of purpose, deep preparation, and a profound respect for the institution of the Legislature and the people it represented. Senate President Russell believed leadership required courage, accountability, ethics, and constant engagement with the community.

His counsel, intellect, and commitment to the Virgin Islands left an indelible mark on all who had the privilege to work alongside him.”

The party said Mr. Russell’s commitment to public service was shaped in part by his grandmother, the late Eulalie Rivera, whose guidance inspired his lifelong involvement in politics and civic affairs.

DPVI also highlighted his lifelong connection to track and field, his role in the cultural life of the territory as a musician and community advocate, and his support for Frederiksted, historic preservation, retirees, athletics, and Virgin Islands culture and identity.

“The Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands honors Ronald E. Russell as a Party stalwart, counselor, statesman, constitutional delegate, athlete, musician, and community advocate whose legacy will continue to inspire future generations of Virgin Islanders,” Burke added.

The party extended condolences to his wife, Royette; his children; family members; friends; colleagues; and all those touched by his service and advocacy.