

Violet Says Senate Reelection Bid Is About Protecting St. Croix, Not Walking Away From Governor's Race

Senator Kurt Violet says he weighed another run for governor but chose the Senate race, arguing St. Croix needs experienced representation, stronger leverage in funding decisions and a voice with institutional knowledge as senior lawmakers leave office.

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Senator Kurt Violet. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

Senator Kurt Violet says his decision not to enter the 2026 gubernatorial race was one of the most difficult political choices he has made in recent years, but ultimately came down to a concern that St. Croix could lose senior, forceful representation in the Legislature at a critical moment for the territory.

Appearing Monday night on V.I. Consortium's first senatorial interview of the election cycle, Mr. Violet said he went "back and forth" over whether to pursue the governorship again or seek another term in the Senate. He said the decision became clearer after he considered the number of senior lawmakers who have already opted not to seek reelection and the role the Legislature will play in shaping policy, funding decisions and executive accountability after the election.

"One of the hardest decisions that I have had to make in the last couple years," Mr. Violet said, describing the internal debate over whether to run for governor or return to the Senate. He said he became "quite worried about the island of St. Croix" and about whether the island would have the level of representation needed in the next Legislature.

Mr. Violet, the current Senate majority leader and a former gubernatorial candidate, said he believes the Legislature can still drive major change in the territory. He pointed to former Senator Earl B. Ottley as an example of a lawmaker who never served as governor but still had a defining impact on the Virgin Islands through legislative leadership.

"I looked as to whether or not the Senate can actually make a change in this community, and overwhelmingly I know that the Senate can make a change," Mr. Violet said.

He argued that St. Croix suffered from insufficient representation during the two years he was out of the Senate, saying he saw legislation and funding decisions move forward without adequately accounting for the island. As one example, he cited the recent [Grant Anticipation Revenue \(GARVEE\) bond issuance](#), saying St. Thomas received more than \$70 million, while St. Croix received about \$28 million. He also noted that St. Thomas had a separate \$100 million highway grant, which he said created a much larger overall infrastructure benefit for that island.

"So when I add the numbers up, St. Thomas had like \$190 million to the highway project, while St. Croix just got \$28 million," he said.

Mr. Violet said that dynamic reinforced his decision to remain in the Senate, where he believes he can help ensure St. Croix is included in major allocations and that proposals coming from the executive branch account for the island's needs. He said any administration bringing legislation to the Senate should understand that St. Croix must be part of the discussion.

"Everybody knows that if you're coming to the Legislature, you got to include St. Croix," he said. "You got to make sure that St. Croix is going to have some type of parity, or a bit more, because we literally behind St. Thomas."

The discussion began with the observation that Mr. Violet had appeared [at the top of a gubernatorial poll](#) despite not being a declared candidate for governor. Asked what he would say to residents who wanted him to run, Mr. Violet said he understood the disappointment but believed the Senate offered a more certain path for him to continue influencing policy on St. Croix's behalf.

He acknowledged that a governor has direct authority over executive decisions, but said a gubernatorial campaign carries no guarantee of victory. He said he did not want to risk being absent from the Legislature if St. Croix needed experienced representation.

"At the end of the day, there's one winner," Mr. Violet said of the governor's race. "You run the risk of winning or you run the risk of losing."

Mr. Vialet said his Senate role also gives him leverage over one of the most important responsibilities facing the next Legislature: the confirmation of commissioners and directors chosen by the next governor. He said lawmakers have too often given incoming governors the benefit of the doubt when nominees are sent down, only to later recognize that some confirmations were poor decisions.

He said the next Senate must be far more rigorous, particularly because the next administration will oversee billions in remaining federal recovery dollars and major infrastructure, education and healthcare projects.

“We no longer could wait,” Mr. Vialet said, adding that the territory has a limited window to ensure major projects are fully underway, and in some cases completed, by 2030. The Office of Disaster Recovery has stated that the [actual deadline is 2035](#) to spend \$23.9 billion in federal disaster recovery funds.

Although Mr. Vialet said his immediate focus is the Senate, he made clear that his decision not to run for governor this cycle is not necessarily permanent.

“It’s not permanent,” he said. “It’s always fluid.”

Still, he said that at this stage, he believes his most important contribution is to remain in the Legislature, where he can bring what he described as institutional knowledge, a record of legislative scrutiny, and a consistent focus on St. Croix.

“I wanted to make sure that I am at the table,” he said.

Mr. Vialet said the next Legislature will need to be strong, prepared and willing to question proposals from the executive branch, regardless of who becomes governor. He said that includes pushing for fairer funding allocations, stronger oversight, better vetting of nominees and more deliberate policy decisions as the territory faces critical choices on infrastructure, economic development, education, healthcare and public safety.

“I bring that institutional knowledge to the Senate,” he said. “I bring strong representation for St. Croix.”