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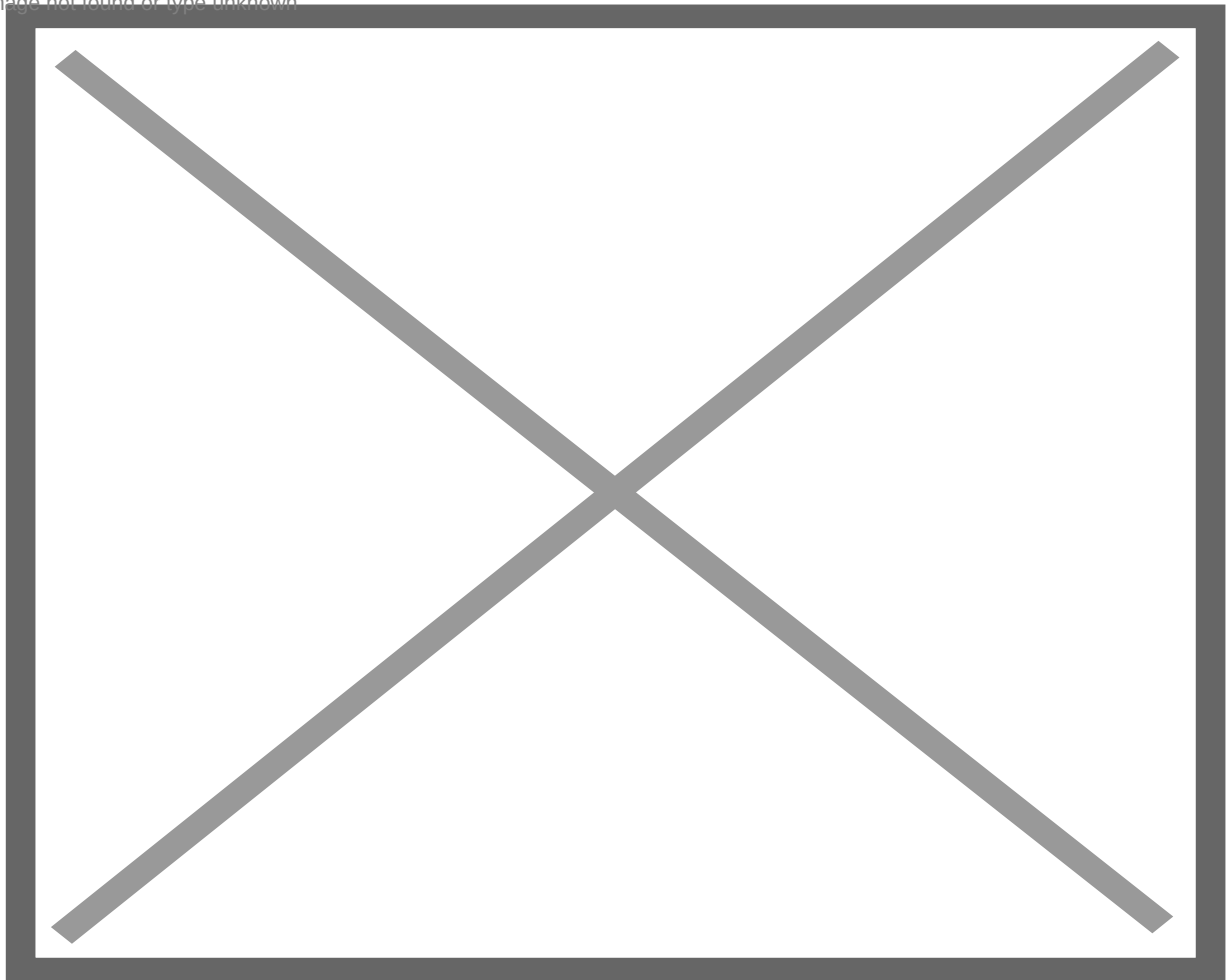
Op-Ed: When We Needed a Fighter, We Had One. Now We Need a Stateswoman.

Former Delegate Donna Christensen argues that Delia Smith's rise from secretary and single mother to U.S. attorney, plus her record on violent crime, public corruption and federal advocacy, has prepared her to represent the Virgin Islands in Congress.

Sponsored Content / **Published On July 29, 2026 11:17 AM /**

Staff Consortium **July 29, 2026**

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Former Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen.

Picture a young woman walking into the Virgin Islands Department of Justice for her first day of work. She is not an attorney. She is a secretary — answering phones, typing pleadings, learning the rhythm of the law from the outside in. And then she looks up and sees her: Jada Finch-Sheen, a brilliant, beautiful Black woman serving as Attorney General of the Virgin Islands. In that

moment, something clicked. The law was not a closed room. It was a door. And a Virgin Islands woman was standing on the other side of it, holding it open. That young secretary was Delia Smith.

What she did next tells you everything you need to know about who she is. She put herself through the University of the Virgin Islands as a single mother — working by day, studying by night, raising her child in between. Then she did it again in law school. No connections. No shortcuts. No one clearing the path ahead of her. Just discipline, faith, and an unshakeable belief that a girl from these islands could rise as high as her work would carry her.

It carried her all the way. Delia Smith became a federal prosecutor in the very community that raised her. And in 2022, nominated by the President and confirmed by the United States Senate, she made history — the first Black woman, and the first native daughter of the Virgin Islands, to serve as United States Attorney for the Virgin Islands. The same woman who once typed the filings was now the one whose signature carried the full weight of the United States Department of Justice.

And she did not treat the office as a trophy. She treated it as a trust.

As U.S. Attorney, Delia Smith fought violent crime with a ferocity this territory had not seen in years — taking guns off our streets, dismantling the networks that fuel our gun violence, and standing with grieving families who had waited too long for justice. She prosecuted public corruption without fear or favor, because she understood a simple truth: every dollar stolen through fraud, waste, and abuse is a dollar taken from a schoolchild, a hospital patient, a family waiting on a blue roof. She held the powerful accountable — not with press releases, but with indictments, convictions, and results.

That is the difference in this race. It is not about who can describe our problems most eloquently. Every candidate can recite the challenges: crime, healthcare, the cost of living, the slow pace of recovery. Describing problems is easy. Solving them is the job. Delia Smith is the only candidate in this race who has actually wielded federal power on behalf of the Virgin Islands people — and delivered.

Now consider what the Delegate's seat actually requires. Our next Delegate must walk into rooms in Washington — at Treasury on the rum cover-over, at HHS on Medicaid, at HUD and FEMA on our recovery dollars — and be taken seriously on day one. Delia Smith has already been vetted by the White House, confirmed by the United States Senate, and trusted with one of the most sensitive posts in federal law enforcement. Federal officials do not have to wonder whether she can do the work. They have watched her do it.

There is a poetry to her story that should not be lost on us. A generation ago, a young Virgin Islands woman looked up from a secretary's desk and saw what was possible. Today, there are young women across St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John looking up at Delia Smith the same way. That is what leadership does. It does not just hold office. It widens the horizon for everyone who comes after.

The Virgin Islands has reached a moment that demands both strength and stature — someone who has fought in the arena and can now represent us with dignity, credibility, and command on the national stage.

When we needed a fighter, we had one. Now that we need a stateswoman, we have her too. Her name is Delia Smith. On August 1, vote like our future depends on it — because it does.

Editor's Note:

This opinion was written by former Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen in support of Delia Smith's candidacy. The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent an endorsement or the editorial position of the V.I. Consortium.

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