The Virgin Islands Consortium

The Choice Is Clear: Delia Smith Brings Proven Federal Experience, Results and Readiness to Meet the USVI's Challenges

In this sponsored Op-Ed, Delia Smith argues that her record as a federal prosecutor and former U.S. Attorney gives her the experience, credibility and readiness to confront the USVI's challenges in crime, healthcare, disaster recovery and the economy.

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Delegate candidate Delia Smith, who argues in a sponsored op-ed that her federal prosecutorial experience, record of results and readiness position her to confront the USVI's challenges in Congress.

This Saturday, Virgin Islanders will choose who carries our one voice to Washington. It is a choice about our families' safety, our hospitals, our pensions, our economy, and our failing power grid. Before you cast your vote, I want to speak to you directly, not with slogans but neighbor to neighbor, about our islands' needs and who can actually deliver them.

Here are the facts that this race turns on. Texas sends 38 representatives to Congress, Florida sends 28, and California sends 52. If one of their representatives is weak on healthcare or appropriations, others can cover those important issues. The Virgin Islands sends one representative to Congress with no final vote. Our Delegate must therefore be the prosecutor, the negotiator and the diplomat — all in a single person — and must walk into Treasury, HHS, HUD and FEMA and be taken seriously the moment she enters the room. A state can afford to send a representative who is not prepared for leadership, but we cannot. We have one voice and that voice must carry.

So the question on Saturday is not who describes our problems. Every candidate in this race can recite them: crime, healthcare, WAPA, the cost of living, a recovery that has crawled while our families continue to suffer. Describing our problems is easy. Solving them in Congress, however, is the job of our Delegate. Let me show you the difference, issue by issue.

On Crime: Results, Not Words

Just days ago, we lost Officer Eustace Charles, a veteran of the VIPD, who was gunned down in Williams Delight. Our entire territory grieves with his family. In a year of dozens of murders, we have watched case after case go unsolved with no arrest, no answers, no justice. I have spent my campaign presenting a proactive plan for crime prevention: federal forensic resources to close cases, police presence and substations in our highest-crime communities, higher salaries that recruit and retain officers, tip lines our people can actually trust, and decoupling the Virgin Islands from Puerto Rico in federal enforcement funding so that maritime interdiction assets are dedicated to our waters, not shared with a territory that dwarfs us in size and population. I am the only candidate in this race who has actually taken guns off these streets, dismantled organizations that feed our violence, and remove murderous gangs from our communities. I have stood with victims of crimes and with our community for almost three decades when those verdicts were returned. These are not talking points — this is my record.

On the Rum Cover-Over: Fight Over the Right Number

The simple truth about the rum cover-over is that it has two parts: the tax rate and the number of gallons of distilled rum sold. Congress has already locked in our tax rate so any proposal that would double said rate would significantly reduce the number of gallons sold on the mainland. Our real problem is sales. Our revenue from the rum cover-over has fallen from approximately $226 million in 2023 to $181 million in 2025, revenue that backs our retirement pensions. Puerto Rico gets the larger share of the rum cover-over because it produces more gallons of rum, and it keeps adding new rum companies while we argue over percentages. Another issue that no one else in this race is addressing is that the tax collected on foreign rum is split between Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands on a formula that has not been rebased since Diageo came to St. Croix in 2008. Before Diageo our share of the foreign rum split was roughly 12 percent. After Diageo however,

our production rate increased to 30-37 percent. Nonetheless, our split fails to reflect the increase in production that Diageo brought to the table. We are entitled to a share that reflects our increased production, and I will fight to have Washington acknowledge these truths. We must also continue to bring more distillers to our shores. More gallons produced means more jobs, a healthier economy and more revenues for our retirees. That is the fight I will take to Washington.

On Healthcare: Know Which Lever to Pull

Our healthcare crisis is not a mystery; it is a set of federal formulas. The match rate that once punished us has been permanently fixed at 83 percent — that battle is largely won. The battle that remains is the cap. The Virgin Islands is the only American jurisdiction whose Medicaid dollars simply run out, a cliff no state ever faces. Our hospitals are reimbursed on a decades-old Medicare baseline that no longer reflects the actually costs of health care in our territory. Lifting the cap is a Medicaid fight while rebasing the reimbursement rate for our hospitals is a Medicare fight. They run through different committees and different statutes. A Delegate who conflates them will lose both. I know which lever to pull because I have spent my career inside the federal government navigating and achieving outcomes. Lastly, our government struggles every year to allocate the 17 percent local match required to draw down our federal Medicaid dollars, even as our hospitals spend millions treating Virgin Islanders who cannot afford payment. I will fight to have that uncompensated care count as in-kind contribution toward the 17 percent match, so that we capture every federal dollar we are entitled to with money we are already spending.

On the HUD Suspension: The Honest Broker

Last week, HUD suspended Housing Finance Authority from accessing $1.3 billion in disaster recovery funds — money for families still waiting after almost nine years since the storms. I will not pretend that HUD’s decision came out of nowhere. I know these facts better than anyone in this race, because as United States Attorney, my office prosecuted the corruption at the center of HUD’s audit. I was on the accountability side of this crisis before it was a headline. That is precisely why I can be the honest broker who sits down with HUD, assist our agencies with compliance, and return the funding to the people of the Virgin Islands. My record on ending waste, fraud and abuse is well documented.

The Verdict

I began my career as a secretary at the Virgin Islands Department of Justice typing pleadings that others signed. I put myself through college and law school as a single parent. I later served as a local and federal prosecutor, and became the first female, native Virgin Islander appointed by President Joe Biden and confirmed by the United States Senate as U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands. The White House vetted me and the Senate confirmed me. The members of Congress can therefore rely on my proven record to conclude that I can do this work.

My fellow Virgin Islanders, you have seen my record. One candidate in this race has wielded federal power on behalf of the Virgin Islands people and has delivered results. When we needed a fighter, we had one. Now that we need a stateswoman, we have her

too. On Saturday, August 1, vote for leadership, proven success, and a better Virgin Islands. Vote Delia Smith for Delegate to Congress.

Editor's Note: *This sponsored op-ed was submitted by Delia L. Smith, a candidate for Delegate to Congress. The views, arguments and claims expressed are solely those of Smith and do not reflect the reporting, analysis or editorial position of the V.I. Consortium. Publication does not constitute an endorsement.*

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