

Roach-Francis and Other Defeated Democratic Candidates Congratulate Winners, Pledge Continued Service

Roach and Francis congratulated Plaskett and Potter, while Donna Frett-Gregory, Delia Smith and Teri Helenese thanked supporters, accepted the results and said their commitment to the Virgin Islands would continue beyond Saturday's Democratic primary.

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Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach and Senator Novelle Francis Jr. congratulated Stacey Plaskett and Milton Potter on their Democratic primary victory Saturday, saying they respected the voters' decision and remained committed to serving the Virgin Islands despite the conclusion of their campaign.

Roach and Francis finished second in the three-way gubernatorial primary with 3,054 votes. Plaskett and Potter won the nomination with 4,493 votes, while Donna Frett-Gregory and Rodney Moorehead placed third with 1,975, according to unofficial election-night results.

In a joint statement, the Roach-Francis campaign said the territory benefits when people are willing to offer themselves for public service and wished Plaskett and Potter success as they move into the November general election.

“Tonight, the voters of the Virgin Islands have spoken, and we honor their decision,” the campaign said. “We want to offer our sincere congratulations to Delegate Stacey Plaskett and Senator Milton Potter on their victory tonight. This territory is stronger for having leaders willing to step forward and serve, and we wish them every success as they carry this campaign into November.”

The campaign also credited the thousands of residents who participated in the election and the broader political process leading up to it.

“Democracy only works when people show up, and today, thousands of you did: at the polls, at the town halls, on the phone banks, and at your kitchen tables talking with your neighbors about what kind of future you want for these islands,” the statement said.

Roach and Francis thanked the volunteers and supporters who worked on their behalf and the voters who supported their ticket.

“To every volunteer who knocked on doors under the August sun, every supporter who put up a sign or wore a shirt or spoke up for us at work, and every one of the thousands who cast a ballot for Lt. Governor Tregenza Roach and Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., thank you,” they said. “You didn’t just support a campaign; you invested your time, your voice, and your trust in an idea: that public service still means something, and that every corner of the Virgin Islands, from St. Croix to St. Thomas to St. John, matters equally.”

The campaign said the values that formed the foundation of the ticket would continue beyond the election.

“That idea doesn’t lose tonight. It lives on in every one of you, and we hope you’ll stay engaged in the work ahead, whatever form that takes,” the statement said.

Roach and Francis said they conducted the campaign according to the standards they believe should guide public service and would leave the race grateful to those who supported them.

“We ran this race the way we believe public service should be conducted: with integrity, with respect, and with a genuine love for these islands and their people,” they said. “We leave it with our heads held high and our gratitude overflowing, for our staff, our volunteers, our families, and most of all, for every voter who gave us a hearing.”

“Serving with purpose was never just a slogan for us. It’s who we are, and that commitment to the Virgin Islands doesn’t end with an election. Thank you, and God bless the Virgin Islands.”

Frett-Gregory, who placed third in the gubernatorial contest with Moorehead, similarly said their campaign had developed into a movement that would continue despite the election’s outcome.

“Together, we built more than a campaign. We built a movement for the people of the Virgin Islands, not politics as usual. That is something no election can take away,” she said.

Frett-Gregory said that while the campaign had concluded, its commitment to the territory and its residents remained unchanged.

“While this chapter has come to a close, our commitment to the people has not. We will continue to advocate, to serve, and to stand with the Virgin Islands,” she said.

She thanked the campaign’s volunteers, donors, voters and others who supported the ticket throughout the primary season.

“Thank you to every volunteer, supporter, donor, prayer warrior, voter, and every Virgin Islander who believed in this campaign,” Frett-Gregory said.

She also thanked Moorehead, describing him as a committed and principled partner throughout the race.

“Thank you to my incredible running mate, Rodney Moorehead, for standing beside me with integrity and unwavering commitment,” she said.

“We will continue the movement. God bless the Virgin Islands.”

In the Delegate to Congress contest, Teri Helenese issued a message of gratitude after finishing third in the four-candidate Democratic primary.

Unofficial results showed Janelle Sarauw winning the nomination with 4,913 votes. Former U.S. Attorney Delia Smith finished second with 3,007, followed by Helenese with 799 and former senator Emmett Hansen with 493.

Helenese said she began the morning after the election reflecting on the residents who had welcomed her throughout the campaign.

“I woke up this morning with an overwhelming sense of gratitude,” she said.

“Over the past several months, so many of you welcomed me into your homes, your businesses, your churches, and your communities. You shared your stories, your concerns, your dreams, and your belief that we can continue moving the Virgin Islands forward. Those conversations have been one of the greatest gifts of this journey, and I will carry them with me.”

Helenese thanked those who supported her candidacy through their time, prayers, financial contributions and public displays of support.

“To everyone who prayed with me, volunteered, made a contribution, placed a sign in your yard, wore a T-shirt, shared a post, or simply offered a word of encouragement, thank you,” she said. “Every act of support reminded me that this campaign was bigger than one person. It was built on people who love these islands and want the very best for them.”

She congratulated Sarauw on securing the Democratic nomination and extended her wishes to the other successful candidates.

“Congratulations to Senator Janelle K. Sarauw on winning the Democratic nomination for Delegate to Congress,” Helenese said. “I also extend my congratulations to every candidate who

was successful in yesterday's election. I wish you wisdom, strength, and success as you take on the responsibility of serving our community.”

Helenese said the end of the campaign did not end her responsibility to the community.

“While campaigns have an ending, our responsibility to one another does not,” she said. “There is still important work to be done, and I remain committed to doing my part to help build a stronger future for the Virgin Islands.”

“Thank you for trusting me, believing in me, and walking this journey alongside me, for the people. May God continue to bless each of you, and may He continue to bless these beautiful Virgin Islands.”

Smith also acknowledged Sarauw’s victory and said she respected the electorate’s decision.

“Greetings Virgin Islanders,” her statement began.

“The people of this territory have spoken and I respect their decision. I congratulate Janelle Sarauw and her supporters on her victory and wish her well as she carries our party's banner into November.”

Smith reflected on her career, from beginning as a secretary in the Attorney General’s Office to being confirmed by the U.S. Senate as U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands.

“I entered this race the same way I approached everything in my life, by doing the work,” she said. “From my first day as a secretary in the Attorney General's Office to the day the United States Senate confirmed me as U.S. Attorney, I never asked for anything I wasn't willing to earn. This campaign was no different. We told the truth and ran on a record of trusted leadership and demonstrated results.”

Smith said the issues that formed the basis of her campaign would continue after the primary, including crime, infrastructure rebuilding, disaster-recovery funding, healthcare and the territory’s treatment by the federal government.

“The challenges facing our territory — an escalating crime rate, rebuilding our infrastructure, protecting our disaster recovery funds, fighting for healthcare and fair treatment in Washington — do not end with this election, and neither does my commitment to our community,” she said.

“I will continue to serve the people of the Virgin Islands because service was never about a title for me. Service was, and always will be, about the work.”

Smith acknowledged that the outcome was not what her campaign had sought but thanked voters for entrusting her with the opportunity to seek the congressional position.

“Though this is not the outcome we worked for, I am profoundly grateful that you trusted me with the honor of serving you in Washington,” she said.

She thanked those who volunteered, contributed and worked throughout the campaign.

“To every volunteer who knocked on doors in the heat, every supporter who answered every call to help the campaign, and to every donor who gave what they could, thank you,” Smith said. “You believe that our territory deserves a leader and a fighter in Washington, and nothing about the outcome of the election changes that belief.”

“To my family, thank you for your sacrifice and your love. To my team, you gave everything and I am forever grateful.”

“God bless you all, and God bless the Virgin Islands.”

The messages from the defeated candidates shared similar themes: respect for the electorate’s decision, gratitude toward volunteers and supporters, congratulations to the nominees and commitments to remain involved in public service after the primary campaign.

Plaskett and Potter, along with Sarauw, will now carry the Democratic Party’s nominations into the November general election.

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