

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Gittens to Education: Postpone, Don't Cancel 2020 Graduations

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Students celebrate during 2017 St. Croix Central High School Graduation By. ERNICE GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM

Senator Kenneth Gittens said Monday he would ask that the V.I. Education Department to consider postponing rather than canceling graduation ceremonies planned for the territory's public high schools. D.O.E. has said it plans on holding virtual graduations, as has been done across the world in an effort to give students a sense of pride for their accomplishment while exercising safe social distancing.

“We all understand that we have to sacrifice in order to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus, however, I do not want to see our seniors robbed of the recognition they deserve for their many years of hard work,” said Mr. Gittens. “In speaking with seniors this week, they expressed their real disappointment at not being able to participate in a ceremony.”

The senator said the students he spoke with were not pleased with the idea of a virtual graduation.

“I do think there is room for some creativity here – perhaps a graduation motorcade or hosting a ceremony later this year,” he said. “The main thing is to ensure that we celebrate our graduates appropriately even if it means we hold a ceremony in December in the tradition of the many universities that host both spring and winter graduations.”

Mr. Gittens indicated he would discuss the matter further with members of the Board of Education and the officials at the Education Department.

“I know it is not a priority issue as we work to keep the community healthy and our economy afloat, but I still want to ensure that we find a way to mark this milestone in the lives of our high school seniors,” he said. “It is very important to these students and their families. Graduation is a memory they will cherish for a lifetime.”