

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Same-Sex Marriage Legislation Dead In The Virgin Islands?

Politics / **Published On August 17, 2014 05:28 PM /**

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Ever since it was revealed that Senator Judi Buckley's Same-Sex Marriage legislation, which sought to change the language in a V.I. law that states marriage is between a man and a woman, to "marriage is between two persons", the territory has been overtaken by fierce debates, protests and rallies against the bill. There was one quiet march in support of the legislation, however the narrative has been dominated by those in opposition.

So does Judi Buckley's Same-Sex Marriage bill even stand a chance of becoming law in the Virgin Islands? According to the Senators that I've spoken to, the chances are slim.

Speaking in an interview on my radio show the Virgin Islands Political Consortium in July, Senate President Shawn-Michael Malone said that he did not think that the bill would make it through committee. He said that the territory wasn't ready for such legislation, and that he was not in support of the bill.

But it was Senator Samuel Sanes, who stopped by the show this past Saturday for a wide-ranging interview on his plans if elected to the 31st legislature, who was the most candid when talking about the Same-Sex Marriage controversy.

"We're in this controversy because we often stray from our beliefs and our customs of the past," Sanes told me. "Growing up we had such deep respect for the law, for government and for the elders. And we had a strong family unit.

"I truly believe that our problems we're facing here -- yes it's an economic recession time around the world -- but it's because we have strayed from [our] core beliefs. And I'm not saying that we should incorporate the church into the state, because as you know, there is a separation. But you know what though, there is something that we can do -- and people don't like to hear that, but to be honest, we need to go back to [our beliefs and customs]."

Senator Sanes was sure to clarify that being human, he isn't perfect, however there are some core beliefs that guide him throughout life's journey.

"I'm not a perfect guy but you know what though, I do follow certain beliefs," he said. "I do respect everybody, but think about how [a Same-Sex Marriage law] is going to affect us right now."

Sanes continued: "The thing is I am very open-minded, but right now we have so many other issues. I'm like, you know... I'm at a loss of words because there are so many things that are affecting us right now. We need to put bread into our plates, that's the bottom line. We need to encourage people to stay on the Island."

On the the Same-Sex Marriage bill's passage, Sanes said: "It's not going to come forth. I don't think it's going to come forth because right now we are concentrating on other issues. Right now we're on life support."

Senator Sanes proceeded to paint a grim reality for St. Croix: "You know, let me be blunt, St. Croix is dying. St. Croix is dying and we are on life support."

The sentiment is equally strong amongst other Senators, and even those who may not oppose the Judi Buckley bill are steering clear from the issue.

So is Same-Sex Marriage dead in the United States Virgin Islands? For now, ostensibly.