

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Coffelt: Virgin Islands Lack Vision For The Future

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Soraya Diase-Coffelt, U.S. Virgin Islands Attorney General.

Stating that she was a "very proud Virgin Islander" with "an extremely diverse background," independent gubernatorial candidate Soraya Diase Coffelt said she stepped into the race for the highest elected office in the Territory because she wants to do "what I can to improve our future because I really believe there is no vision for our future."

Coffelt's remarks came during an appearance on radio talk show Mario on 1620 AM The Reef on Monday. It was during the same interview she announced that she and her Republican running mate, John Canegata, had 'declared war on corruption' in the Virgin

Islands.

Coffelt, a lawyer and former judge, identifies herself as a Christian and went on to quote Old Testament scripture regarding the importance of having vision in order to lead effectively, stating, "without the vision the people perish; that's what the Bible says."

Coffelt said she believes the current absence of a clear plan that would serve to move the Virgin Islands forward can be attributed to many of the challenges the territory is facing.

"I believe strongly that because we have lacked vision, we are in crisis-management mode and almost everyday [I] read an article in the paper and there's some crisis



Gubernatorial candidate Soraya Diase-Coffelt

and running mate, John Canegata

As for her vision for the future of the Virgin Islands, Coffelt highlighted a number of points, first stating that "leadership requires boldness and an ambitious, yet achievable vision," something she says she has.

"I have an ambitious vision that our islands are the economic leader, economic powerhouse in the Caribbean," Coffelt offered. "I want us to be the shining example of what a group of determined people can achieve together and how we came out of our economic slump and turned our economy around into prosperity."

Another part of Coffelt's vision for the Virgin Islands include putting an end to government waste.

"I have a vision of our government budgeting its income and expenses wisely," she said, "reducing waste and mis-management of funds so that we become increasingly self-reliant rather than always seeking assistance from the federal government to bail us out of an emergency."

Coffelt also said she envisions a territory free of crime, a place "to where our sons and daughters want to return home because of all the opportunities that exist here for them," and one whose "electricity costs are the lowest in the Caribbean," among other points.

During the interview, however, Coffelt did not provide details on how she would go about implementing her vision.

In a brief emailed statement issued late Monday to *VI Consortium*, Coffelt confirmed her path to the Nov. 4 General Election is free and clear, due to a recent court order.

"The Third Circuit Court of Appeals [in Pennsylvania] entered an order this past Thursday denying the [Virgin Islands] government's request for a hearing en banc, meaning, a hearing before all the judges on the court," Coffelt explained. "No judge agreed with them. That should finally be the end of the case."

The case of which Coffelt speaks began in June when Supervisor of Elections Caroline Fawkes and the V.I. Elections System took court action against Coffelt and Canegata, stating the pair could not run together as a mixed-party team. District Court Judge Wilma Lewis ruled in favor of Fawkes and the Elections System.

However, Coffelt appealed her case to the Third Circuit Court, arguing that V.I. Code does not prohibit a mixed party team from running together. The court agreed with Coffelt.

After winning the appeal in late August, effectively retaining her and Canegata's name on the Nov. 4 ballot, Coffelt applauded the court's decision, stating: "The illegal actions of the Supervisor of Elections to keep us off the ballot have been voided. This is a ground-breaking decision for the people of the Virgin Islands because it solidifies the right of the people to nominate candidates of their choice no matter what political persuasion that candidate may have."