

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Coffelt To Nelson: Put Marijuana Aside And Focus On WAPA

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Former judge and gubernatorial candidate Soraya Diase-Coffelt said she believes Senator Terrence "Positive" Nelson should take all the energy that he's using on the marijuana decriminalization and other marijuana-related legislation, and focus it on solving the Virgin Islands WAPA crisis.

What I would say to Sen. Nelson, is put all this emphasis on solving our WAPA problem. I understand your concern on this marijuana issue, but be more concerned about what's happening to everyone with WAPA -- it affects everything.

That's what Diase-Coffelt told this reporter in the *VI Consortium's* second "Big Interview," a feature that will see us speaking to each gubernatorial candidate on a wide range of topics. The lawyer said she and Nelson have talked about marijuana before, and she has expressed her disagreement with the senator that his pro-marijuana stance would benefit the Virgin Islands.

"I would have vetoed the [marijuana decriminalization bill] for another reason," Diase-Coffelt said, speaking of Governor de Jongh's [recent action on the bill sponsored by Nelson](#). "I'm against it, period."

She extended her argument against marijuana, saying it is a "gateway drug" for other drug addictions.

"I believe that it's a gateway drug," Diase-Coffelt said. "It's not just marijuana and you stop at marijuana, and I believe that its effects are very bad on the human body. So I'm against it, I'm against legalizing it. I've spoken many times with Sen. Nelson, and I said, 'I disagree with you, Sen. Nelson.' He says, 'Oh no, we're just debating, we're just talking about it.' But what I would say to Sen. Nelson, is put all this emphasis on solving our WAPA problem."

The former judge said she has also seen first-hand how the substance has negatively impacted the Territory's youth.

"I don't believe that marijuana should be legalized," she said, "as a judge, I saw our young men coming before me as juvenile delinquents, and either they had dropped out of school and smoking marijuana, or they were smoking marijuana, and [were] on the verge of dropping out of school. So marijuana has played a very negative part, especially with our young men."

Diase-Coffelt went on to challenge Senator Nelson to give higher priority to the plight of Virgin Islanders who must face seemingly insurmountable energy bills every month. She detested the fact that not much is currently being done in the Senate to tackle the crisis.

"I understand your concern on this marijuana issue, but be more concerned about what's happening to everyone with WAPA -- it affects everything," she said. "So, I wish that would be done. And I don't know why it is that when somebody gets elected for Senate, addressing this WAPA issue is not a priority. I can tell you with the Diase-Coffelt/Canegata administration, it's our number 1 priority."

We will have much more from our Big Interview with Soraya Diase-Coffelt and her running mate, John Canegata, in a full video interview that will be posted on *VI Consortium* on Thursday.