

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VI Action Group: Do Not Vote Early Until Machine Glitch Is Fixed

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The Board of Elections had planned on holding an emergency meeting on Wednesday to discuss the issues plaguing the early-voting process, as a malfunction in the DS200 voting machines forced Elections Supervisor Caroline Fawkes to have ballots that were already cast manually handled instead of being scanned by the machines. In light of these discrepancies, the [VI Action Group](#), a non-profit established in 2012, has been advising voters not to participate in the process until the situation was rectified. The group had asked Fawkes to postpone early voting, but as of late Thursday, voters continued casting their ballots. See sample ballot [here](#).

This revelation has caused quite a stir in the community, as many say they do not trust the Board's handling of the situation, and contend that if the ballots did not go through the DS200 voting machines, there was no way to know if ballots were spoiled -- leaving a great chance of many ballots being thrown out because of potential mistakes.

According to VI Action Group, of the 168 people who voted on Tuesday, it was very likely that 12 or more of those votes did not count. The *VI Consortium* could not independently confirm VI Action Group's claims.

"The glitch discovered with the DS200 causes the system to fail to recognize when a voter selects the Democratic symbol, and then inadvertently selects candidates with a different party affiliation, a group member claims. "The machine fails to recognize that this is a problem and does not alert the voter that the ballot is spoiled, giving them another opportunity to correct their mistake."

The *VI Consortium* received an email on Wednesday of a meeting that was to take place to discuss the issue, with Fawkes stating the Board would move forward with feeding ballots into the DS200 systems on Thursday, and invited the media to witness the process. However, that meeting was cancelled about two hours later, in a follow-up email from Supervisor of Elections office. It was not explained why the meeting was cancelled or if a meeting will be rescheduled.

It is not yet known whether the Board of Elections would continue manually handling ballots or if the DS200 machines would finally be used. Yet, early voting continued with much participation, and according to Fawkes, approximately 456 people have voted on St. Croix since Tuesday, when early voting began.

Image Credit: Getty Images