

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Joint Boards Of Elections Meeting Contentious, Unproductive

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A Joint Boards of Elections meeting held Monday at Gertrude's restaurant on St. Croix proved to be contentious and largely unproductive, as members from both the St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John districts did not discuss or vote on key issues that could affect the upcoming November 4 General Election.

With Sen. Alicia "Chucky" Hansen's name stripped from the Nov. 4 ballot by Supreme Court order late Friday, many in attendance hoped the issue would be raised, in light of the hundreds of ballots that were already cast with the embattled senator's name included as an option during the early voting period that began on Oct. 21. As of Oct. 26, however, Supervisor of Elections Caroline Fawkes indefinitely suspended early voting in

the St. Croix District.

St. Thomas Board member, Arturo Watlington, secretary of the Joint Boards, motioned to bring the discussion of Hansen to the floor, pointing out that the Boards wished to know with which of the recent court decisions they should comply--the Oct. 24 Supreme Court ruling that ordered Hansen be removed from the ballot or the September District Court ruling that ordered her name be kept on the ballot. Many members expressed their disagreement with Watlington's motion and there was no discussion on the matter.

In a press release issued late Sunday night, Fawkes said she would be in compliance with the Supreme Court's Oct. 24 ruling and remove Hansen's name from the ballot.

The Joint Boards also did not discuss whether new ballots would be printed without Hansen's name and made available in time for Election Day. While Chairman of the St. Croix District Adelbert Bryan waged a heated discussion on the issue of ballots already cast in early voting, it was still not made clear what would become of those votes.

The Joint Boards did, however, receive testimony from the Elections System's webmaster on the preparedness of her department in making election-night results timely available online and to local news stations. The webmaster said she has the capability of posting results within "three to five minutes" after receiving them in the correct htm. file format.

Later in the meeting, St. Croix Board Member Rupert Ross, Jr., motioned to have the November 14 certification of votes deadline moved to November 15. He said the new date gives the Joint Boards a full 10 days--as mandated by law for votes to be counted and certified--and would still give members the time they needed to tally votes, in the event there is a run off election, something Ross says he anticipates happening. He said run off votes would need to be tabulated by November 18. Ross's motion was passed by a majority 'yes' vote.

Quorum was broken more than halfway through the meeting when two St. Thomas Board members abruptly packed up and left, rendering the remaining Joint Boards members incapable of voting on any other matter. Soon, the room erupted in angry shouting among members and concerned citizens regarding the lost quorum.

No announcement has been made as to whether there would be another meeting this week.

The *VI Consortium* will continue to follow this story and provide updates as they become available.