

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Novelle Francis Ranks Second In St. Croix Senate Race

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ST. CROIX – Self-admittedly naïve of the voting process, 20-year-old Anuptah Kahina said he cast a single senatorial vote on Tuesday – it was one of the 3,830 that went to second place vote-getter Novelle Francis, according to unofficial results from the Virgin Islands Election System.

It was his first time voting in a general election, and in between a game of dominoes at Francis's Estate St. George's campaign headquarters Tuesday night, Kahina confessed he didn't know he could vote for more than one St. Croix senator.

"I wasn't aware you could vote for seven different people so I voted for one person actually, which was Novelle Francis," he said.

It was a popular choice. More than three thousand other Francis supporters cast ballots that put the first-time candidate just behind Kurt Violet, who is also a first-time senatorial candidate. Violet reeled 4,275 votes, based on the latest results from the VI Election System as of early Wednesday morning.

The preliminary results mirror that of the Primary Elections on Aug. 2 when both democratic candidates emerged as the highest ranking in the senatorial race. Francis reeled 2,970 votes within the St. Croix district back then – a tally that also placed him right behind Violet who garnered 3,184 votes.

Kahina said his one vote for Francis comes with admiration for the former police commissioner, present gas station owner and senatorial hopeful. According to Kahina, many senators have made a lot of promises “but they never follow through.” He is counting on Francis to follow through.

“I respect what he does and I really hope his ideas come to light,” Kahina said.

Francis has publicly promised to support investments in early childhood education and measures to strengthen the public school system in an effort to decrease increasing poverty levels in the territory.

In a sit-down interview with *VI Consortium* Tuesday night, Francis said he believed it is a senator’s job to improve the quality of life for the people of the territory. He said, it was the 30th Legislature’s failure to succeed in this area that prompted him to launch a senatorial campaign that’s cost him about \$30,000 in the past year – all in hopes for a seat in the 31st legislature.

“In terms of what I’ve seen with the last legislature – the 30th legislature – I was extremely disappointed as a member of this community as well as a business man,” Francis said. “When we look at our roads, when we look at the high cost of living, when we look at the number of poverty, when we look at our education system – all of those areas are dysfunctional and that truly reflects our leaders and I’m not pleased with that.”

Apart from Kahina, a lot more people also seem to be banking on Francis’s resolve to be a change agent. Second to Violet, Francis reeled top votes during the Democratic Primary Election on Aug. 2. The first-time candidate garnered about 2,970 votes within the St. Croix district.

But rallying the support hasn’t come easy, Francis said. The entire campaign process has been a sacrifice – “a sacrifice to a sacrifice to family, health and well-being; a sacrifice to my business,” he said.

Nonetheless, Francis said he will count the sacrifice “well worth it” if he gets the opportunity to help improve the quality of life for Virgin Islanders from a senatorial seat.

For Francis, winning a seat means “my work is not in vain and this community is ready for a change.”

Should he be victorious after official General Election tallies, he said he plans to get to work right away to form consensus with other elected senators to push a St. Croix agenda forward.

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