

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Capehart Calls On 31st Legislature To Make Election Reform A "Top Priority"

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Ernice Gilbert **November 17, 2014**



Outgoing Senator Diane Capehart, whose tenure as a lawmaker lasted only two years, is now calling on the newly elected senators, who will comprise the 31st Legislature, to make election reform a top priority.

That's what the freshman senator, who chairs the Committee on Government Services and Housing, which has oversight over the Board of Elections, said in a press release issued Monday, adding that much of the confusion surrounding the November 4 General Elections could have been prevented had members of the 30th Legislature been on the "same page."

"I am of the opinion that much of the confusion surrounding this year's elections could have been avoided had we all been on the same page," Capehart said.

"I know first hand the myriad of issues this Legislature and the next will have to address, but it is important—given all of the circumstances surrounding the 2014 election—that the 31st Legislature make election reform just as high a priority as all the other issues," the Senator added.

Capehart said new laws should be set in place that make Elections Board decisions unanimous, whether those decisions be made in the St. Croix District or the St. Thomas-St. John District, adding that only then will local elections be considered "fair."

"Now that we have switched to a new machine, have been through both the Primary and the General Election, and now a run-off, it is clear now that we need a better functioning Board of Elections," Capehart said. "What is done in one district has to be done in another, or we can't call it a fair election."

With that, she suggested updating local laws that govern the Board of Elections.

"I recommend the incoming senators look at how they can amend the current language of Title 18 VIC to mandate better organizational effectiveness of the Board of Elections," Capehart said.

Capehart, who [collected](#) 4,471 votes in the 2012 General Elections, only managed 3,130 votes in the 2014 General Election, falling 1,341 votes short of her last win. The senator saw her fate took a turn for the worse when she became the only St. Croix senator who supported the now-vetoed "Streetlights" bill that sought to give WAPA the power to charge customers for the usage of streetlights.

In a recent statement issued to media outlets, Capehart thanked those that supported her second run for office and said she was grateful for the opportunity to serve.

"I would like to thank the voters for coming out and exercising their right to vote in this most important election, and I would like to especially thank those who supported me," she said. "Unfortunately, I did not get enough support to win re-election, however I am grateful for the opportunity to have served my community in this capacity."