

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Ballot Recount Resumes, Belardo De O'Neal Flip-Flops On Previous Board Decision

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In a sudden flip-flop move on a decision she and other Elections Board members made last week to allow non-bubbled votes to be counted as valid votes cast for write-in candidates, St. Croix District Vice-Chairman Lilliana Belardo de O'Neal on Friday said she is now unsure if the board will move forward with that decision.

"We are putting [the ballots] in categories and at the end of the counting the board again will decide, based on that decision, they may have changed their mind," she said. "I cannot tell you. But we are putting them in categories so that we know how many bubbles Epiphane got, how many bubbles Capehart has, how many bubbles Senator Hansen has, and how many non-bubbles. At this time, I cannot answer that question."

Belardo de O'Neal's statement came at the start of the recounting of ballots cast for Sen. Alicia "Chucky" Hansen, Sen. Diane Capehart and Epiphane Joseph. The *VI Consortium* asked the former senator if the board would continue to count ballots under the new rule that member Lisa Harris-Moorhead created and was approved by Rupert Ross, Jr. and Belardo de O'Neal on Dec. 3 to, in fact, give non-bubbled votes to write-in candidates, violating the instructions printed on the ballot, which states:

"INSTRUCTIONS: Read instructions carefully before marking your ballot. You may vote on both sides. The only way to mark your ballot for your votes to be counted is to completely fill in the oval next to the candidates of your choice(s). Make NO other mark(s) on your ballot, if you do, your vote(s) will not be counted.

"Write In: To vote for a person not on the ballot for an office, write the name on the line to the left of that name."



Recount of General Elections ballots taking

place on Dec. 12.

Friday's recount resumed after almost a week of suspension when, on Dec. 8, Superior Court Judge Harold Willocks ordered the recount to stop until accommodations could be made to have the public gain access to the recount process. On Dec. 4, [board members voted to ban the public](#), including the media, from viewing the recount. Since Willocks's ruling on Monday, accommodations have been made for the public to view the recount, with limited seating inside the Elections Board building and close-circuit viewing on big-screen televisions made available on the sidewalk.

From about 9:45 a.m. to 5:21 p.m. on Friday two teams of talliers, along with board members Harris-Moorhead, Ross, Roland Moolenaar and Belardo de O'Neal, counted at-poll ballots in one room, and rejected, sticker and symbol ballots in another room at the Elections System office in Sunny Isles.

Belardo de O'Neal explained why she decided to continue with the recount despite an upcoming court hearing.

"We will continue to count until that court hearing comes and depending on that court hearing, we will follow the court order, but as far as we stand today, we will continue counting," she said.

The vice-chairman was referring to a case that will be heard in Superior Court on Monday, where the court has subpoenaed the Elections Board, Elections Supervisor and Elections Deputy Supervisor in Sen. Nellie Rivera-O'Reilly's effort to permanently stop the recount. Rivera-O'Reilly maintains that the proceeding is illegal, stating that the veteran Sen. Hansen cannot request a recount because she was a write-in candidate

and not an official candidate on the ballot. The hearing will take place on Dec. 15 at 9 a.m. at the Superior Court on St. Croix.

Chairman Adelbert Bryan was not present at Friday's recount, neither were members Raymond Williams and Glenn Webster. The recount will continue at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 13 and again from 9 a.m to 1 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 14.

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