The Virgin Islands Consortium

Kenneth Mapp Sworn In As 8th Governor Of U.S. Virgin Islands

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Ernice Gilbert January 06, 2015

Governor Kenneth Mapp.

I Kenneth Mapp do solemnly swear that I will support, obey and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States applicable to the Virgin Islands, and the laws of the Virgin Islands. That I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will faithfully and impartially perform all the duties of Governor of the United States Virgin Islands with fidelity, so help me God.

January 5, 2015 will go down in history as yet another milestone in the U.S. Virgin Islands quest for prosperity for all, as the reigns of leadership was passed from Governor John P. de Jongh to Governor Kenneth Mapp, who was sworn in today at a brief ceremony, charting the course for a new day in the territory, with a new vision.

As expected with such events, special guests sang, and flowers were presented to the mother of Governor Mapp and First Lady Cecile de Jongh. Ministers of the Gospel opened and closed in prayer, and the Army band gave renditions. Outgoing Senate President, Shawn-Michael Malone, presented Governor de Jongh with a memento medal, and later the Symbol of the Office of Governor to Kenneth Mapp.

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But the moment of truth came during the actual swearing in, as Kenneth Mapp and Osbert Potter repeated the words that, once completed, ushered them to the highest offices of the land.

"I Kenneth Mapp do solemnly swear that I will support, obey and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States applicable to the Virgin Islands, and the laws of the Virgin Islands. That I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will faithfully and impartially perform all the duties of Governor of the

o help me God."

Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Kenneth E. Mapp.

Those were the same words that Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter swore just moments before Governor Mapp did, and Potter, with passion in his voice, thanked supporters for sticking with the campaign throughout the grueling election season, and promised to continue working for the people. Potter noted that he had made history by becoming the first naturalized citizen to hold the office of Lieutenant Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and promised to push forward the interest of residents with the same status. Potter was born on the neighboring island of Tortola.

When Kenneth Mapp took the podium to speak, his language remained the same as it was throughout the campaign season, highlighting the importance of working together.

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"As Lieutenant Governor Potter and I take our oaths of office on the grounds of Emancipation Garden, I am reminded of the sacrifices that are forever memorialized in this historic location. The lives of our ancestors, who toiled on the land upon which we now live, work, and play, are consecrated here. This monument to their memory serves as a testament to the unquenchable thirst for human freedom and dignity, as well as our ability and resilience to overcome even the most challenging obstacles," Mapp said.

The Governor highlighted the importance of inaugurals, a tradition that has been established over the years and mandated by the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands.

Mapp also spoke of building a better Virgin Islands for the people, creating opportunities for the youth, providing care for senior citizens and working to nurture the well-being of the territory's children.

Lieutenant Governor of the U.S. Virgin

Islands, Osbert Potter.

The Governor thanked former Governor and Lieutenant Governor John P. de Jongh and Gregory Francis for their service. He also acknowledged Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen and Delegate to Congress-elect Stacey Plaskett. Mapp gave honor to the men and women in uniform "for the sacrifices they make each and every day as they protect our freedoms and liberties."

He added: "many of our soldiers are serving in faraway places and are in harm's way. Let us continue to keep them in our prayers as they serve our country and make their way back home."

Next, Mapp spoke directly to the people of the Virgin Islands.

"To my fellow Virgin Islanders, I accept the honor you have bestowed upon me to chart a new course for generations to come; a course to restore, to revitalize, to renovate, and to re-energize America's Paradise.

"During our campaign, Lt. Governor Potter and I saw firsthand and learned just how difficult life in our Virgin Islands has become. We met single mothers who are struggling to stay employed and feed and clothe their families. We spoke and listened to the business owners who are fighting to keep the lights on and their doors open. We have been in the homes of working couples who have electric bills that have grown larger than one of their paychecks. And because we have all but shut the doors of our senior citizen centers, we have visited with senior citizens in the cafeterias of our hospitals, in the food courts of our shopping centers and malls, and under the trees on our streets.

"We mention these difficulties not to cast blame, but to underscore just how difficult the lives of many Virgin Islanders have become because as a community, as a people, and as a government we have lost our way.

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"For decades we have been counting the money we have and the money we don't have by the hundreds of millions of dollars. So we no longer see that a gallon of milk priced at $14.00 hurts families. We no longer see that $.51 pkwh—five times the national average—for electricity kills businesses, puts our people out of work, and forces some families to live by candle light. We have become numb to the violence that pervades our neighborhoods, and we no longer empathize with many folks who simply can no longer make it. Everyday retirees and families decide to move away, because they cannot afford

the high cost-of-living in the Virgin Islands."

In closing, Mapp reminded the people, just as he did on the campaign trail, that their help would be needed if the Virgin Islands were to become strong again, and promised to never ask for more than himself and Potter were willing to give.

"To our people, we need you. We need your voice and we need your support. We are committed to doing all we can on your behalf, but you too must be a part of this rebuilding. Neither I, nor anyone on my team, will ever ask more of you than we are willing to give. My Administration cannot do this alone; we must stand together or none of us will stand at all," the Governor said.

In closing, the Governor thanked the people for their continued support, and called on God to bless the territory and the United Sates of America.

Inaugural events continue tomorrow on St. Croix.

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