

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Virgin Islands DOJ In 'Open Revolt' After Mapp Appoints Terri Griffiths As Acting Attorney General

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The staff at the Department of Justice (DOJ) in St. Thomas is in "open revolt" following Governor Kenneth Mapp's selection Friday of Attorney Terri Griffiths as Acting Attorney General of the U.S. Virgin Islands in the aftermath of [the resignation of Soraya Diase-Coffelt](#), people with deep ties to the administration have informed the *VI Consortium*.

Soon after these people, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation, informed *VI Consortium* of the atmosphere at the DOJ, a press release was issued by the Mapp administration Friday afternoon confirming Griffiths as the governor's new pick as the territory's chief law enforcement officer.

Sources say one of the reasons Diase-Coffelt resigned her post as Attorney General Thursday, after only two weeks on the job, was because she refused to allow Griffiths to join her team. However, Randy Knight, the governor's chief of staff, insisted that Griffiths join the team. In fact, Knight walked Griffiths to the Attorney General's office prior to her appointment, sources told the *VI Consortium*.

Furthermore, a letter from the staff of the Department of Justice, dated Jan. 15, 2015 and addressed to Mr. Lee Carl of WSTA Radio St. Thomas, described the current mood at DOJ, stating that there is "turmoil at the Department of Justice."

DOJ staffers also sent a letter to the Mapp-Potter transition team outlining their grievances.

Both of those letters can be seen [here](#).

The letter to Mr. Carl is also reproduced directly below.

Dear Mr. Carl,

We the employees of the Department of Justice are in a state of shock after becoming aware that our new Attorney General Soraya Diase-Coffelt has resigned after one week. This department, after experiencing eight years of failed leadership, look forward to embracing new leadership and we are truly disappointed that Judge Diase-Coffelt thought it best to leave us. There are many serious issues to be addressed in this department, and we have faith in her abilities, but we understand that she has morale standards that she must adhere to.

We understand that she wanted to make certain changes, but it appeared that some people wanted business to run the same as usual. We made recommendations to her and we believe she was going to make some necessary changes, and she was not given the authority to do what she thought was best for our department.

Politics is hard but we respect that she will not be bullied by others into choosing her managers and some of her staff at the DOJ. Attorney Diase-Coffelt brought in Kevin Rodriguez, who is well qualified, however he is gone because of politics. Solicitor General Bernard Van Sluytman was given a pink slip, and immediately after, we lost an attorney who decided that she couldn't stay after that poor decision. Our Chief Deputy Attorney General, Wayne Anderson, was also given a pink slip and this was another bad decision. Turmoil at the Department of Justice! Who is listening to this department?

We are attaching a letter to the Mapp-Potter transition team that clearly spelled out all of our concerns. We believe that she agreed with our concerns and was about to make tough decisions but she was not allowed to do so. It's a shame.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely the staff of the Virgin Islands Department of Justice.

Griffiths notably represented then-gubernatorial candidate Kenneth Mapp during the 2014 Nov. 4 General Election in a civil suit filed Oct. 30 in Superior Court against Elections Supervisor Caroline Fawkes, St. Thomas-St. John District Board of Elections Chairman Arturo Watlington, Jr., Joint Boards of Election Chairman Alecea Wells, and St. Croix District Board Chairman Adelbert Bryan to prevent the Board of Elections from stopping voters from scanning their ballots in the DS200 voting machines.

The Superior Court [ruled against](#) Mapp; however, on appeal to the Supreme Court, Mapp won the case, granting voters the right to place their ballots into the DS200 machines. Fawkes was [ordered](#) to make the machines available to voters for the Nov. 18 run-off election.

According to Griffiths's [LinkedIn profile](#), she established a firm, Griffiths Law, in 2006 on St. Thomas. It also reveals the various firms the longtime attorney has worked for over the years.

The Mapp administration's announcement of Griffiths's appointment was accompanied by a biography of the lawyer. It reads:

"Attorney Griffiths has practiced law in the USVI since 1996 and has a strong background in Complex litigation, including, fraud, white collar crimes, toxic tort, government relations including zoning, and has handled numerous IRS tax controversies. She has served as a staff attorney for a federal judge in the state of Florida, and a probation and parole officer in three states (IL, SC, and MO).

"Attorney Griffiths is a graduate of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, where she received her B.S. & J.D., Administration of Justice where she graduated Cum laude. Attorney Griffiths received her Master of Law (LLM) and Taxation degree from University of Florida - Fredric G. Levin College of Law Master of Laws (LLM), Taxation. Attorney Griffiths is a welcomed addition to Governor Mapp's administration."

On Jan. 15, hours after standing with Governor Mapp to announce [the administration's decision to file suit against HOVENSA](#), Diase-Coffelt resigned her post.

According to a press release issued late Thursday by Government House, Diase-Coffelt cited among reasons for resigning, "a staffing conflict with personnel assembled by the administration."

In accepting Diase-Coffelt's resignation, Governor Mapp said, "It is indeed unfortunate that we were unable to resolve the staffing personnel issues prior to this resignation. I wish Ms. Diase-Coffelt well in her future endeavors."