

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Diase-Coffelt Creates New Website, Petition For Independent Attorney, Inspector Generals

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Attorney and former Judge Soraya Diase-Coffelt Tuesday announced the creation of a website and online petition for "Virgin Islanders everywhere to sign" in an effort to drum up support for her belief that the Virgin Islands Attorney General should be an elected position and the office of the Inspector General should be independent of "interference" from the Virgin Islands Government.

In announcing today's roll out of the online tools, Diase-Coffelt, in a statement, said their creation was a part of "the movement to fight a war against corruption in the Virgin Islands" and in line with a promise she made to Virgin Islanders.

"At my press conference on January 23, 2015, I notified the public that I would champion a people's movement to fight corruption by seeking to amend our law so that we have an independent Department of Justice and Attorney General," Diase-Coffelt's statement began.

In fulfilling that commitment," the former Virgin Islands Attorney General who [famously resigned](#) after two weeks on the job, said, "I would like to announce that a [website has been created](#), as well as an online petition for Virgin Islanders everywhere to sign. We have expanded our goal to include amending our law to provide for an independent Inspector General's Office as well."

Diase-Coffelt explained that the role of the V.I. Department of Justice is that of representing "the best interests of the people of the Virgin Islands and handles criminal investigations and prosecutions as well as contracts and appeals on behalf of the government."

She continued, "By law, the Attorney General is the head of the Department of Justice. The Inspector General's Office was established to do necessary investigations and audits of the government."

However, she said the way the law is currently written, "a governor has the authority to supervise and control the Department of Justice and the Office of the Inspector General. A governor also appoints the Attorney General and the Inspector General. Additionally, a governor appoints all the lawyers in the Department of Justice and hires the majority of the employees, who serve at the governor's pleasure. In the meantime, a governor has a separate team of lawyers who work in the governor's office and hires outside attorneys, as needed."

She went on to say that "the Department of Justice and the Office of the Inspector General must be independent of the power and interference of a governor. The people of the Virgin Islands must have an independent attorney to assert and protect their interests in order for justice to be achieved. We believe that true independence can only come when the Attorney General is elected by the people."

Diase-Coffelt's petition is addressed to the Legislature of the Virgin Islands and to Governor Kenneth Mapp requesting that both branches of government amend the V.I. Code, allowing residents to vote for the territory's Attorney General.

"It is also addressed to our Delegate to Congress, the U.S. Congress, and the President to amend certain sections of the Revised Organic Act of 1954," Diase-Coffelt said.

With that, Diase-Coffelt said she is mounting an effort to educate the public "on what corruption is and its many faces because corruption can be ethical violations as well as crimes."

"In short, corruption involves someone putting his or her private or personal interests and gain above the interests of the people. Corruption has had a drastic negative effect on our economy and political system. Fighting corruption is an important fight in order for us to take back our Virgin Islands," she said.

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