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Exclusive | Senator Alicia Barnes, the Top Vote-Getter in 2018, Will Not Seek Reelection

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Senator Alicia Barnes has decided not to seek reelection in the upcoming 2020 senatorial race. By. VI LEGISLATURE

Senator Alicia V. Barnes, [who ascended to the top of the pack during the 2018 senatorial race](#) in the general election — topping names such as Senator Kurt Vialet and Novelle Francis — has told the Consortium in an exclusive interview that she will not seek reelection in November.

Following her victory in November 2018, Ms. Barnes said to the Consortium, “I feel that [with] my experience, both personal and professional, I would be doing a disservice to my community if I did not step forward to offer myself to serve as a member of the Legislature.”

Now, Ms. Barnes, who also serves as Senate secretary and chair of the Committee On Government Operations, Consumer Affairs, Energy, Environment & Planning, has decided it is time to move on while vowing to continue representing St. Croix residents until December — and beyond her tenure as a lawmaker.

"To my beloved constituents of St. Croix, thank you once again for giving me the opportunity to serve you as one of your representatives in the 33rd Legislature," Ms. Barnes said in a statement, which is expected to be issued to the media later today. "While I will continue to work hard on your behalf for the duration of my term, I, Alicia V. Barnes, will not be seeking re-election. Rest assured, however, I will continue to lend my voice, knowledge and expertise for the betterment of our islands."

She added, "St. Croix, I remain humbled by your overwhelming confidence in me and have worked tirelessly to offer and support meaningful legislation and initiatives on your behalf. It is your confidence in me that propelled me to be your top vote-getter. It is now my utmost respect for you that compels me to face the hard truth that until we change our present system of representation, it is you, the voters of St. Croix, who will continue to be misrepresented and underrepresented."

The senator explained that the current structure of the Legislature "promotes competition rather than cooperation and collaboration."

"It truly is more about each Senator's political agenda and ambition than you, the people of St. Croix. I remain grateful for the opportunity to represent you, and will continue to do so to the best of my ability for the duration of the 33rd Legislature. However, I cannot in good conscience seek re-election to continue to be a participant in this flawed system of representation," she said.

Ms. Barnes explained to this publication what she believes would be a better structure: "Right now what we have is that everyone represents everyone but no one is accountable to anyone. If we had a system where senators were representing a specific district within each of the islands, then you would have a greater degree of accountability to the constituents of that specific district. Then once you get in the body, it would foster collaboration more so than competition because the members in the body would not have competed against each other."

Ms. Barnes said she supported the [Reapportionment Initiative](#), [which failed](#), as "a good start towards more representative government and accountability."

Asked by the Consortium how she would respond to people who contend that she should help change the system instead of leaving altogether, the senator said, "Everyone will have an opinion, however, ultimately the decision is mine to make."

Ms. Barnes also pointed out that her commitment to the people of the territory was two years, and the notion that once a senator runs for office, this senator must perpetually seek reelection should be abandoned. "A term is two years and that is the commitment that you make to the people, and that was the commitment I made to the people. There's no obligation other than public expectation that you will forever be a perpetual candidate," she said.

Ms. Barnes said she would continue to remain engaged in the community as a private citizen to move the USVI forward. "I have always been someone that has been active in the community, and I will continue to do so to lend my voice and expertise to address the issues of self-determination — doing so as a private citizen."

Her statement concluded, "Collectively we must ensure that the overarching issues of Self-Determination, to include the adoption of a U.S. Virgin Islands Constitution, Status, Electoral Reform, and Governance, are addressed. These are the necessary paths to true representation, transparency, and accountability; and it is then, and only then, will we truly progress as a people and as a territory. St. Croix, thank you once again for giving me the honor of serving you. May God Bless You and the entire U.S. Virgin Islands."

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