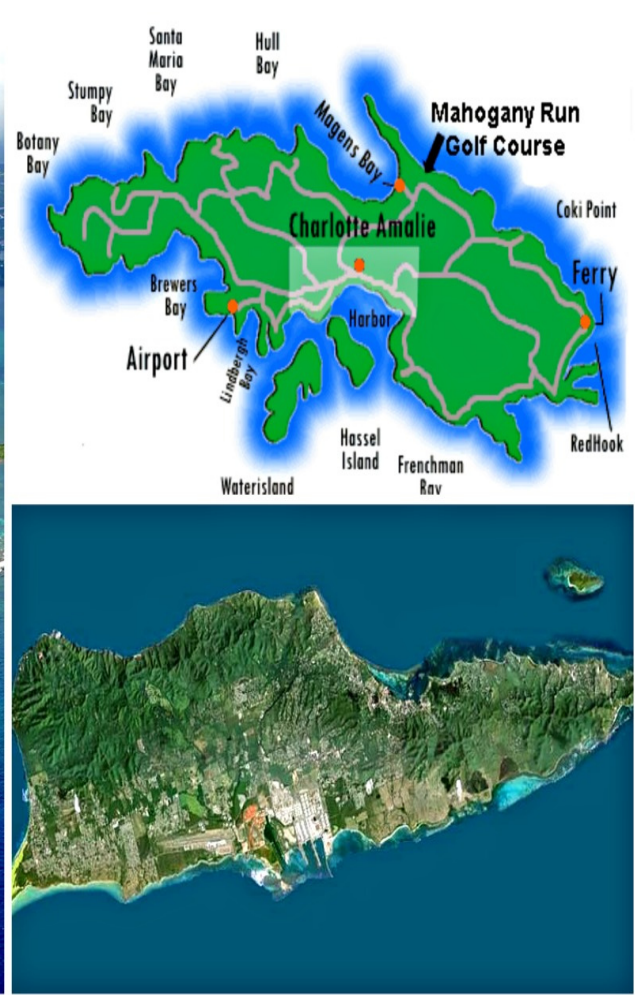


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Letters To The Editor: The Case For Sub-Districting In St. Croix

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Staff **March 16, 2015**



This letter was submitted to VI Consortium in early February. We decided to publish it now, [in light of Sen. Nelson's press conference](#) on March 17. Do you share Bob White's sentiments on the topic of sub districting?

Dear Editor,

It is a new year and I thought I might suggest a few modest proposals for our new government.

Yesterday, I was on the air with a very informed man, known to many as a straight shooter and with a great deal of government experience. Now, I never mention people's names so I will not mention John Ab----son's name. Nor Holland, will I mention your name or the name of your wonderful radio show.

We were discussing the need for good government and the hope we have for our new governor and Legislature. I raised the question of how contentious some of the election had been and we should have a better system of electing our senators. You could have heard a pin drop, silence, and then a flood of insights ran across the microphones.

Dear reader, it was wonderful. With unanimous voices we agreed that the current "at-large" election system breeds a poor working relationship within each island's seven because they have just run against each other and in the next election they must run against each other once again. There is concern on the part of some that 'if the Senator from my island, sitting next to me, looks too good he might get more votes next time and bump me out of office.'

It is impossible, as smart humans, not to be aware of this and so we often don't get the benefit of a united island Senate. Instead, we get a Senate that the other island can pick off a few to vote against the interest of their island. The solution is simple: SUB DISTRICTICING.

It was pointed out by John A. that it is in the power of the Senate to make this happen right now without any change in the Organic Act. In 1999, this power was given to the Senate to determine how they are elected. Some years ago, we had a referendum on this issue. The public voted to make this change. However, it went nowhere. Now is our chance again. Let's talk of why we should do it. The majority of concerns are very local.

- FIX THE NEIGHBORHOOD ROADS
- FIX THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREET LIGHTS
- PAINT THE YELLOW AND WHITE LINES ON THE ROADS
- PROTECT MY NEIGHBORHOOD FROM CRIME
- STOP ALL THAT NOISE, LATE AT NIGHT, FROM ACROSS THE STREET

I could go on.

We have no one to call. Senators say they represent "all of us"; but being at-large, they represent none of us. We should have neighborhood representatives. We should have "our" senator live in the neighborhood so they truly understand our concerns.

Many people come from "down island" where they have sub districting and they can hold their representative responsible. If we get sub districting, it is easier for candidates to run and much less expensive. Just think, they can visit all the houses in their neighborhood and the chances for St. Thomas to pay a lot of money for a St. Croix Senate race is eliminated. Under the current system it so expensive to get elected that money from St. Thomas is often the difference between winning or failure. We want our senators beholding to us, not to them.

This change to sub districting does not have to happen on St. Thomas, it can be a change only on St Croix. Let us have it here and then St. Thomas can decide if they want it as well after seeing the results here. It happens that St. Croix is already sub-divided

into several voting districts so the same districts can be used to begin the new system. St. Thomas is currently sub-divided into fewer, which would later require fixing, but it is doable. For now, let us work it only on St. Croix.

Governor, you could send down a bill proposing this; it would go a long way in showing your support for 'power to the people,' which I know you want.

On the radio we talked about some other ideas as well, we will talk about them in another letter. Now, let us start to bring pressure to change the election process. Having our own Senator will get the work done that we are already paying for.

Submitted by:

Bob White St. Croix

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