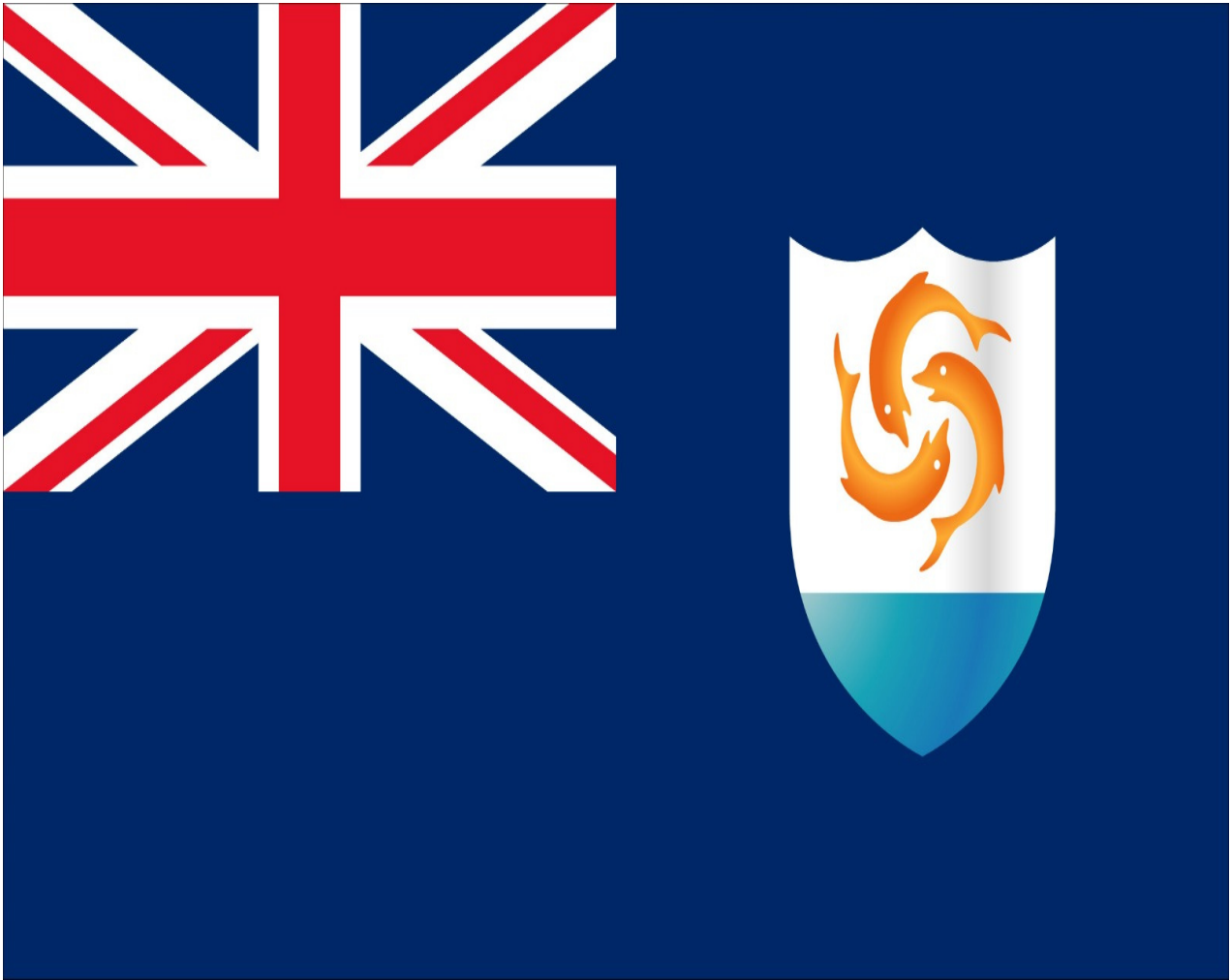


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Caribbean Report: Preview of the Anguilla Elections (Prt. 1)

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A pivotal time in the history of the British Caribbean territory of Anguilla, which is home to over 13,000 native Anguillians, is fast approaching. On April 22, Anguillan nationals will head to the polls in their respective constituencies and elect a representative for the position of Chief Minister. The elected representative will either form the country's new political majority or become a member of the country's opposing party.

Similar to most other democracies that exist in the region and globally, Anguilla has a parliamentary representative democratic form of government. At this time in the country's history, the Anguillan political system is dominated by two major parties: the Anguillan United Movement party (AUM), which is currently the ruling party, and the Anguillan

United Front party (AUF). The former leader of the AUM party and the current Chief Minister Hubert Hughes is resigning and has decided not to seek another term.

As such, in this year's election, the Anguillan United Movement party is being led by Dr. Ellis L. Webster, MD. The opposing Anguillan United Front party is being led by former Finance, Economics, Commerce and Tourism Minister Victor Banks. Both of the aforementioned parties have a candidate running for election in each of the seven constituencies. Conversely, the third and newly formed Democracy, Opportunity, Vision & Empowerment (DOVE) party led by Sutcliffe Hodge only has candidates vying for office in three of the seven constituencies. There are also several independents vying to become the representatives of their respective constituencies.

Like many other Caribbean nations, Anguilla is embarking upon crucial economic times. In 2008, Anguilla was dramatically affected by the Great Recession. The country has been struggling to rebound and spur economic growth. One example of such an effort involved the implementation of a new form of tax by the government, known to the Anguillan people as the Interim Stabilization Levy and is set at 3 percent. This tax aimed at stabilizing the country's economy by taxing income from employment has been openly decried by many Anguillan locals. Some residents felt that the government did not do enough to attract outside investors. The added tax to the people may have closed the budget shortfall, but at the outcome of stagnating the economy.

The country's growth has been stagnant. Its main economic driver is tourism. Anguilla's tourism product mainly caters to the very wealthy and to celebrities, drawing the likes of Robert De Niro, Michael Jordan, and Uma Thurman. It has created a unique niche in that area. However, Anguilla's hotel occupancy rate has been under 40 percent for the last few years. Airlifts are also minimal to the country as well, even though Seaborne Airlines has recently added Anguilla to its portfolio, bringing an additional 34 seats per trip to its airlift number. This happened after a carefully negotiated contract between the government with the input of the private sector and the airline. For Anguilla to grow its tourism product, it will require the country's leaders to come up with creative solutions to affect areas that have affected its growth in the tourism arena, with projects such as the expansion of the airport.

It is clear that this upcoming election is critical for the future and prosperity of the Anguillan populace. Anguillans face many of the same issues U.S. Virgin Islanders and those living in the greater Caribbean region face, including a mounting national debt, a brain drain fueled by the exodus of young talent, unemployment, high energy costs, a failing healthcare system, dependency on one economic product (tourism), and stagnant economic growth.

In this series, I will examine and lay out the prospective solutions to many of these problems, as presented by the various political party leaders. I will also analyze the electoral races in each of the seven Anguillan constituencies.