

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Former Elections System Tech Coordinator Appointed To VINGN Board, Sees 'Limitless' Potential For Technology In Territory

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Dr. Tonjia Coverdale, CEO of viNGN.

ST. CROIX – Dr. Tonjia Coverdale, former technology territorial coordinator of the Elections System of the Virgin Islands, was recently appointed to the Virgin Islands Next Generation Network by the Public Finance Authority's board.

Her appointment comes after the PFA board voted to expand the number of members on the viNGN board from seven to nine.

Coverdale now joins Governor Kenneth Mapp, Alfred Boschulte, Peter Schultz, C. Bernard Fulp, Elizabeth Armstrong and Jose Luis Garcia Serrano for a seat on the board.

Coverdale resigned as the VI Elections System territorial coordinator just days before the 2014 General Election because of conflicts with the Joint Boards of Elections over the use of the DS200 voting machines.

Since then, Coverdale said she's been focusing on advancing information technology (IT) within the territory to create efficiency in both public and private sectors. IT advancement here also includes the "creation and sustainability of a highly-trained," technological workforce, she said.

According to Coverdale, she's been doing her part to train "our next generation of technologists" as an IT professor at the University of the Virgin Islands. Last year, she established a Bachelor of Business Administration with a major in Information Systems and Technology at the university in an effort to build a viable workforce that will lead the territory "into our new, digital economy," she told *VI Consortium*.

The educator said her strong background in IT and related fields uniquely positions her to assist in creating an overall strategy that will allow viNGN to be of benefit to VI residents.

"As a former e-Commerce entrepreneur running my online business from my basement, I also truly understand the needs of our local businesses and what they need from viNGN for their sustainable success," she said.

Coverdale also said her appointment to the viNGN board also works as a "conduit to the University of the Virgin Islands, its knowledge resources in our faculty, and our future technology workforce in our students."

And in relation to the recent FCC Net Neutrality ruling, which redefined domestic broadband as having 25 megabits of upload speeds and up, Coverdale said the territory is uniquely positioned through Global Crossing's data center. The data center is located on the west end of St. Croix and boasts one of the fastest fiber networks in the U.S.

"With the new Net Neutrality ruling, viNGN will play an enormous role in ensuring that we, in the Virgin Islands, have access to the '25 MB and up' standards that have been redefined by the FCC," Coverdale said. "The great news is that while most of the U.S. will have to now begin their planning and implementation of the infrastructure that is needed to be compliant, we already have these capabilities here in the Virgin Islands today."

According to the newest viNGN board member, the territory has a technological advantage over most states across the nation. It will take a "focused plan and extended partnerships...to bring expanded broadband capabilities to our homes and businesses" and to make the territory "a major competitor in the global economy," Coverdale believes.

"viNGN can really open up an entirely new age for our Territory, a digital age, and through leadership and collaboration, our potential is limitless," she said.

Dr. Coverdale first came to the territory in 2010 when she accepted an assistant professorship position to teach computer information systems at the University of the Virgin Islands. She holds three degrees in the field of Information Systems, including a

BS from Morgan State University, MBA from Georgia State University, and PhD from Morgan State University. She is the first African-American and woman to graduate with a doctoral degree in Information Systems from any of the 106 Historical Black Colleges and Universities in the United States. She has past work experiences with technical firms, including IBM, HP, and Accenture.

She once participated in the [Mrs. US Virgin Islands Pageant](#) (for married women), and remains very active, especially on St. Thomas, where she lives.

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