

The Virgin Islands Consortium

New Legislation Seeks To Buy Catherineberg From WICO For \$3.3 Million

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ST. THOMAS -- The West Indian Company (WICO), which is owned by the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI), owns Catherineberg, commonly known as the Governor's Mansion, that sits high atop Denmark Hill overlooking Charlotte Amalie. But new legislation proposed by Sen. Janette Millin Young is seeking to change ownership from WICO to the GVI for a payment of \$3.3 million.

There's a catch, however: WICO owes the government about 3.3 million in taxes, so the government won't actually pay WICO money; as the legislation's language makes plain:

[BILL NO. 31-0052](#) -- "An Act to authorize the Virgin Islands Government to purchase Estate Catherineberg from WICO by offsetting payments owed in lieu of taxes, as mandated by Act No. 5826, as amended."

According to the measure, WICO is mandated by law to pay the GVI 10 percent of its annual revenue in lieu of taxes -- the total of which equates to \$700,000. The measure also reveals that WICO hasn't met its obligation for the fiscal years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. As a result of its failure, WICO currently owes the GVI \$3.3 million for fiscal years 2010, 2011 and 2012, according to the proposed measure.

The bill also states that Catherineberg is not a revenue generator for WICO, and WICO would like to remove the 6 acre property from its portfolio. Furthermore, the mansion is often used by Governors to host state functions and other official activities.

The legislation now sits in the Senate Committee on Finance pending further action. If approved, the sale would be transacted through the Department of Property and Procurement.

WICO, Catherineberg, Governor Mapp and a \$12,500 Monthly Mansion Rental

Since taking office, Governor Kenneth Mapp has been residing in a luxury mansion located in Nazareth, St. Thomas, that's currently costing tax payers \$12,500 in monthly rent payments. The revelation of the costly payments ignited controversy among residents of the territory, with the consensus being that, in a time of such pronounced financial hardship, which was made known by Governor Mapp himself, frugality should be considered.

"I want to be very, very clear. I got elected and my priorities have nothing to do really with where I live and accommodations provided by the government," Mapp told *VI Consortium* [at a recent press conference](#). "I own my own home of which I've owned from 2001. I live there when I'm on St. Croix. There's residence made available to me by the government when I'm on St. Croix of which I have not slept in. I'm still in my own home and I'm happy to be there."

Still, Mapp believes repairs at Catherineberg are overdue, as well as a determination as to what should be the final purpose of the aging mansion. The governor also made known that he plans on exiting the St. Thomas mansion.

"Now, we will do an assessment of Catherineberg, there will be repairs of Catherineberg, I do have a plan to exit the Nazareth property. I can't give you a date on when that exodus will occur, but I think overall, and I've been on this public stage for quite a while, as a government and as a territory, we need to come to a resolution on this issue with residencies for governors and lieutenant governors. It's been provided since governor's were appointed by presidents," Mapp said.

He continued: "We've seen a clear demarcation from the standard of having residencies repaired to house governors and lieutenant governors. I think in this maze of what's happening, we're going to present a plan to the community and the legislature that we believe could resolve this once and for all."

Correction: April 12, 2015

A previous version of this article stated that the amount the Government of the Virgin Islands is willing to pay for Catherineberg, through legislation sponsored by Sen. Janette Millin Young, is \$3.2 million. That's incorrect. The correct amount is \$3.3 million, according to language written into Bill 31-0052.

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