

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Prominent Florida Newspaper Names U.S. Virgin Islands As Top Gay-Friendly Caribbean Destination

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ST. CROIX – The U.S. Virgin Islands is ranked one of the top four gay-friendly Caribbean destinations by the Miami Herald, with St. Croix being dubbed as “the mecca of gay tourism in the USVI.”

[In the Miami Herald's](#) “Palette Magazine” Sunday supplement to the main newspaper, it also gives high marks to nearby Puerto Rico, St. Maarten/St. Martin and Curacao as it says all four make for “easy getaways” from southern Florida.

In the article called: “Caribbean Pride: LGBT-Friendly Island Getaways” the Miami Herald says the U.S. Virgin Islands is friendly to the gay community, but that “it’s still advisable

to be discreet in certain instances.”

Last year, former Sen. Judi Buckley proposed same-sex marriage legislation that sparked a fierce debate in the territory both pro and con.

More than a dozen states nationwide have legalized gay marriage, but the Buckley bill sponsoring it for the U.S. Virgin Islands in July 2014 languished in committee and went nowhere.

Legislators such as Sen. Sammuel Sanes did not publicly oppose the bill then, but suggested that the Virgin Islands needed to put its focus on the economy.

“It’s not going to come forth ... right now because we are concentrating on other issues,” Sanes told the *V.I. Consortium*. “Let me be blunt, St. Croix is dying and we are on life support.”

Then-candidate Kenneth Mapp told *V.I. Consortium* that while he couldn't prevent private citizens from making personal decisions, he would not send gay marriage legislation to the Senate.

Former Delegate to Congress and gubernatorial candidate in the 2014 General Elections, Donna Christensen, said in a wide-ranging interview with *V.I. Consortium* that while she would not be the sponsor of gay marriage legislation, if the Supreme Court of the United States moved to legalize the lifestyle -- she would have no other option but to uphold the law.

"I'm going to uphold the Constitution," Christensen [said in October](#). "And the Supreme Court, I noticed, did not take on any of those cases, leaving it to the States. So, it would be up to the Virgin Islands to make that decision. [But] that bill is going to die; it's never going to come, it's not part of my agenda. I do not intend to introduce a [same-sex marriage] bill in the territory."

She continued: "But I will defend the right because the people deserve equal protection under the law, and the Supreme Court has said in almost every instance, to deny a same-sex couple the right to marry is denying them equal protection under the law, and therefore is unconstitutional. That's what they've said in some of the previous cases that they have heard.

And if the highest court of the land has said that, I'm not going to deny anyone any right. And I will also defend, just as fiercely, the right of churches to follow the tenets of their faith and not be dictated to ever be told that you must perform same-sex marriage — that's up to the church. That's where a separation between church and state is very, very clear, and some churches will and some churches won't."

Here is what the Miami Herald had to say about the territory under the headline: “U.S. Virgin Islands – Retreat to the Resorts”:

“Characterized by dramatic, lush green mountaintops and tranquil coves with deep blue water as far as the eye can see, the U.S. Virgin Islands consist of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John, each accessible to one another by ferry. Like Puerto Rico, this U.S. territory requires no passport or customs lines for U.S. citizens and U.S. anti-discrimination laws

protect it.”

“Although USVI is widely considered gay-friendly, it’s still advisable to be discreet in certain instances, as some locals have deeply set religious beliefs that may cause raised eyebrows. While the cosmopolitan St. Thomas has a nightlife scene in Frenchtown and Charlotte Amalie with bars catering to the gay traveler, these areas can be dangerous after dark. That’s why indulging in the offerings at an all-encompassing resort is often the way to go for both gay and straight travelers in USVI.”

Image Credit: Ebony

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