

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Lt. Gov. Office: Make No Repairs To Homes Purchased Between 2012-2013 At Gov. Auction Until Further Notice

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ST. CROIX -- If you purchased a home between the years 2012-2013 at a government-sanctioned auction conducted by the VI Collector's Office, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor has warned not to make any repairs, nor attempt to transfer ownership of the real property until "further notice."

According a press release issued on Monday, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, after a review was conducted, determined that the "properties may not have complied with the requirements of Title 33 of the Virgin Islands Code."

As a result of the alleged noncompliance, the properties may be subject to the remedies outlined in Title 33, Section 2549 of VI Code, according to the release.

Title 33 of VI Code, Section 2549, subtitled, "Penalties for Improperly Conducting a Tax and Public Sewer System User Fee Auction," says, "If the Lieutenant Governor or any person acting on his behalf:

- (1) Sells or assists in selling any real property --
 - (A) Knowing it to be exempt from attachment; or
 - (B) Knowing that the taxes for which it is sold have been paid; or
- (2) Knowingly and willfully sells or assists in selling any real or personal property for taxes to defraud the owner thereof; or
- (3) In any manner restrains bidders; or
- (4) Knowingly or willfully issues a certificate of purchase of real or personal property so sold --

then the Lieutenant Governor or such person shall pay the injured party all damages sustained thereby, and all such sales shall be void."

In September of 2014, the Office of the Inspector General released a [damning report](#) that laid bare its findings on inspections of government-sanctioned real estate auctions. The report confirmed there was "validity to the allegations of questionable bidding practices and a lack of compliance with statutory regulations governing real property auctions conducted by the Lt. Governor's Office."

The categories of unscrupulous practices were many, specifically that "as a result of procedural changes made in real property auctions by officials at the Lieutenant Governor's Office: