

The Virgin Islands Consortium

31st Legislature Rejects 11 of Mapp's Nominees Citing Pay Increase Impasse

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ST. THOMAS -- The 31st Legislature took bold action today during a hearing at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall, rejecting over 11 of Governor Kenneth Mapp's nominees by voting down their bid to lead government departments.

Only former Sen. Donald Cole, Mapp's Public Service Commission Director nominee, was given a favorable vote.

The senators cited pay raises that Mapp gave the cabinet members as the main issue, deeming the increases unacceptable, especially during these times, when the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) is hardly able to pay its own bills, and is covered

in debt upwards \$120 million; and at a time when various government agencies -- including the Department of Education -- have seen budget cuts, forcing cutbacks of much-needed programs.

Senators had voiced their opposition of the pay raises when they were revealed by the nominees during testimonies under oath. However, the impasse was magnified during a meeting Mapp held with senators on April 20 at Government House in Christiansted, St. Croix.

Freshman Sen. Kurt Violet [told](#) *VI Consortium* that senators expressed concern and disapproval of the raises at the meeting, but Mapp pushed back, telling the senators that he had made promises and he intended to keep them.

VI Consortium spoke to Senate President Neville James following today's hearing, who relayed the developments that led to today's no vote against the nominees.

"We made a decision from back in March that we (Senate Democrats) were not comfortable with the message that we would be sending to the public given the governor's statement in the [State of the Territory Address](#), and his actions in giving raises, which were not consistent at a time when he stated that the territory was on the brink of financial collapse," James said.

Mapp is an independent governor working with a legislature controlled by Democrats, who were helped by Sen. Tregenza Roach to fail the nominees. If the Democrats are able to stick together with one narrative, the power they currently wield would force the governor to consistently compromise and consult them before making sweeping decisions.

Some senators, including Nelson and O'Reilly, who voted in favor of most of the nominees, said what played out today was partisan politics. Even so, Nelson commended the Democrats for sticking together -- especially since Government House finally decided to compromise following the vote.

Sen. James told *VI Consortium* that his office received communication from the Mapp administration of the governor's willingness to compromise on the salary increases given to the nominees, a move that changed the dynamics, according to James.

"We received a call from the Acting Governor, Osbert Potter, and they forwarded documentation to us speaking of compromise, so we are now processing what they've offered us, and we have not adjourned the session -- we stand in recess until the call of the Chair," James said, adding that the session could continue as early as next week.

The compromise, James said, would include one of the senators on the prevailing side to make a motion for reconsideration of the Mapp nominees.

Today's "no" vote on the governor's nominees represents an embarrassing setback for the administration, forcing it to rethink its strategy of cooperation moving forward. But based on conversations *VI Consortium* had with senators, Mapp should have seen the rejection coming, as these senators vowed to vote down the nominees if the salary increases weren't reduced, or altogether abandoned.

"The governor should really reconsider his approach to granting raises at the early level of his administration, and thus I'm prepared to act accordingly when the time comes," Sen. Myron D. Jackson told *VI Consortium* on May 14 near Fort Christiansvaern [following a presentation](#) hosted by U.S. National Park Service about searching for shipwrecks off the coast of the island.

Asked if he was prepared to vote against the nominees, Jackson said a "no" vote would most likely be his position, which he remained true to today.

Nominations considered today are as follows:

> • Failed—Mr. Valdamier O. Collens, Commissioner, Department of Finance—8 no 7 yes (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Graham, Liburd, Nelson, O'Reilly; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, James, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Mrs. Beverly Nicholson-Doty, Commissioner, Department of Tourism—8 no, 7 yes (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Graham, Liburd, Nelson, O'Reilly; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, James, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Mr. Milton Potter, Director, Division of Personnel, 8 no, 7 yes (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Graham, Liburd, Nelson, O'Reilly; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, James, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Mr. Carlos Robles, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture 8 no, 7 yes (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Graham, Liburd, Nelson, O'Reilly; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, James, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Mr. Eugene Farrell, Director, Virgin Islands Fire Services—12 no, 3 yes (Yes: Forde, Graham, Nelson; No: Blyden, Francis, Gittens, Harrigan, Jackson, James, Liburd, O'Reilly, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Mr. Devin Carrington, Commissioner, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, 8 no, 7 yes (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Graham, Liburd, Nelson, O'Reilly; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, James, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Mr. Marvin Pickering, Director, Bureau of Internal Revenue—8 no, 7 yes (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Graham, Liburd, Nelson, O'Reilly; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, James, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Mr. Gustav James, Commissioner Department of Public Works—8 no, 7 yes (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Graham, Liburd, Nelson, O'Reilly; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, James, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Mrs. Vivian Ebbsen-Fludd, Commissioner, Department of Human Services—9 no, 6 yes (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Graham, Liburd, Nelson; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, James, O'Reilly, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Ms. Dawn Henry, Esq., Commissioner, Department of Planning and Natural Resources—8 no, 6 yes, 1 not voting (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Liburd,

Nelson, O'Reilly; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, James, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin Young; Not voting: Graham)

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> • Failed—Nomination: Mr. Nellon Bowry, Director Nominee, Office of Management and Budget—8 no, 5 yes, 2 not voting (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Liburd, O'Reilly; No: Francis, Harrigan, Jackson, Jackson, James, Roach, Sanes, Violet, Millin-Young; Not voting: Graham, Nelson)

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> • Approved—Nomination: Mr. Donald G. Cole, Executive Director, V. I. Public Services Commission— 10 yes, 4 no, 1 not voting (Yes: Blyden, Forde, Gittens, Graham, Harrigan, Jackson, Liburd, O'Reilly, Roach, Millin-Young; No: Francis, James, Sanes, Violet; Not voting: Nelson)

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