

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Slams Senate: 'We Pay Outsiders Hundreds Of Thousands And Ask Qualified Natives To Sacrifice'

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp had harsh words for members of the 31st Legislature who voted down 11 of his cabinet nominees during a legislative session last Thursday, and called for the Senate to treat its own people with more respect.

Why in the Virgin Islands, when we speak of Virgin Islanders who have been educated, who have been trained, who have gone off and have the experience and who have demonstrated an ability to do the job, and we give them an opportunity, we turn around and tell them they have no value. -- Governor Kenneth Mapp.

Mapp said he does not subscribe to the idea that locals who spent years studying and have garnered the experience necessary to hold certain positions and be paid accordingly, should be subject to base pay or salaries that are below their qualifications, especially when persons who come from away are being paid -- through senate approval -- hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In describing his frustration, the governor went through his educational background. From his years in local schools all the way to achieving a masters degree in public administration, and his 34 years in public service. Mapp said he remains "bewildered" that no one questions outside professionals who come to the territory and make six figure incomes.

"James Watson came to St. Croix and bought some property, and we took \$42 million in gross receipt tax monies and we built a facility that he could lease Home Depot and have a successful business," Mapp said, referring to funds the government borrowed to build the facility currently housing the retailer of home improvement, construction products and services.

"Why in the Virgin Islands when we speak of Virgin Islanders who have been educated, who have been trained, who have gone off and have the experience and who have demonstrated an ability to do the job, and we give them an opportunity, we turn around and tell them they have no value," the governor said with passion in his voice, receiving thunderous applause from the attentive audience. "I want to be very, very clear: I do not subscribe to this philosophy."

The governor then pointed to the University of The Virgin Islands President Dr. David Hall, who receives an annual salary of \$350,000, according to UVI's [own website](#). The chief executive also mentioned an individual hired by Juan F. Luis Hospital who made \$400,000 annually, and another to run the Schneider Regional Medical Center, who received \$275,000 per annum.

"Why do the people outside the Virgin Islands have value and we give them everything that they demand, but we have a lack of ability to give ourselves, and give value to ourselves," Mapp said.

The chief executive said he will give the 31st Legislature what they want because he has no intentions to be deemed the most defiant governor. He said the capping of his cabinet nominees' salaries was important to the senators, who he said calls the compromise a demonstration of sacrifice.

But the governor sees a different future where individuals receive annual incomes befitting of their qualifications, and said he, along with the lieutenant governor, are working on such a plan.

"Lieutenant Governor Potter and I are working on a mission where we will stop sacrificing the people of this territory and improve the quality of lives of our community," the governor said.

Mapp highlighted Bureau of Internal Revenue Director nominee Marvin Pickering, who the governor said took the position of director, met an agency that could not pay tax refunds, and have managed to turn the situation around [to the tune of \\$4 million](#) in

refunds on a monthly basis. He also highlighted other areas where his nominees have made great strides in bettering the lives of the territory's residents.

"This government we've inherited had shutdown just about all of its services for the senior citizens community on the basis that we had no money. But we are reopening and expanding our services to our senior citizens," Mapp said.

He added: "This government that we inherited, we have been able to reduce allotments in some areas, increase allotments in others, pay the salaries that we have designated, hire new people and put them to work in the Virgin Islands, and we have not gone to the legislature and ask them for one increase in our budget."

The governor also called out the Senate for what he calls "nitpicking", because while senators are calling on the capping of salaries at \$105,000, "the legislature has employees that are getting paid \$120,000," Mapp said.

"[So] don't tell me that the commissioner of Tourism (Beverly Nicholson-Doty), a commissioner of Public Works (Gustav James) who's building and fixing the roads in the territory; a commissioner of Tourism who is expanding our infrastructure and improving our economy in the territory. A director of the Virgin Islands Internal Revenue (Marvin Pickering), who is increasing revenues to the treasury and reduced the current operating deficit that we inherited by \$26 million, that we're still sitting her quibbling about increasing the pay of a position by seven or eight, or nine, or ten or twenty thousand dollars," the territory's leader said.

"My friends, we are quibbling about matters that are not important to the benefit and the well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands."