

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Nominees In Limbo As Democrats Deny Motion To Reconsider Approval

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ST. THOMAS -- Eleven of Governor Kenneth Mapp's cabinet nominees will remain in limbo and may soon need to be withdrawn and resubmitted by the governor if a compromise cannot be reached, as Senate Democrats killed a motion to reconsider the nominees for approval at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall this morning.

The Democrats had promised to approve the nominees. In fact, just [two days ago](#) Sen. Kurt Violet told *VI Consortium* that he was prepared to vote yes. And on Thursday, May 21, Sen. President Neville James told *The Consortium* that the dynamics changed after his office received a letter from Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter calling for compromise.

But following a [widely-read VI Consortium article](#) where the governor called out the senators for devaluing well-trained locals by telling them to "sacrifice", the dynamics, it would seem, changed yet again.

At today's brief hearing, there was almost no motion to reconsider the 11 nominees. However, Independent Sen. Nellie Rivera-O'Reilly inquired of the Senate's legal counsel whether there existed an opportunity for a senator to make a motion if a member of the prevailing side declined to do so.

Legal counsel told the senator that it was up to the Senate's discretion, prompting Rivera-O'Reilly to make a motion for reconsideration of the Mapp nominees. The motion would fail 8-6, with Senate Democrats, along with [Sen. Tregenza A. Roach](#), voting No.

Following the vote, James immediately adjourned the session, sending the process of Mapp cabinet nominees back to square one.

On Wednesday, *The Consortium* reached out to Violet for comment following Mapp's assertion that the 31st Legislature needed to value its own people. Violet pushed back.

"The decision was made because we value our people, all our people to include those who have not received a raise in six years," he said.

The senator's words come as the territory's residents are having an ongoing debate on the matter since the article's publishing, with the argument seemingly getting the most support being the notion that not some, but all government employees who are producing quality work should receive raises.

"Some of us like myself don't have [a] way to go back to school to build up our profiles and statuses. [However], we've work[ed] for years -- like 18 yrs of experience and services and can't even get a [coordinator] or manager position and not even union raises. Give us a chance as well, [so we can] eat and drink like everyone else," Marisol Ventura said in the comments section of *The Consortium's* [Facebook page](#).

"You can't squeeze blood from a rock. Set an example for our young people on fiscal responsibility!! Public service!!" Jestina Shiinene added.

But not everyone held the same view. Chelcie S. Porter, who pointed out that she was not a supporter of the governor, said she would like to see more locals getting hired.

"I'm not a Mapp supporter and I'm not born in VI but I do want to see more locals gaining employment," Porter said. "Now, if we need better education and job-training (which in my opinion we do) that's one thing, but too many businesses are all too eager to pass up and underpay locals. [If] this keeps happening, young people will continue to leave and St. Thomas will be as white-washed as St John in 20 yrs."

Senate Majority Leader Samuel Sanes told *VI Consortium* that a letter will be forwarded to the governor, which should then be followed by a meeting between the first and second branches of government, as they search for room to resolve the matter.

Mapp made his comments at the swearing-in ceremony of two of his cabinet members at Government House in Christiandale, St. Croix, while giving remarks about the two

candidates, Pedro Cruz, commissioner of Sports, Parks and Recreation, and the Virgin Islands Police Department's Commissioner Delroy Richards, Sr.

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.