

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senator Marvin Blyden Says There Are Too Many Female Officers In The VIPD; They Tend To Be 'Timid'

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ST. CROIX -- Members of the 31st Legislature's Committee on Finance heard testimony on Wednesday at the Frits E. Lawaetz Conference Room from officials of the Virgin Islands Police Department, where the department's FY 2016 budget requests were being parsed by committee members.

Chaired by Sen. Clifford Graham, senators fired questions in the direction of VIPD Commissioner Delroy Richards, Sr., including inquiries about recruiting, vacancies, overtime funding and also difficulty in retaining officers to the force.

On such senator was freshman Marvin Blyden, a Democrat, who, while commenting on ways to recruit new officers during a round of questioning, asked Richards for the gender breakdown in recruiting.

Dwayne Richards, assistant director for the VIPD's Human Resources arm, said while he did not have the percentage breakdown at the hearing, he knew that "more females tend to come through the process than males."

Blyden then asked whether a program could be created that would see more males being recruited, "because I feel that's one of our problems," he said.

Then, without warning, Blyden uttered the fighting words.

"We have too much female officers," he said. "I don't mean to sound discriminatory, but I'm being honest and I'm keeping it real. Because they don't respect them, and many times they are kind of timid to deal with certain situations. It's a fact."

Blyden again asked Commissioner Richards to do something about the lack of males in the VIPD, however Richards disagreed with the senator's assertion that females were timid, and said he's seen instances where women were more forceful than their male counterparts.

"I must also add that I have seen some very aggressive female police officers, and I've seen some being more aggressive than male police officers, and I've seen this from both the police perspective and the private industry, so that's why I welcome them," Richards said.

"As long as you're able to meet the qualifications, I don't have an issue with that," he added.

Realizing his mistake, Blyden backpedaled, stating that he too has seen tough women in the VIPD, and reiterated that his words were not meant to be discriminatory, and that it's just a perception he's held.

Commissioner Richards said the only strategy in relation to recruitment is for the VIPD, through its PR campaign, to emphasize the qualifications of becoming a police officer and encourage both males and females to apply.

Sen. Blyden was the top vote-getter in the St. Thomas-St. John district 2014 General Election's senatorial race.

Feature Image: Sen. Marvin Blyden