

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sen. Neville James Says Homosexuality Is An Abomination

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ST. CROIX -- Senate President of the 31st Legislature, Sen. Neville James, has been vocal in his stance on same-sex marriage. The senator has said that he believes marriage is between a man and a woman, and has further stated that it remains, according to the United States Constitution, his right to disagree with gay marriage.

But in a Facebook conversation with Attorney Carl R. Williams, who reached out to James with a fiery message lecturing the senator on his duty to follow the law, James shot back with a heated message of his own, stating that he would not sign an executive order executed by the Governor that seeks to bring the territory on equal footing with the U.S. Mainland and other U.S. territories as it relates to marriage equality following the

U.S. Supreme Court's June 26 ruling, because, in his opinion, homosexuality is an abomination.

"As an American citizen, I do as I feel like as long as I'm not breaking the law," James wrote in the [Facebook conversation](#), provided to *The Consortium* by Attorney Williams. "I won't be attesting to anything, signed by anybody, that I feel is an abomination."

James added: "Now when you get a chance, go in front of a mirror and ask yourself the real reason you're upset with what I did, or in this case didn't do... In the meantime, have a Coke, a smile and back up off me...Mr. Carl Randolph Williams... Peace."

If the senator's response to Attorney Williams, a member of the VI Bar Association, came off as intense, that's because Williams' own message to the St. Croix Democrat was straightforward and borderline disrespectful.

"Senator James: You have not been elected to grand (stand) in the way of equal rights! You have been elected to follow and uphold the law, sir, regardless of your personal position. That is your sworn duty," Williams wrote.

"Also, texting the Governor with a sass-mouth comment more befitting a belligerent preteen officially makes you a "dishonorable" delegate. Your job is only to ATTEST to the authenticity of the Governor's signature. That's it. Your personal belief system is not at issue. The one and only question before you Senator James is, 'Is this the signature of the Governor of the Virgin Islands?' If your answer is yes, then sign the Executive Order and move on," wrote the attorney.

James has refused to attest to or witness the Governor's signature pursuant to section 11 of the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands, which states that in the absence of the lieutenant governor, the Senate president is next in leadership.

Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter won't return to the territory until Wednesday. In his absence, the law requires the Senate president's signature. James, however, notified Government House that he needed an opportunity to be advised of his duties as acting lieutenant governor before making a decision.

Mapp issued the Marriage Equality executive order last Tuesday. He'd made his intent of doing so known during a press conference on June 30, contending that the Supreme Court's decision to legalize same-sex marriage across the U.S., affected the territory as well.

"The Government of the Virgin Islands as a civil society can no longer discriminate on marriage," Mapp said. "The nation has arrived, pursuant to the Supreme Court's ruling, at full marriage equality — when two consenting adults appear for a marriage license and apply for that license, civil society is required to respond. And so persons of the same-sex can be married in the U.S. Virgin Islands."

The governor stressed that the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling does not force churches and ministers to perform same-sex or any other kind of marriage, however as the territory's leader, he must abide by the law.

“I want to again underscore for the conversation that the Supreme Court ruling does not mandate the churches or ministers to perform marriages of any kind. But civil society does have that responsibility and can no longer discriminate on two consenting adults wishing to be married,” Mapp said.

When asked about the sentiment among many that the territory was not quite ready for the historic ruling, the governor said his personal opinion on the matter is irrelevant.

“Well, it’s not my decision,” the chief executive said. “When Lieutenant Governor [Osbert] Potter and I met during the campaign, we met with a council of ministers and they talked about our position [concerning] if a bill should arrive at our desk legalizing same-sex marriage.

“We said to the ministers then that we would not be sending any bill to the Legislature to do that; but we cautioned them that the movement in the nation clearly indicated that the judicial branch of government would ultimately decide this issue. And that as sworn leaders of a civil society, we took an oath that we say we take freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion — meaning that we take the oath swearing to uphold the laws of the nation as they apply to the Virgin Islands and the laws of the Virgin Islands.”

He continued: “The Supreme Court has made a decision that affects the entire nation. It is not for me to express what my personal feelings are. It is for me to do the business of governance and the business of governance, given the Supreme Court’s ruling, says that if an individual in the Virgin Islands is married to a person of the same-sex in any state of the nation, that the Virgin Islands government must recognize that marriage as lawful.

“So the benefits to marriage, the rights and privileges to marriage, must be extended to that individual. Whether it’s health insurance, whether it’s beneficiary, whether it’s filing tax returns, and the executive order that I am writing is to alert the agencies and to direct them how they are to perform given the ruling as issued by the United States Supreme Court.”