

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Democrats Force Mapp Nominees Back To Pay Levels Of December 31, 2014

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ST. THOMAS -- Senate Democrats united at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall on Thursday afternoon to send a sharp rebuke to Governor Kenneth Mapp and the pay raises that he sought to give his cabinet nominees, drafting an amendment to [Bill No. 31-0149](#) that sets the salaries of all cabinet members at the amount each position was paid on December 31, 2014.

Objections and point of inquiries came fast, as St. Croix Sen. Nereida "Nellie" Rivera-O'Reilly, following her objection of the motion, inquired of counsel whether the motion violated the separation of powers. Legal counsel said it did not have an immediate answer; which prompted At-Large Senator Almando "Rocky" Liburd to ask the president

whether it was prudent to move forward with a motion that remains questionable. James, however, said the motion was adopted and that if changes were necessary, they would be made at the appropriate time.

Sen. Rivera-O'Reilly's objection, which she did not withdraw, prompted a roll call:

Marvin Blydin: **Yes**

Jean Forde: **Yes**

Novelle Francis: **Yes**

Kenneth Gittens: **Yes** (*original stance was not voting*)

Clifford Graham: **Yes**

Justin Harrigan, Sr.: **Yes**

Myron Jackson: **Yes**

Neville James: **Yes**

Almando "Rocky" Liburd: **No**

Terrence "Positive" Nelson: **No**

Nereida "Nellie" O'Reilly: **No**

Tregenza Roach: **No**

Sammuel Sanes: **Yes**

Kurt Violet: **Yes**

Janet Millin Young: **Yes**

Following a short break, legal counsel, citing Section 8 of Virgin Islands Code, said the Legislative Branch has "broad authority to enact legislation" on salaries of all branches of government, including executive and judicial.

Counsel then cited Section 20 of the Revised Organic Act, titled "Salaries and Expenses of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Department Heads, Officers and Employees, Members of the Legislature". This section, counsel said, "provides that salaries and travel allowances of the governor, lieutenant governor, the heads of the executive departments, other officers and employees of the Government of the Virgin Islands and the members of the Legislature, shall be paid by the Government of the Virgin Islands at rates prescribed by the laws of the Virgin Islands.

The territory's laws are set by the Legislature.

Jackson's amendment to the bill was adopted by the Senate, along with a myriad of other amendments, offering help to schools, sponsored by Violet; relief to farmers in the

amount of \$500,000 for the drought the territory's currently facing through the Dept. of Labor, sponsored by Sen. Millin Young; relief for tax payers who are faced with two property tax bills in 2015, giving them a grace period lasting until early 2016 to make said payments, sponsored by Sen. Marvin Blyden; and funds to help the St. Croix branch of Women's Coalition, sponsored by Sen. Novelle Francis, among other amendments.

The bill itself, an act authorizing the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, through the Office of the Tax Assessor, to issue the real property tax bills for a given calendar year based on the assessment of the current year, was successful in the full Senate, and will be forwarded to the governor for his approval.

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