

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Vialet: Public Should Not Blame Legislature For Mapp's Spending Habits

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ST. THOMAS -- Virgin Islands residents should not cast blame on senators of the 31st Legislature for what many have deemed the exorbitant spending of Governor Kenneth Mapp, Senator Kurt Vialet said during a Senate hearing last Thursday here, contending that the Senate did not sanction Mapp's spending, and should not be held accountable.

He said many of the texts he receives from residents demanding that senators curtail the governor's spending work as a double edged sword; because at one point some contend that the governor has within his authority to raise his cabinet members' salary, and at other times, including the conversation surrounding his spending, residents expect the 31st Legislature to take action, according to Vialet.

"It is quite strange and unfair for so many in the public to continuously blame this body for the spending of Government House," he said. "I have people texting me and saying, 'oh, you need to control the spending,' and I'm like, I'm in the Legislature."

Following his remarks on who should be held accountable, Violet changed course, veering into a topic that has long been discussed among residents: high hopes of an incoming leader who talked the talk, but for many, have failed to walk the talk.

"Governor Mapp is governing under a different time," the first-term Democrat began. "He came in with extremely high expectations of the people of the Virgin Islands, and he came in after a number of individuals felt that they were not treated right by the last administration.

"So when Governor Mapp won, there was this high expectation that we have this individual who's going to come into Government House, and he's going to right this ship, because he's been publicly talking about all of the excess that has been going on in the past administration, and was just really going to right this ship.

"So the expectation for him was really higher (compared to other governors) going in, and then he went in at a time when the economy of St. Croix remains severely depressed: the closure of HOVENSA, a lot of individuals are unemployed -- and they had high expectations."

According to Violet, the Mapp administration has left many constituents deflated because he has not curtailed the spending like he promised he would. Indeed, senators at the hearing, held at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall, [assailed](#) the administration for ostensibly being detached from the ills and sufferings of its people. And that frustration is magnified when residents read stories in the media about excessive spending.

"Seeing all of that, that is the reason why the spending for the villa frustrated so many individuals. And that is why every time they read what's in the newspaper it becomes so frustrating to them. Because a lot of those same individuals are saying, 'I can't pay my WAPA bill, but then we're reading about these expenses,'" Violet said.

He continued: "At some point, Government House is going to have to change the perception that is out there, because it's really not a good perception. And at this point you're not being given an opportunity to govern because everybody's worrying about the expenses."

Other lawmakers also expressed their discontent with Government House's behavior. Sen. Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly said if Mapp has a plan to lift the territory out of financial crisis, it needs to be unveiled immediately; Sen. Terrence "Positive" Nelson added that the people have the right to remove Mapp from office -- hinting at impeachment -- if they so choose; Sen. Myron Jackson held strong to his stance that Mapp should stay at Government House in St. Thomas, as per law; and Sen. Sammuel Sanes said he could feel the frustration of the people as it relates to the territory's trajectory, and said that the despair could be seen in their eyes.

Board Chairman for WICO and Chief of Staff for the Mapp administration Randolph Knight told senators that the administration was closing in a permanent residence for the governor, and confirmed that it would be ready in [two weeks](#).

Feature Image: Sen. Kurt Vialet during last Thursday's WICO hearing.

Image Credit: VI Legislature.

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