

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Letter Sent To Senate To Derail Acting AG's Candidacy

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ST. THOMAS -- A letter sent to the 31st Legislature to derail the candidacy of Claude Walker, acting attorney general of the Virgin Islands, saw members of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary pressing the nominee on actions he's taken at the Department of Justice during his short tenure.

But the gambit seems to have fallen flat, as Walker -- flanked by DOJ employees who attended the hearing as a show of solidarity with his actions -- was able to intelligently answer inquiries thrown at him by lawmakers. And the senators, convinced by recommendations sent to them by employees who support Walker, commended the AG for his dedication to overhaul the DOJ which, Walker says, was on a downward spiral when he took over.

"I have received a lot of positive feedback in support of your candidacy more than any other candidate," said Sen. Janette Millin Young. "And I really take those seriously because like any good candidate, Walker has done a good job at having good references speak up on his behalf."

The secret to failure is when you try to please everybody. - Claude Walker.

The letter, seen [here](#), is titled "Save Department of Justice, Please Vote No To Claude Walker". It is reminiscent of another [penning](#) by unnamed DOJ employees, and alleges that Walker has disrupted the DOJ and caused confusion. It also alleges that the AG's recent press conference on paternity and child support was a "mere distraction from the mess he's causing and he is grand standing to make it appear he was starting something or doing something productive for the department, when the fact is those methods of collection have been in place and have been applied by the Paternity and Support Division for years since federal the laws are on the books," according to the letter.

The letter also accused Walker of intimidation, fear and threats, and says he dismantled the already understaffed White Collar Crime and Public Corruption Crime Division.

Walker, however, denied the allegations.

"No, not at all," he said, referring to disintegrating the unit. "We are staffing up that division. We are hiring investigators, and the criminal action that I have taken so far within the last two months as head of the Department of Justice, show that I am not dismantling the Public Corruption Division, so that is not accurate." Walker was referring to [the arrest](#) of former Governor John P. de Jongh and Julito Francis, former director of the Virgin Islands Public Finance Authority.

Million Young said she understood the difficulty that heads of organizations face when making tough decisions.

"I believe that sometimes people have issues with supervisors dealing with the staffing as they should," she said. "I think you may have acted a little early and pissed off some people when you made your changes, but I guess you are very self-confident and you knew you were in there for the long haul."

For Walker's part, it was action that was mandatory if the DOJ is to move forward and regain the community's confidence.

"I didn't have any choice," Walker said. "If you're dealing with a situation where the ship is going down and you have to take emergency action, these agencies are extremely important. Everything we do in the American system involves the law, so you cannot have an agency like the Department of Justice in the state that it was when I inherited it; so decisive action had to be taken in some areas to put it on course and to prevent it from going further into decline."

He added: "The secret to failure is when you try to please everybody. I've been making some tough decisions to right the ship. If some people are offended, it is what it is."

Sen. Kurt Vialet said he would have appreciated the chance to question someone who could have given him answers as to whether the chaos at the DOJ was created within the

last seven months or prior the the current administration. However, the acting AG said some of the issues he's seeing at the department date back to his tenure there in 1994.

Sen. Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly said her office also received numerous recommendations for Walker, the most outstanding being his stance to boost employee morale.

After hours of discussion, Walker's nomination was forwarded out of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary to the full senate without opposition. It is expected to receive the full Senate's approval as well.

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