

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dignitaries Issue Veterans Day Statements

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ST. CROIX -- Several senators and Governor Kenneth Mapp issued statements showing their appreciation for the territory's veterans. The lawmakers here are expected to attend the activities [being held in Frederiksted this morning](#), along with Mr. Mapp, while senators on St. Thomas will do the same in their district.

"It is my privilege to represent the proud people of this Territory in paying tribute and respect to the many men and women among us who served our nation in the Armed Forces of the United States. We will continue to use the occasion of Veterans Day, and every other opportunity, to express our collective appreciation for their valor, patriotism, professionalism, and sacrifice to preserve our cherished way of life," said the territory's leader.

"I urge all Virgin Islanders to take pride in the history of our community's willingness to contribute our human resources to the defense of our nation, as well as to its need to respond to emergencies of all origins. It is largely due to the records of service of our veterans, including their numbers in proportion to our modest population, that we, as Virgin Islanders, can claim our rightful place as equals among the citizens of any state. We must pledge, therefore, to reserve always for our veterans the dignity, respect, support, and honor reserved for veterans throughout the great nation which they so proudly served," he added.

Senator Kurt Violet said honoring those who have "stepped up and sacrifice to protect our freedom" remains a privilege that he does not take lightly. Mr. Violet, whose brother serves in the armed forces, added that constant reverence "is one way that we can show our gratitude to the servicemen and women of previous generations, and those of this generation who continue to serve. We're grateful to each and every one of them."

Senator Neville James also expressed gratitude: "We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the 22 million troops and reservists, including the more than 5000 veterans from the Territory, for protecting the United States of America and the freedoms we enjoy.

I have always been especially proud of our local veterans, who are part of a line of heroes that have valiantly defended this country and stood up for its values. Virgin Islands veterans have made their mark across the world, and have courageously fought on the beaches of Normandy to the jungles of Vietnam; from the deserts of Kuwait to the skies above of Kosovo; from the cities of Iraq to the mountains of Afghanistan. We recognize that we owe these soldiers a debt we can never fully repay."

And Senator Gittens said he has the utmost respect for Virgin Islanders who have answered the call from the country's earliest conflicts. "Our small territory is no less represented in our armed forces than anywhere across the United States, and today I pause to say thank you. Thank you for stepping up and fighting to protect the freedom and liberties that we all enjoy."

These are just some of the policymakers who expressed appreciation to the armed men and women. Others include Senator Jean Forde and Marvin Blyden, both St. Thomas Democrats, who, like their colleagues, said they were grateful to know that freedom is assured because some chose to put their lives on the line.

"The heroic efforts of our brave men and women in uniform are not sufficient to sustain a free society if we do not continually act to strengthen it from within," Mr. Forde, a first-term Democrat, said. "If we at home do not participate as informed and involved citizens, then we are dishonoring the efforts and the sacrifice of those who have fought abroad to defend our way of life."

Mr. Blyden, another freshman, added: "I encourage everyone to show your appreciation to our Veterans by attending events in their honor. These individuals are courageous and selfless Virgin Islanders. Let's remember to continually keep our Veterans and their families in our thoughts and prayers."

Feature Image: From second right, Governor Kenneth Mapp, former Adjutant General of the Virgin Islands National Guard Ronaldo Rivera, and current Director of Veterans Affairs Patrick Farrell, marching in May during Memorial Day celebrations.

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