

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Federation Of Teachers To Stage Demonstration At Government House In Christiansted

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ST. CROIX -- The St. Croix Federation of Teachers, AFT-Local 1826, has issued a call to action to "all ATF members and stakeholders," asking that they band together for a demonstration at Government House here on Tuesday, to "revive education in the Virgin Islands and get back to the bargaining table," according to a release AFT issued on Friday.

No other information was divulged in the short press release, which ended by stating, "your voice matters, silence is betrayal," quoting Martin Luther King using bold, red text.

It's been a while since AFT staged a demonstration, but it comes as many have been asking when the Federation would take action on teacher's behalf, many of whom have left the territory in search of better opportunities elsewhere -- most of them on the U.S. mainland, where many states pay far better salaries.

In October, a teacher who spoke to The Consortium on the condition of anonymity to speak freely on the matter, said teachers have been mistreated by the Government of the Virgin Islands in regards to their wages, and the money deducted from the paychecks every fortnight. Coupled with the fact that teachers haven't received a raise in the territory for multiple years — even after contracts were negotiated between 2009-2010 — local educators have either [left the territory for better-paying](#) jurisdictions, or quit the field altogether.

And in August, the head of Human Resources at the Department of Education, Nicole Jacobs, [revealed](#) to The Consortium that over 70 teachers had either resigned or retired from the DOE since June. Jacobs also confirmed that the department had been receiving resignations through emails for the entire week beginning August 10, 2015 at an alarming rate.

The Department saw 6 resignations and 20 retirements here, and in the St. Thomas-St. John District, 19 teachers resigned and 26 retired — a total of 71 educators — between June 19 to August 8 of 2015.

"This does not include anything that I've received this week," Jacobs said then, referring to resignations she had been receiving via email of teachers who had already left the territory. "If you don't report back to school you will be terminated; so you don't want that on your record, but it does not negate the fact that [being a teacher] is not a profession that you can just fill the positions."

Left in a crisis following the resignations, DOE moved to import 38 teachers from the Dominican Republic and the Philippines (the breakdown per country was not revealed).

The imported educators were hired to instruct students in physical education, social studies, math and science, according to a DOE press release. The release also made known that there were 120 teachers in the department's current substitute pool (territory-wide) who would be used throughout both districts. And DOE said it was in talks with Education officials in Puerto Rico to begin recruiting teachers from the nearby island to the territory.

The Consortium will cover the event, which begins at 4:00 p.m. and runs until 6:00 p.m.