

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Signs Executive Order Billing Government For Potter's St. Thomas Rental Home

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp has signed [an executive order](#) mandating the Government of the Virgin Islands (G.V.I.) to pay for Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter's dwelling while he's here.

That's according to a press release Government House issued on Thursday, which contends that Mr. Potter -- a resident of St. Thomas with a home here -- has no place to reside in the capacity of his office while on the tourist-heavy island.

The announcement comes one week before the lease for a condo that Mr. Potter has been renting -- and which the government had expended over \$16,000 for before the

lieutenant governor agreed to pay for the rental -- comes to an end on February 27.

The territory, the release says, has historically provided housing for its lieutenant governors with at least six properties assigned for the use of the second in command. However, it added, none of these properties are currently available as residences in the St. Thomas-St. John district, prompting Mr. Mapp to sign the executive order mandating that the G.V.I. pay for Mr. Potter's housing here.

In July of last year, a fury was ignited over the condominium rental, which [Mr. Potter was renting on the government's dime](#) for \$2,800 a month. After the arrangement came to light, Mr. Potter [announced](#) that he would be paying for the condo out of his own pocket.

"What I have decided to do, because it is not my intention to make a 2-bedroom resident for the lieutenant governor to occupy, to make that be a continuous, nonstop, bone of contention and distraction for this administration, for the legislature [and] for the people of the Virgin Islands. What I have decided to do going forward — because I have not spent a day at the condo — I will personally assume the cost for rental for that condo going forward," the lieutenant governor said in July, 2015.

"I will assume that [cost] until, and with the expectation that the executive branch of government, in conjunction with the legislature, come together and once and for all bring some resolution to this situation," he added.

That expense to Mr. Potter has now been erased as a result of the governor's executive order, which, according to the release, was enacted because until now, lieutenant governors serving the past four administrations have resided on St. Croix and stayed in hotels while working on St. Thomas.

But the release did not clarify whether Mr. Potter would pay for the over \$16,000 that the government had illegally expended for the rental property's lease, according to Mr. Mapp's own chief legal counsel, Emile Henderson III. The governor had been advised by Mr. Henderson that such action would be illegal, but the territory's leader had rejected the opinion, holding firm to his belief that the government should foot the bill.

Language in the executive order says funds for Mr. Potter's rental home will be paid from the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and the Department of Property and Procurement will assist with finding the housing -- suggesting that Mr. Potter may vacate the condominium for something else.