

The Virgin Islands Consortium

In Upset, John Yob, Other Newcomers, Unseat Local Mainstays In Republican Caucus

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John Yob

ST. CROIX -- Local stalwarts of the G.O.P. were left reeling on Thursday after John Yob, above, who is currently enthralled in a court battle challenging his residency in the territory (Mr. Yob moved to the islands from the mainland sometime in 2015, and lives in St. John), was the top vote-getter at the territory's Republican caucus on Thursday.

Mr. Yob is a political consultant from Michigan who has written a book about contested political conventions. He is the owner of Michigan-based consulting firm Strategic

National and the former national political director for former Republican presidential candidate Rand Paul. Mr. Yob gained experience working for Mr. Paul, John McCain and Rick Santorum, and made national headlines last September after he was [allegedly punched](#) at a Michigan bar by a Marco Rubio staffer.

At the caucus on Thursday, Mr. Yob won 131 votes, his wife, Erica Yob, won 123 votes and Lindsey Eilon, another newcomer, also won on Thursday, coming in sixth place. However, Ethan Eilon, a political consultant and Mrs. Eilon's husband, lost his bid.

In all, three newcomers, two of whom only recently made the territory their home, unseated local veterans and will travel to the Republican convention in Cleveland, Ohio, as delegates.

But Mr. Yob and his wife are currently in a fight for the legitimacy of their candidacies in the Superior Court, after Mr. Yob filed a lawsuit against Elections Supervisor Caroline Fawkes on Wednesday, following Ms. Fawkes' action to remove the Yobs and Eilons from the [electoral rolls](#). Superior Court Judge Kathleen Mackay granted Mr. Yob a restraining order against the Elections System on Thursday morning, clearing the path for the new residents to run.

John Canegata, a local super delegate and the Republican state chairman, told The Consortium that he received a letter from Ms. Fawkes stating that her move to block Mr. Yob and his wife from the local caucus was based on information the Elections System had gleaned from Mr. Yob's Facebook page, which included details that Mr. Yob moved to St. John on December 28, 2015, and therefore would not be eligible to vote in the Thursday caucus, because the 90-day threshold to be considered a resident in the territory would not arrive until March 27.

In the letter, dated March 4, Ms. Fawkes added that Mr. Yob visited the St. John Elections office early January seeking to register to vote, and told an Elections assistant that he'd arrived on St. John a week earlier. Ms. Fawkes alleged in the letter that Mr. Yob then registered at the St. Thomas Elections office and provided a falsified date that fell within the parameters "to meet the requirement."

In his lawsuit against Ms. Fawkes, Mr. Yob alleges that Chairwoman of the St. Croix Board of Elections, Lilliana Belardo de O'Neal, convinced Ms. Fawkes to block him and his wife from the ballot to clear the path for Mrs. de O'Neal's husband, Humberto O'Neal, to win in the caucus on Thursday. And Mr. Yob, on multiple occasions, has flatly denied any wrongdoing, stating that the filing he made with the court plainly shows that he's met the local requirements to run.

A status hearing on the matter has been scheduled for Monday, and a motion for preliminary injunction will be heard on March 22.

For his part, Mr. Canegata told The Consortium that whatever Thursday's outcome was, he would work with winners to present a united front and continue to work a strategy to grow the Republican party in the territory, a vision he said was only 25 percent complete. On Thursday, over 300 residents participated in the caucus, up from less than 100 in 2012.

Thursday's other winners include Gwen Brady, who won 129 votes, Warren Cole with 123 votes and George Logan with 120 votes.

Correction: March 12, 2016

A previous version of this story, because of a text error, stated that the voting eligibility requisite in the U.S. Virgin Islands was 90 months. That's incorrect. The correct threshold is 90 days. The story has been updated.

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