

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senator Rivera-O'Reilly Says It's Time For Her To Step Down

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Ernice Gilbert **April 06, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, who is on her eighth year in office after serving almost four terms in the Senate, told The Consortium today that she would most likely not run for reelection, an announcement that is sure to surprise many and sadden ardent supporters.

"Every year I give it a lot of thought," Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly said about deciding whether to seek office. "But I think that in the last election the message was loud and clear, and I think that's a sign that people are tired of me, and they would like to see a turnover and I understand that." The veteran senator was locked in a struggle for 7th place with former Senator Alicia Hansen, but [ultimately won that battle](#).

At the height of her career, Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly was a top vote-getter, but she placed last during the 2014 General Election and almost lost her seat to Mrs. Hansen. Putting these factors into perspective, Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly said she got the message loud and clear from constituents in the St. Croix district, and would most likely step aside to allow "new energy" to impact the territory. The vocal senator also called for term limits for senators, and supported a restructuring of the system that would favor districting.

"Sometimes the time comes when you have to pass on the mantle and bring new energy and bring new ideas to the Legislature, and only when one of us steps down or gets moved can that happen," Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly said almost nonchalantly, as if she was tired of being a senator. "And so I am prepared to follow the will of the people, because I basically had to fight to stay in the Senate, and if I can't get the message then I'm in denial. So I got the message loud and clear."

Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly described her time at the senate as "a great and formidable journey," but also called the Legislature "a place where ideas go to die," and as an all-consuming entity that could cause members to lose direction.

"You lose efficacy after a while because you get dumped into the pile with everybody else and anything you do that's effective is lost," she said. "The job can make you bitter and it's a place where you ultimately go to lose your soul. You lose your spirit; it destroys your spirit."

She continued: "You don't come in the middle then come in at the top, then come in at the bottom for no reason. We are like stocks in the stock market: we go up and down and are subject to volatility -- but I like to be seen and I like to be heard."

The senator has had major clashes in the Senate with other lawmakers, but she also has a record of getting legislation passed. And the conversation that Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly had with The Consortium today took place during an open house event for [My Brother's Workshop](#), a nonprofit organization created to help at-risk youth get back on track. The facility that today's event was being held in once belonged to the Department of Human Services, but it was later turned over to My Brother's Workshop in part because of incessant support from Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly.

Even so, the senator insists that her time is up, and although she will announce her final decision before the deadline of May 17, her mind, she says, is just about made up.

"I don't like to be a follower and I don't like to be a believer. I don't mold easily, and the art of compromise isn't something I learned early on," she said.

During a recent Senate session Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly, although referring [specifically to the marijuana and hemp debate](#), summed up her mood succinctly: "The fire in the belly, the desire to be a trailblazer to bring the house down, to inspire, to move people from one position to another, it's gone. It's been gone," she admitted.