

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Line-Item Vetoes Portion Of Bill Barring Purchase Of Limousines

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ST. THOMAS -- Intent on purchasing new "ceremonial vehicles" for the Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor -- [as he'd requested last August](#) -- Governor Kenneth Mapp line-item vetoed a portion of the Emergency Vehicles bill that sought to prevent the executive branch from spending upwards \$300,000 on three limousines: one for the governor on each island, and one for the lieutenant governor.

On March 30, Senator Janette Millin Young offered amendment No. 31-944 to bill No. 31-0224, which added a section that said, "Nothing in this Act is intended to authorize the purchase of official or ceremonial vehicles for the offices of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. The commissioner of the Department of Property and

Procurement is prohibited from using the monies authorized in this Act to purchase ceremonial or official vehicles for the offices of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor.”

But Mr. Mapp, in his transmittal letter to Senate President Neville James on recent actions taken on the Emergency Vehicles bill and other measures, contended that the addition of the language would prohibit not only the governor and lieutenant governor offices from purchasing the ceremonial vehicles, it would also bar other departments tied to the aforementioned offices from purchasing much-needed transportation.

The governor then reminded senators of the many offices connected to the Office of the Governor: Office of Veterans' Affairs, the Law Enforcement Planning Commission, the VI Energy Office, the Division of Personnel, the Office of Management & Budget, the Bureau of Information Technology, the Office of the Tax Assessor, the Division of Corporations and Trademarks, the Division of Banking & Insurance, the Division of Tax Collector, the Division of the Recorder of Deeds, the Division of Property Appraisers, the Office of the Cadastral. According to Mr. Mapp, all these offices would be hamstrung by the move.

But the amendment included language specific to the purchase of "ceremonial" or "official" vehicles for the offices of the governor and lieutenant governor. Furthermore, it did not mention the prohibition of any office that may be connected to Mapp or Potter's. The governor added that without the line-item veto, he would be forced to ask the Legislature to appropriate monies from the general fund to provide the necessary transportation for the employees within these units to perform their duties.

It remains to be seen whether senators will override the governor's veto and include additional language to clarify further that the block on buying "ceremonial" or "official" vehicles is specific to the offices of the governor and lieutenant governor.

Senators had faced immense backlash from residents who felt that it was legislators responsibility to control the spending of the executive branch. Senator Kurt Vialet in particular, after amending the Emergency Vehicles bill with language that left an open-ended nature to the measure, later issued a statement placing the onus of Mr. Mapp.

“During the past few weeks numerous departments have requested vehicles to include D.O.E. (Department of Education), Y.R.C. (Youth Rehabilitation Center) and The Taxicab Commission. The language allows the Government of the Virgin Islands to have flexibility to meet the needs of the people,” Mr. Vialet wrote. “I do agree that ceremonial cars should not be purchased and hope that Governor Mapp listens to the cry of the people. However, that is a decision that he must make and the electorate need to effectively let him know their concerns.”

Last August, the governor made his case for requesting funding for the new vehicles, explaining that the ones currently in use were in constant need of repair and that it would be a better financial decision to purchase new ones altogether.

“The Governor’s official vehicles were purchased back in 2005; they are in constant need of repair and are an embarrassment to the territory,” Mr. Mapp said. “During my inauguration on January 5, my official vehicle collapsed at Emancipation Garden and I had to be transported to the next inaugural event via police transport. I suppose this was symbolic of the state of the government I was inheriting. Currently the Lieutenant

Governor travels via police vehicles because he has no functioning official vehicle.”

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