

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett Defeats Russell In Primary; Sails To General Election

Politics / **Published On August 06, 2016 11:40 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **August 06, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett [easily defeated](#) contender Ronald Russell, former senator and practicing attorney who mounted a campaign against Ms. Plaskett hoping to unseat the freshman congresswoman in today's primary election.

But Mr. Russell's effort was no match to Ms. Plaskett's campaign machine, having defeated universally loved former senator Shawn-Michael Malone in 2014, stunning observers, and having foot soldiers and offices on all three islands; which helped sideline Mr. Russell's limited resources and nimble team. With nearly all precincts reporting, Ms. Plaskett's lead over Mr. Russell is currently 3,275 to 539, or 85.46 percent of all votes.

"I just want to say I'm humbled and grateful to the people of the Virgin Islands that showed me in a strong manner that they have faith in the work that I've done," Ms. Plaskett told The Consortium via telephone following her win. The congresswoman made a point of highlighting what she said were negative ads hurled at her by Mr. Russell. "My opponent spent tens of thousands of dollars in attack ads against me; I've only ran positive ads highlighting issues of interest to the people of the Virgin Islands. I'm proud of my campaign," she said.

Mr. Russell had expected to win today.

"I think that people understand that the delegate election is for a leadership role, and I think you could contrast my leadership skills with Delegate Plaskett's and what I've accomplished. And I don't think there's comparison," Mr. Russell told The Consortium this afternoon outside the Ricardo Richards Elementary School, which serves as a polling place. "But people have an opportunity to make their choices."

Today's primary election turnout was very low, a result Mr. Russell blamed on the new electioneering law -- passed by the Legislature in April -- which prohibits electioneering within 200 feet of polling stations.

Asked if he would serve again if he lost today's election, Mr. Russell said, "I will cross that bridge when I arrive to it."

Correction: August 6, 2016

A previous version of this story, because of a formatting error, included a premature total of the vote count. We have updated the story to reflect the correct information.