

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Running Uncontested, John Canegata Reelected Chairman Of Fractured Republican Party

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John Canegata

ST. CROIX -- A faction of the fractious local Republican Party led by Chairman John Canegata held its caucus on Saturday, with the results returning an unsurprising win for Mr. Canegata as state chairman, as he ran uncontested.

The effort was the party's third this year, (fourth if the presidential caucus of March 10 is counted) between the two factions, and it remains to be seen whether it would be the caucus considered legitimate in a year the local Republicans have run their party amok.

"A new record was set tonight with this being the highest turnout ever for a party-run leadership election," Mr. Canegata said in a press release issued late Saturday following the results. "Republicans from St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas participated in the Republican Territorial Caucus, which was held in strict accordance with national party rules to address the legal uncertainty created after the Democrat-controlled Joint Board of Elections refused to conduct a full primary election."

But in a press release issued Monday by well-known Republican superdelegate, ubiquitous radio personality and former local senator, Holland Redfield -- who refused to attend the Republican Party's national convention in protest of Donald Trump -- urged local Republicans to ignore Saturday's caucus.

"I urge all Republicans in the Virgin Islands to boycott this illegal 'Canegata Caucus' and instead focus on registering more Republicans to vote who can participate in the Republican Party in the future", said Mr. Redfield. "The 'Canegata Caucus' on August 13th is not a caucus of Republicans in the Virgin Islands, but rather a meeting of his cohorts. The violations of the RNC Agreement are numerous and are presently being documented for submission."

On May 28 at the Windward Passage in St. Thomas, there was a call to convention by the party's opposing faction, to include Mr. Redfield, James Oliver, Herbert Schoenbohm, Warren B. Cole and others. There, they elected 28 members to the Territorial Committee and replaced Mr. Canegata as chairman of the party with Mr. Cole.

None of the aforementioned appeared on the ballot in Saturday's caucus.

Also reelected during yesterday's caucus according to results provided by the caucus committee, were Lilliana Belardo de O'Neal as national committeewoman and Jevon Williams as national committeeman, according to results provided in a press release. Thirty-eight members of the Territorial Committee -- 19 from St. Croix, 19 from St. Thomas-St. John -- were also elected.

"I am deeply honored to have been re-elected chairman for a third time by Republicans across the Virgin Islands. For the first time in over 20 years, the Republican Party is a real political party focused on defeating Democrats," Mr. Canegata added.

According to a party release, the results would be certified on Tuesday during a meeting held by what has been dubbed the independent caucus committee.

Correction: August 14, 2016

A previous version of this story stated that Saturday's caucus results were provided by John Canegata, when they were provided by the caucus committee in a press release. We've updated the story.