The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Heaps Praise On Senators Who Supported Sin Tax Bill, Calling Vote 'Good Judgement'

VIC News / **Published On February 17, 2017 10:37 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert February 17, 2017

ST. THOMAS -- Following the sin tax bill's successful passage in the Committee on Finance on Wednesday, with Democrats Kurt Vialet, Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, Neville James, Marvin Blyden and Brian Smith supporting the measure, Governor Kenneth Mapp has heaped praise on the lawmakers for supporting the measure, calling their action "good judgement."

The sin tax bill, formally named the Virgin Islands Revenue Enhancement and Economic Recovery Act, seeks to either introduce or raise taxes on rum, beer, tobacco products and sugary drinks (Coke, Sprite, etc.) as well as internet purchases and timeshare unit owners. The measure is ardently opposed by the business community, who contend that their operations would be adversely affected upon the bill's passage.

And it is opposed by many residents who have come to despise government inaction on cutting costs, while placing the burden on an already overtaxed populace.

"Mapp and other high-level officials should take a pay cut," wrote Niko Qaddadeh on The Consortium's Facebook platform. "Mapp makes more than larger states on the mainland. If many employees are expected to work for free or take pay cuts then so should he, instead of being greedy. Shameful and sad."

Many have also lost confidence in the leaders' ability or willingness to listen to their constituents.

"Protest does nothing!!! Voting on a referendum does nothing!!! All the different ideas and solutions offered yesterday and previous hearing given no consideration. All sell outs. Pennies add up does make a difference. Tax us so [you] could borrow money to mismanage some more. We are really doomed, smh," wrote Suzette Aubain-Descartes.

For Mr. Mapp, however, the vote represented a positive step on the path towards stabilizing the territory's fiscal health.

“Change takes courage and I thank the courageous leaders that supported these measures,” Mr. Mapp said in a release issued Thursday. “While we are currently experiencing some serious challenges, I am very encouraged by the effort and good judgement of senators willing to move forward. This is truly an important step toward improving Virgin Islands financial stability for the long term.”

© Viconsortium 2026