The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Is Said To Have Promoted Territory As Business Friendly Destination While In D.C.

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Governor Kenneth Mapp is said to have promoted the U.S. Virgin Islands as a U.S. territory that offers businesses inviting tax breaks, and encouraged both public and private sector investments during his current visit to Washington for the National Governors Association (NGA) Winter Meeting, where he and other governors were to meet with President Donald Trump, members of Congress and business leaders, Government House announced on Monday.

Speaking with White House Correspondent April Ryan at American Urban Radio Networks (AURN), Mr. Mapp noted that Mr. Trump has encouraged businesses to come back to do work and invest in America, and reminded Mr. Ryan's listeners that the territory offers tremendous corporate tax advantages, according to Government House.

“The U.S. Virgin Islands is an excellent place for businesses to invest given the wonderful tax climate that the U.S. Congress has allowed us to use to encourage American companies to do business there,” Mr. Mapp said.

As the territory prepares to officially commemorate its 100th anniversary under the U.S. flag, the governor believes it is important for the new president to understand the historic importance of the event and its impact on the American citizens living in the USVI, Government House said. Mr. Mapp, according to the release, also wants Mr. Trump to recognize that the territory deserves funding from the infrastructure initiatives that the new administration puts forth.

“How can we get a reasonable share of the Highway Trust Fund so that the road system in the Virgin Islands could be taken care of?” the governor questioned, explaining that investing in a solid, safe and modern infrastructure is critical for the nearly three million Americans from the U.S. mainland who visit St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas each year as well as more than 100,000 American citizens living in the territory.

The release said the governor disliked announcing potential cuts throughout government, but it was a necessary decision in light of the territory's current financial crisis. Mr. Mapp said the problem must be tackled with all hands on deck -- including sacrifices from the business community, which has vehemently opposed the sin taxes.

“No one likes budget cuts or raising taxes. And no chief executive wants to request that the Legislature approve these crucial measures, but we must. Leadership means making some very difficult but necessary decisions. I ask the business community, our elected officials, and our citizens to join me so we can do this together. We must share responsibility for stabilizing our territory’s finances after years of neglect, to ensure a future we can all be proud of,” Mr. Mapp said, referring to the Virgin Islands Revenue Enhancement and Economic Recovery Act, often called the sin tax measure, and other recent fiscal bills.

Democratic, Republican and Independent governors are currently gathering in Washington, D.C., for one of their two annual meetings. In addition to policy discussions on education, infrastructure, childhood hunger and cybersecurity, governors were to meet with Mr. Trump, Vice President mike Pence and various cabinet secretaries. They will also go to Capitol Hill on today to hold briefings with leaders in Congress on health care reform, tax reform and cybersecurity. At this weekend’s talks, there will be a record number of attendees, including at least 46 governors.

The event ends today, but Mr. Mapp won't return until Wednesday.