

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senators Seek Legal Counsel's Opinion On Special Election As Certification Remains In Limbo

Politics / **Published On April 21, 2017 10:24 AM /**

Staff **April 21, 2017**



ST. THOMAS -- Three senators out of the St. Thomas-St John District on Thursday requested a legislative legal opinion to determine what action the Legislature should take if the Board of Elections does not certify the results of the 2017 Special Election. This, they say, is critical to addressing representation between the districts.

The final votes were counted on Thursday (there was a total of 4,540 votes), and saw Janelle Sarauw, above, maintaining her lead over former Senator Justin Harrigan, Sr., by 200 votes. But the St. Thomas Board of Elections has yet to certify the results.

Senators Tregenza A. Roach, Janette Millin Young and Dwayne DeGraff said that they continue to be concerned regarding what they described as the inequality of representation in their district. The senators said that challenges to the results of both the general and special elections may cause this matter to be drawn out indefinitely.

As members of the Senate's Minority Coalition, the senators had earlier appealed to the body to address the matter prior to the special election held in April. Unfortunately, their pleas fell on deaf ears, despite the fact that they were supported in their position by the Legislature's legal counsel.

"I really believe that the Legislature missed an opportunity to provide closure in this matter early on. The legal counsel's opinion made it clear that we were required to act, and as provided in the Organic Act, we would have had the opportunity to make the final decision on whether or not Senator-Elect Kevin Rodriguez would be seated as a member of the body," Mr. Roach said.

He added that every court has suggested that the Legislature had the authority to intervene and each written opinion references the body's failure to act.

Mrs. Millin Young said that timely resolution to this matter is critical because it affects the body's ability to function consistent with its responsibilities set out in the Organic Act.

"We have requested the legal counsel's input because we want to be assured that we have solid legal advice going forward," she said. "But what we cannot, and should not do, is to sit around waiting for someone else to resolve this issue. Leaders must lead."