

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Promotes Territory As 'Exciting' Destination On National TV With Roland Martin

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Political status, the minimum wage, economic opportunities and St. Croix's burgeoning culinary scene were among the topics Governor Kenneth Mapp addressed during his live national television appearance Wednesday, according to a release issued by Government House on Wednesday.

Mr. Mapp was a guest on host Roland Martin's morning show, News One Now, a one-hour weekday news program on the TV ONE network airing in 57 million households nationwide and available as an audio simulcast online. Mr. Martin is well known as a former CNN contributor and as a senior analyst for the Tom Joyner Morning Show.

Government House says Mr. Martin and his panelists were impressed with the ability of the territory to increase its minimum wage – a battle that is being fought in cities and states across the U.S. The governor shared credit with the Virgin Islands Legislature for advancing this issue and said it was critical to bring residents closer to a living wage. Mr. Mapp [signed a bill into law last year](#) that increased the USVI's minimum wage from \$7.25 per hour to \$9.50 beginning this month – with another increase scheduled for next year – bringing private sector salaries to a minimum of \$10.50 per hour. It is estimated that 15,000 residents in the territory will directly benefit from the increase in pay. The governor is also responsible for raising the salaries of thousands of VI Government employees.

“You can’t have people living in the margins,” he said. “You have got to work to bring the quality of life of workers in the territory up.”

The governor explained the U.S. Virgin Islands’ status as an unincorporated jurisdiction of the United States and highlighted the contributions of Virgin Islanders serving in the military, despite being unable to vote in Presidential elections.

“We are subject to the call of the president for conflicts,” he said. “We have a robust enrollment of Virgin Islanders in the Armed Forces.”

The governor indicated that more than 40,000 Virgin Islanders live in the U.S. mainland and that Virgin Islanders have deep family ties throughout the 50 states.

“Most African Americans’ ancestors who live on the mainland came through the Caribbean in the slave trade,” he said. “We are very much connected.”

Mr. Mapp invited show panelists and viewers to visit the USVI and noted the nonstop flights to the USVI available from Washington, D.C., Houston and many other cities.

“It’s just an exciting place to be,” he said. “We are at a crossroads where our economy is growing. We are creating more opportunity for our people and we want them to get in business.”

The governor highlighted St. Croix’s reputation as a destination for food lovers and said the big island was “driving our culinary industry” with young black men playing a leading role as chefs and entrepreneurs.

“It’s just an exciting time to be in the Virgin Islands,” he said.