

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senate Majority Rebukes St. Thomas District Democratic Party, Says Members Won't Be Intimidated

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ST. THOMAS -- Senate Democrats who make up the Majority Caucus in the 32nd Legislature, unitedly rebuked the St. Thomas District Democratic Party and its chair Edgar Phillips on Thursday afternoon, following a release issued by the party on Wednesday and published on The Consortium today, where Senate Democrats [were given an ultimatum](#): seat Kevin Rodriguez or leave the party.

Those fighting words elicited a swift response from the majority, whose members said they would not be intimidated by "idle threats."

"The caucus made it clear that it intends to remain focused on the issue at hand and that its members will fulfill their duties with the utmost respect, professionalism, and fairness," reads the Majority Caucus release.

The back and forth puts on display the fractured nature of the Democratic Party in the Virgin Islands, whose members oftentimes buck party narratives and stances in pursuit of their own interests.

The caucus expressed strong commitment to the principles of the Democratic Party, but said that Mr. Phillips's position does absolutely no good for anyone -- not Mr. Rodriquez, the party, or the electorate. The caucus further emphasized that the members of the electorate, particularly those in the St. Thomas/St. John District, are the ones being disenfranchised.

"We shall resolve this issue as soon as possible," the statement continued. "There is a process that must be followed and we will do so diligently and within the requirements of the law, as well as the rules of the first branch of government."

Senate Majority Leader Neville James stated, "While there are many points of view that have been expressed regarding this matter, at no time was the Caucus trying to shun away from its responsibilities. From day one this matter has been in the hands of the court, an equal branch of government, as such it would have been improper to attempt to wrestle it out of their hands. We will take the high road and dispense of this matter in full view of the public in the appropriate time and fashion."

The party's release was sharp in its rebuke and clear in its expectation from Senate Democrats.

"There should be no debate regarding his qualifications to be seated as a senator," reads the release. "Thereafter there are specific charges that should be brought against him as a senator, then those written charges which affect his qualifications shall be served on him so he can be in a position to defend.

"If our Democratic senators cannot adhere to such a process, then they should discontinue being Democratic senators," it said.

Feature Image: Neville James, Majority Caucus leader. (Credit: Legislature)