

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Announces 'VI Hurricane and Resiliency Advisory Group', Created To Guide Recovery Of USVI

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp on Monday announced the creation of an expert advisory committee to help guide reconstruction and resiliency efforts in the U.S. Virgin Islands in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The VI Hurricane and Resiliency Advisory Group, under the Office of the Governor, includes local officials and community members, as well as business and environmental experts, and thought leaders from around the United States.

These individuals will determine, among other things, how the over \$1.4 million collected through [USVI recovery](#) to aid with relief efforts, will be spent.

Under the governor's direction, the group will perform a quantitative assessment of the damage from Hurricanes Irma and Maria and outline risks facing the USVI from potential future natural hazards looking ahead 30 years, including how those risks may evolve with climate change, the governor said. They will also set the course for the USVI's long-term security and economic recovery, with a special focus on making the territory's critical infrastructure, homes, and businesses more resilient to future storms and other natural disasters, the governor added.

The VI Hurricane and Resiliency Advisory Group will also focus on:

- The ongoing planning, coordination and implementation of USVI response and recovery efforts across the human services, infrastructure, housing and economic sectors.
- The development of a centralized process to attract, coordinate and leverage federal, private-sector and philanthropic funding and volunteer efforts.
- The development and implementation of a coordinated economic recovery plan, with a particular focus on the tourism industry and all related services.
- Tracking and monitoring distribution and spending of federal disaster assistance funding and private donations, including the Community Fund for the Virgin Islands, administered by the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands.
- The near- and long-term actions needed to increase the USVI's resilience from natural hazards, including policy recommendations and guidelines and prioritization for infrastructure investments.

"We're bringing together experts from many disciplines to help the U.S. Virgin Islands build back as fast and smart as possible to enhance the long-term resiliency and economic health of our islands, while protecting our communities from future storms," Mr. Mapp said.

"The members of the VI Hurricane and Resiliency Advisory Group care deeply about our Territory and will work hard alongside us to rebuild stronger and better than ever before," the governor added. "I am tremendously appreciative and encouraged by the level of assistance and cooperation we have received."

Clifford Graham, President and CEO of the West Indian Company (WICO) port facilities and Havensight Mall on St. Thomas, will serve as chairman of the group. Mr. Graham previously served two terms as a senator in the Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands overseeing the Finance and Rules Committees and was the long-time Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority.

The VI Hurricane and Resiliency Advisory Group also includes:

Dr. Jerome M. Adams – United States Surgeon General. Dr. Adams is an anesthesiologist and a vice admiral in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. On September 5, 2017, he was sworn in by Vice President Mike Pence as the 20th Surgeon General of the United States. Prior to his appointment as Surgeon General, Dr. Adams served as the Indiana State Health Commissioner. He also holds a Masters in Public Health from the University of California, Berkeley.

Elizabeth Armstrong – General Manager of the Buccaneer Hotel on St. Croix, which her family has owned and operated since 1947. Ms. Armstrong led a successful \$25 million capital renovation of every aspect of the Buccaneer resort, while maintaining its authenticity and cultural heritage. She also serves as chairwoman of the Governing Board of the V.I. Water and Power Authority, Vice Chair of the Virgin Islands Next Generation Network, and is a past president of the St. Croix Hotel and Tourism Association.

Valdamier Collens – Commissioner for the USVI Department of Finance and Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Public Finance Authority, Mr. Collens formerly served as the Chief Financial Officer for the Virgin Islands Port Authority and as Assistant Commissioner for the Department of Finance.

Vivek Daswani – President and Owner of Royal Caribbean. Mr. Daswani has worked to develop and expand his family's retail operations in the U.S. Virgin Islands for the past 20 years and is an integral part of the local business community and tourism industry. He has served on the boards of the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands and the V.I. Institute of the Performing Arts.

Judith Enck – Visiting Scholar at Pace University Elisabeth Haub School of Law. Ms. Enck brings more than 37 years of experience in the environmental field, most recently as a former EPA Region 2 Administrator, which includes New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and seven tribal nations. Prior to her role at the EPA, Ms. Enck served as the New York State Deputy Secretary for the Environment.

Andrew Farkas – Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Island Capital Group, a real estate and merchant banking firm with significant interests in the USVI. Mr. Farkas was previously Chairman and CEO of Insignia Financial Group, a global real estate services company. He is an avid philanthropist and sailor.

Eugene Farrell – Chief of Staff to Governor Kenneth Mapp. Prior to assuming his current position, Mr. Farrell served as the governor's Senior Policy Advisor for Justice, Law Enforcement, Security and Emergency Operations. Mr. Farrell has more than 30 years of management and leadership experience in the U.S. Armed Forces, Civilian Emergency Response System and as a business owner, Government House said. He currently serves as a board member on the Virgin Islands Economic Development Commission.

Novelle E. Francis, Jr. – Senator, Legislature of the Virgin Islands. Mr. Francis is serving his second term representing the St. Croix district. He is a former Chair of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety and presently chairs the Committee on Rules and Judiciary. Mr. Francis has extensive experience in emergency management and response, having served 25 years in the Virgin Islands Police Department, where he attained the rank of Commissioner. He was heavily involved in updating the territory's emergency response plan after Hurricane Marilyn and remains

committed to ensuring the improvement of the Virgin Islands' disaster management policies and procedures.

Daryl Griffith – Acting Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer for the V.I. Housing Finance Authority. Mr. Griffith works to increase access to housing and community development opportunities throughout the USVI. Prior to his work with the Housing Finance Authority, Mr. Griffith was a Vice President and Commercial Relationship Manager with Sun Trust Bank, where he worked with business owners to access capital and grow their companies.

Anthony Hurley – Associate Managing Director with Witt O'Briens, an emergency and security risk management firm. Mr. Hurley brings 37 years in the utility industry, working for five electric utilities across three states. Mr. Hurley has an extensive background in emergency management and hurricane recovery, having supported emergency responses to Hurricanes Isabel, Francis, Ivan, Katrina, Rita, Irene, Sandy, Harvey, and now Irma and Maria.

Hans Lawaetz – President of Annaly Farms, Inc. Mr. Lawaetz is a St. Croix businessman and cattle farmer. He served as a U.S. Air Force Captain after graduating from Cornell University. Mr. Lawaetz has served on the boards of the V.I. Conservation District, Good Hope School, St. Croix Landmark Society, the Virgin Islands Olympic Committee and the 2017 V.I. Transfer Centennial Commission. He is currently President of the St. Croix Friends of Denmark Society.

John McInnis III – Director of the Kenny Chesney's Love for Love City Foundation and CEO of McInnis Industries, a construction company his family founded in 1970 that has grown to more than \$1 billion. Mr. McInnis and his company have been instrumental in several national emergency cleanup operations including Hurricanes Ivan, Katrina, and the BP Horizon oil spill. The McInnis Family is also the majority owner in one of the world's most famous road house beach bars, The Flora-Bama, on the Alabama/Florida stat line. The bar has been featured in songs by Jimmy Buffet and Kenny Chesney.

Beverly Nicholson-Doty – Commissioner of Tourism for the USVI. Mrs. Nicholson-Doty oversees the advertising and marketing strategy for the entire USVI, as well as its national and international tourism-related efforts and product development. Raised on St. Thomas, in 2004 she was appointed President of the USVI Hotel & Tourism Association. She has also served as Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Council of Ministers and Commissioners.

Basil Ottley – Director of Policy for the Office of Insular Affairs within the U.S. Department of Interior. Mr. Ottley coordinates federal policies for the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands while also overseeing U.S. federal assistance provided to Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau. Before joining Interior, he was elected to the 27th Virgin Islands Legislature in November 2006.

Geri Purvis – Individual Assistance Branch Director Geri Purvis has worked with FEMA for nearly 15 years and has responded to more than 25 disaster operations throughout her time serving in the field of emergency management. She has worked in Individual Assistance, Fraud Investigation and External Affairs. She has recently responded to Hurricane Sandy, Hurricane Irene and several disasters across the United States as a member of the Region II Incident Management Assistance Team. Ms. Purvis represents the areas of Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services

Marjorie Roberts – Head of Marjorie Rawls Roberts, P.C., a law firm specializing in tax, corporate/securities, estate planning, and business law. Her practice focuses on representing major U.S. and international companies seeking to do business in the USVI. She formerly served as Technical Advisor and Chief Counsel to the USVI Bureau of Internal Revenue, as well as General Counsel, Vice President, and Director for Globalvest Management Company, LP, a St. Thomas-based investment company.

Harriet Tregoning – Immediate past Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of Community Planning and Development at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. At HUD, Ms. Tregoning focused on helping states and cities across the country build a strong foundation for resilience in the face of a changing climate. Ms. Tregoning was previously Director of the District of Columbia Office of Planning and served as Director of Development, Community and Environment at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Feature Image: Governor Kenneth Mapp announces the appointment of Clifford Graham (right) as Chairman of the VI Hurricane and Resiliency Advisory Group during a press conference on Monday. Graham is the President and CEO of the West Indian Company Limited (WICO). (Credit: Government House)