

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Alicia Barnes, Former D.P.N.R. Commissioner, Announces Senate Run

Politics / **Published On January 22, 2018 12:47 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **January 22, 2018**



ST. CROIX -- Alicia Barnes, above, said on Saturday that she would seek a Senate seat in this year's election cycle, making her announcement the most formidable yet in this year's pool of newcomers on St. Croix.

Ms. Barnes, who is running as a Democrat, is well-known in the Virgin Islands, having served in many important capacities, including commissioner of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources during the de Jongh administration. She has also served as the director of the V.I. Energy Office and assistant CEO of the Economic Development Authority, among other important roles.

Ms. Barnes said her decision to seek elected office came after Hurricane Maria wrecked many parts of St. Croix. She mentioned her knowledge and skills in areas that are specific to the territory's recovery, which she said will be utilized if elected. "Being familiar with government, emergency response, emergency planning, the issues with banking and insurance, my level frustration [grew], and I said, you know what, instead of continuously complaining, I need to get back involved directly," she told The Consortium following the [Women's March event](#) held on St. Croix at Fort Christianvaern.

Ms. Barnes said she has remained involved with nonprofit work as well as mentoring, "But I really made a conscious and earnest decision to get back engaged in actual political process after Maria and all of the experiences coming out of it."

The number of candidates running for Senate in both districts continue to grow, a sign that these candidates sense the incumbents may be weak. On St. Croix, former senator Kenneth Gittens has rejoined the race, along with newcomers Javan James, Ophelia Jackson and Ricky Dean Andrews.

Asked how she intends to stand out if elected, Ms. Barnes said standing out was not on her priority list. "What's a priority of mine is ensuring that the Legislature stands out as the first branch of government, in that the Legislature reaffirms its position as the entity that sets the policy for government, controls the purse strings and enacts laws that would move the Virgin Islands forward and create an atmosphere for growth."

The areas that Ms. Barnes said she would work to improve if elected include healthcare reform, with one idea being partnering with off-island service providers that would see companies opening facilities in the territory, and thereby keeping the circulation of health-related dollars in the local economy. Ms. Barnes said mental health is also one of her top priorities: "I think it is an indictment on an entire community when our elderly and those that are mentally challenged are suffering on the levels that they are."

"And we need to begin the dialogue with G.E.R.S.; we may not be able to solve it overnight, but we need to begin the dialogue in earnest," she added. The candidate also mentioned education along with workforce development, "where we engage the Department of Education, vocational education, the Economic Development Authority and look at what the real needs are in our community. Where we are, where we want to go, and how do we prepare our students to begin to be employed and to be contributing members of society," she concluded.