

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sea Change Coming To Senate With Five Seats Up For Grabs

Politics / **Published On May 03, 2018 11:41 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **May 03, 2018**



A sea change is coming to the Legislature in November, as five senators are confirmed not to be seeking reelection this election cycle, making room for a new breed of lawmakers who will lead the territory for better or worse.

Senator Janette Millin Young won't seek reelection as a senator; The Consortium can confirm that Ms. Millin Young will run for governor with Edgar Bengoa, a well-known Crucian currently serving as president of the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce.

Senator Tregenza Roach is running as lieutenant governor with Albert Bryan; Senator Samuel Sanes is running at lieutenant governor with Allison Petrus; Senator Alicia

Hansen is running as lieutenant governor with Adlah Donastorg, and Senator Positive Nelson is running for governor as an independent candidate.

Neville James, long rumored not to be seeking reelection, confirmed to The Consortium on Wednesday that he is indeed running for a seat in the 33rd Legislation. But questions remain about Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, who has a track record of [announcing her intentions not to run](#), but winds up seeking reelection nonetheless.

Their departure leaves five seats up for grabs for the 33rd Legislature -- currently two in St. Thomas and three in St. Croix. In St. Croix, there are no less than ten newcomers seeking one of the three seats, including former Senator Kenneth Gittens.

The number of open seats has concerned some political observers who worry that the newcomers may lack the institutional know-how that is required to be effective. It was one of the reasons Mr. James decided to seek reelection. He told The Consortium that part of his mission moving forward is to clear a path for young leaders -- whether they're part of the Majority or Minority caucus. Mr. James said the last four years in the Senate has seen strong leadership from the St. Croix District, whose senators have been leading the Majority's agenda -- among them Senators Kurt Vialet, Novelle Francis and Mr. James.

What the change means for the territory moving forward

With five newcomers bound for the Senate, new ideas will definitely flourish. But real change in course would depend on how these new lawmakers work with the veterans, who will most likely still lead the agenda. It will also depend on whether there is a change at the executive level. If Governor Kenneth Mapp is reelected in November, expect him to continue pushing his current agenda, which the governor has said on multiple occasions is to continue maximizing federal dollars pouring into the territory as a result of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Mr. Mapp has said these new dollars will facilitate the reconstruction of the territory's infrastructure, including roads, electric systems, as well as the construction of new schools and other public facilities.

As for the gubernatorial race, there are now 9 teams vying to lead the territory come January, 2019. They include Soraya Diase Coffelt, who has yet to announce a running mate; the Moletto-Frederick team; Warren Mosler, who [recently announced Ray Fonseca](#) as his lieutenant governor pick; Donastorg and Alicia Hansen; Petrus and Sanes; Bryan and Roach, Dawson and James, Positive Nelson (Mr. Nelson hasn't announced an LT choice); and Millin Young and Bengoa.

The independent teams are Millin Young-Bengoa, Donastorg-Hansen, Mosler-Fonseca, Moletto-Frederick, Positive Nelson and Soraya Diase Coffelt. The Democrats -- Petrus-Sanes, Bryan-Roach and Dawson-James will face off during the Democratic primary election on August 4.