

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Nelson, Unable To Find Running Mate, Bows Out Of Race

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ST. CROIX -- Senator Positive Nelson's event at the Botanical Gardens Bodine Pavilion in St. George this afternoon had all the trappings of a major announcement. Mr. Nelson [had announced in December his bid](#) for governor, stating, "I am willing to be your next governor if you're tired of this one." He was referring to Governor Kenneth Mapp.

Hors d'oeuvres were placed on tables that were leaned to a side wall, and supporters sat and listened as Mr. Nelson spoke for over an hour. Deep into his speech, Mr. Nelson had yet to announce a running mate, and some attendees were confused as to the purpose of the event.

But after speaking at length about his agenda, including education, marijuana, Limetree Bay and his infrastructure plan, Mr. Nelson finally made the announcement: "Friends, family, Virgin Islands territory, I'm not going to tell you that what I'm about to say is easy; it's not. It's not because I feel like I'm the people's chance for good government. I feel like I'm the most prepared and qualified... And unfortunately at this time, about 3:06 p.m. on Monday, May 7, I don't have somebody that I can tell you is my running mate," Mr. Nelson said.

He added: "I have not been hiding from you because I want to play games. I'm not like that; you know that. It's because there's nobody to make that full commitment."

Barring the longshot of a major write-in effort to get Mr. Nelson elected in November, the senator's political journey, at least for now, will end this year. Asked if he would seek office next election cycle, the senator said if the people of the territory showed interest in electing him, he would run again.

And as for his signature agenda of legalized marijuana -- including medicinal and recreational use -- with Mr. Nelson out of the Senate come November, that effort has been left to languish with a medical marijuana bill all but stuck in the Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services, chaired by Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, who has been staunchly opposed to all things marijuana.

Mr. Nelson said there were some prospects who were on board, but after speaking with family, friends and associates, their minds changed. "But I'm not blaming anybody," he said. "At this time, today, I don't have a running mate," he repeated, as the small audience sat in silence.

A supporter of Mr. Nelson's, so hurt by what she had heard, got up and left, telling this reporter that she attended the event in hopes of learning who Mr. Nelson's running mate would be.

With the deadline to file being Tuesday at 6:00 p.m., Mr. Nelson said his team had everything needed to run a successful campaign: organization and funding, but not a running mate. "It's tough," Mr. Nelson admitted as he appeared to become emotional. He said if he were to shed a tear while making the unexpected announcement, it would not be because he was not able to run, but because he believed that the territory's only real chance would be with him at the helm.

"People say, 'Well, why now?' Because now is all we have, and what we do now with these monies that we are about to get, if we don't invest it in proper infrastructure, people, things will not be good," he concluded.