

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Letter To The Editor | Magistrate Camacho, Please Rule On My 16-Month-Old Civil Case

Opinion / **Published On June 06, 2018 01:17 PM /**

Staff **June 06, 2018**



I am writing this letter after 16 and a half months of waiting for a ruling on a civil case presented on January 24, 2017 before Magistrate Miguel Camacho in St. Croix. I went from patiently waiting to being very frustrated after doing everything I could have possibly done for a ruling and still not receiving one.

In November 2016, I traveled from the mainland to St. Croix to present a civil case on November 22, 2016 in the Small Claims Court before Magistrate Camacho. I presented my case with all the evidence to support it: invoices, cancelled checks, receipts, pictures, etc. Much to my surprise, a continuance hearing was scheduled for January 24, 2017. I was flabbergasted. I had everything to support my case. Why couldn't Magistrate

Camacho make a ruling?

Since I could not travel back to St. Croix for the continuance hearing on January 24, 2017, I participated by way of conference call. I was asked to provide evidence to support the claims that were made in the hearing on January 24th for a ruling to be made. These items were quickly gathered and faxed the first week of February to the Small Claims Court where receipt of these items was confirmed. Providing these items should have resulted in a ruling shortly thereafter, per Magistrate Camacho. What happened?

After two months without a ruling, I started calling the Small Claims Court each week to see if a ruling was made on the case. Each time I was told: "The case is still in review. We don't know when a ruling will be made." How much time does it take to review a civil case when everything requested was provided? Frustrated, I asked to speak directly with Magistrate Camacho. I was told that it was not possible to speak with him since he is the one working on the case. Since I could not communicate with Magistrate Camacho by phone, I wrote him a letter dated June 20, 2017 asking if anything else was needed for a ruling to be made on my case. No response. Another letter was sent to Magistrate Camacho dated August 18, 2017 again asking if anything else was needed from me for a ruling to be made. Again, there was no response or ruling.

With still no ruling on the case or response from Magistrate Camacho, I placed a call to Judge Michael Dunston in St. Thomas on August 18, 2017. After confirming that he is the supervisor of Magistrate Camacho, I thoroughly explained the situation. I expressed my frustration with the lack of ruling after seven months of presenting my case in the Small Claims Court in St. Croix. Providing the case number to Judge Dunston, he said that he will make contact with Magistrate Camacho and tell him to make a ruling on the case. Interestingly enough, Judge Dunston asked no questions or seemed the least bit surprised by the lack of ruling after all that time. That conversation with Judge Dunston was followed with a letter dated August 22nd. Still no ruling after that phone conversation or follow-up letter. Why not?

Why has a ruling not been made? I have since learned that mine is one of a significant amount of cases that are "still in review" for more than a year after being presented before Magistrate Camacho.

It has now been 16 and a half months – one year and four and a half months – since the continuance hearing held on January 24, 2017. I have done everything requested by Magistrate Camacho. Why no ruling? I have called the Small Claims Court in St. Croix over 75 times, written letters to Magistrate Camacho, Judge Dunston and spoken with Judge Dunston. I even reached out to the Office on Lieutenant Governor to see if I could find resolution through their office. Unfortunately, they could not help me. What other recourse do I have? Who do I turn to?

The lack of ruling on this case, like many other situations have been, cannot be blamed on the islands being struck by hurricanes. This case was presented on January 24, 2017. A ruling should have been made long before the hurricanes hit in August and September.

I spoke to three judges here on the mainland asking their thoughts on a ruling not yet being made on a civil case after 16 and a half months. They were in shock and disbelief. One told me that there is no reason for a lack of ruling other than someone not wanting to do his job and someone not wanting to do his job to make Magistrate Camacho do what he is being paid to do. One asked "If it takes this long to get a ruling on a civil case, how long does it take to make a ruling on a homicide case in the U. S. Virgin Islands?" It was also said that the court system in St. Croix is operating worse than that of a "third-world country". I have to agree with them.

Why has a ruling not been made on this case after 16 and a half months of being presented? This strikes me as strange. Is this the norm? Do I not deserve a ruling? Should I just forget about it? I need a ruling on my case in order to proceed with what needs to be done on my home. Is a ruling now going to be made against me because of bringing this to the public? I was left with no choice other than to do so.

Submitted by: *Nadine Brooks, a Virgin Islander living in New York.*

© Viconsortium 2026