

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Takes Swipe At Local Paper For Story On Government House Salary Increases: 'Stop Making Fools Of Yourselves'

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp has responded to a story printed in the Wednesday edition of The Virgin Islands Daily News, which says three of Mr. Mapp cabinet members, including Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter, had received increases in their salaries recently.

According to a Government House release issued this afternoon, Mr. Mapp said the paper's stories "continue to regularly include mischaracterizations and misinformation, and that the paper "would be wise to invest in hiring at least one Virgin Islander to work in

its news department." Government House said Mr. Mapp took issue with Wednesday's article, which the administration said contained factual errors and omitted crucial information.

"Sadly, we have grown accustomed to seeing headlines that don't match the associated articles, and, for the most part, we ignore the many errors and perpetually negative slant. However, this week I am compelled to respond," Mr. Mapp said of the paper.

Government House said the article in question stated, "officials already earning top salaries have quietly been receiving hefty raises." In his rebuttal, the governor started with the article's claim that Mr. Potter had been given a raise. "This article further incorrectly states that Lt. Gov. Osbert Potter received a pay increase of \$10,000 bringing his salary to \$112,000," Mr. said. However, the lieutenant governor's salary is set by law, specifically Title 3, Section 31 of the Virgin Islands Code, the territory's leader added.

"Under the law, the Lt. governor's salary is set at \$125,000 and cannot be changed by any administrative action," Mr. Mapp said. "Only the Legislature can give the Lt. governor a pay raise."

In the same article, the newspaper also cited raises given to two Government House employees last year, but failed to mention that these staff members were actually promoted to new positions of much greater responsibility, according to Government House. The administration said Senior Policy Advisor Eugene Farrell was promoted to chief of staff in September 2017 at a salary of \$125,000. The previous chief of staff, Randolph Knight, was paid \$130,000 annually.

And Samuel Carrion, who the administration said had previously wore several hats as a Government House communications specialist, was promoted to the position of senior policy advisor at \$75,000 annually following what the administration described as Mr. Carrion's "tremendous efforts after Hurricanes Irma and Maria."

"Mr. Carrion became the leader behind facilitating the many delegations we had here from Congress, the White House, the national media, non-government organizations and others," the governor said. "All the while, continuing to serve as my office's primary point of contact for Spanish-speaking Virgin Islanders and our local church groups."

Mr. Mapp, who Government House said has for the most part resisted directly criticizing the Virgin Islands Daily News, took a swipe at the paper, and said it should hire local journalists. (VI Daily News has had numerous local journalists over the years, although its current cadre is made up of mostly U.S. mainland writers who moved to the territory for the job.)

"I have a history of promoting individuals who are in my employ whose work demonstrates and provides more value to the people of the Virgin Islands," he said. "The Daily News criticized the hiring of a conservator at Government House, quoting someone from the mainland who deemed this committed young Virgin Islander unqualified. As governor, I decide who is qualified to work at Government House, not the Virgin Islands Daily News. To the folks at the VI Daily News, when do you intend to hire a Virgin Islander on your staff of journalists and editors? If you do, perhaps you will stop making fools of yourselves."

