

The Virgin Islands Consortium

At First Board Of Elections Meeting Following Supreme Court Ruling, Disarray, Confusion

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ST. CROIX -- The unified Board of Elections attempted to hold its first meeting as one board following the Supreme Court ruling that upheld [the Superior Court's judgement](#), which ruled that all meetings held by the boards after August 1, 2017, were in contravention of a 2016 law that formed one board of elections.

But the meeting almost instantly descended into chaos as board members had varying opinions on what should have happened yesterday. Republican board member Jevon Williams said the first item should be appointing new leadership to the board, but Arturo Watlington fired back, stating that if all actions taken after August 1 were null and void, then Mr. Williams -- as well as Harriet Mercer and Robert Schanfarber -- should not be

considered board members, as their swearing-in came after August 1.

Present at the meeting were Senator Positive Nelson, his gubernatorial running mate Gary Udhwani and Attorney Trudy Fenster, along with a few supporters. They had ventured to the meeting based on a release sent out to the media giving notification that matters concerning Mr. Nelson's candidacy -- [which was rejected as defective by the Elections System](#) -- would be discussed at the Tuesday meeting. Mr. Nelson said he was not given notification of the meeting, but Supervisor of Elections Caroline Fawkes, who joined the meeting via phone, contended the claim, stating that a notice was sent out and that Mr. Nelson's email was one of the recipients.

But the senator said the email blast sent out to media -- and indeed to him -- was not an official invite to the meeting. Following the Board of Elections meeting, which never garnered a quorum and ended abruptly, the senator expressed his frustration to The Consortium.

"I am insulted that Mrs. Fawkes would consider a public notice to a public official to attend to a hearing, a formal invitation," Mr. Nelson said. "To sit here to be subjected to this is insulting and never mind to say unprofessional, and we are here prepared to just have a chance at free opportunity to due process.

"The people who are willing to vote for the Nelson-Udhwani team should have access, and it's unfortunate that we have to sit here, our attorney and ourselves, to come here and sit through this," the senator said.

The senator [recently filed suit](#) against the Board of Elections and the Elections System of the Virgin Islands in the District Court, contending that he and his running mate, Gary Udhwani, were not given an opportunity to cure their nomination — which Mrs. Fawkes has deemed defective — before being rejected.

Feature Image: Positive Nelson and Attorney Trudy Fenster (right), listens as Board of Elections member Adelbert Bryan argues a point. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)