

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Catherineberg Will Become Museum Following Senate's Veto Override

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ST. THOMAS -- Senators who make up the 32nd Legislature on Thursday overrode a Governor Kenneth Mapp [veto](#) of [Bill No. 32-0002](#) that had ended the hopes of Estate Catherineberg becoming a museum. The bill removes ownership of the estate from the West Indian Company (WICO), which is owned by the government, and places it under direct control of the Government of the Virgin Islands, through a \$6.65 million sale.

In a transmittal letter to Senate President Myron Jackson announcing his decision, the governor raised separation of power concerns, WICO's outstanding debt to the government and the costs associated with maintaining the historic site.

“I am convinced that this measure was not given the consideration and thoughtfulness it required,” Mr. Mapp wrote in the June 9, 2017 [letter](#). “Not only does this bill fail to resolve the issue of WICO’s outstanding PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) debt owed to the Government of the Virgin Islands, but it also heaves upon the central government a historic treasure for which the central government has no adequate resources to maintain.”

The chief executive had also indicated that the proposed purchase price of \$6.65 million was arbitrary, and asked Mr. Jackson how the Legislature determined the property’s appraised value.

“What recourse does WICO have if the property is valued more than or less than this amount?” Mr. Mapp asked. “I cannot approve this measure as drafted nor would I implement this measure if the Senate chooses to override my veto.”

The governor’s defiant language suggests that he would not implement the law of the land, fighting words that lawmakers may take offense to. Mr. Mapp was swiftly rebuked by Senator Janette Millin Young, sponsor of the WICO measure, who said she was “disturbed” by the governor’s choice of words.

“This statement shows his utter disdain and disrespect for the Legislature and the people it represents. Senators and the public should join together in rebuking the notion that a governor — a chief executive — can publicly state that he will choose what laws he will follow. He needs to understand, unequivocally, that the U.S. Virgin Islands, as all U.S. jurisdictions, abide by two major doctrines — separation of powers and checks and balance,” Mrs. Millin Young said.

On Thursday, lawmakers voted 13-2 in favor of the override, with Senators Janette Millin Young and Janelle Sarauw voting against it.