

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett's Work In Congress In Aftermath Of 2017 Storms Praised By Nancy Pelosi During Trip To USVI

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ST. THOMAS -- Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett was joined by a delegation of congresspeople who visited Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands over the weekend in hopes of better understanding the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

During a press briefing held at the ACC building at the University of the Virgin Islands in St. Thomas, Ms. Plaskett was joined by Governor Kenneth Mapp, Ms. Pelosi and other congresspeople -- many of them with strong roots in the territories -- to speak about the tour and its importance to their decision-making process back on Capitol Hill.

"We've had really great talks with community people, we've also learned and talked with people who are directly affected as well as the policymakers, our good Governor Mapp and the great work that his team has done," Ms. Plaskett said during the briefing.

The Delegation flew into the territory on Saturday morning, visited Coral Bay and the Myrah Keating Smith Community Health Center on St. John, came back to St. Thomas and toured the island, where they met with Schneider Regional Medical Center officials as well as those of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority, Ms. Plaskett said.

The territory's delegate to Congress also thanked FEMA Region II Coordinator Bill Vogel and his team, who she said were part of the discussions on how Congress, the local government and FEMA can work together for the betterment of the territory.

Ms. Plaskett said the aim of the meeting was to ensure that the territories -- Puerto Rico and the USVI -- have the funds they need "not just to recover, not just to rebuild, but to be better than before." She added, "I'm grateful that they heard the discussions that both Governor Mapp and myself and many others made in Washington that there were so many preexisting circumstances, so many deficiencies that the territories had before the storms that made the devastation even greater than it would have been if it would have been anywhere else in the United States."

Former House speaker and current minority leader, Nancy Pelosi, said the delegation who were part of the tour sit on important committees in Congress relative to the distribution of FEMA funds, so their understanding of how the territories were affected, and seeing firsthand the aftermath of the storms, will inform their decisions back in Washington.

"The whole idea of what needs to be done, knowledge of the issue, commitment from the communities that we represent and frankly many of us have had natural disasters in our own states," Ms. Pelosi said. "So we come here with some knowledge, with some judgement about how we can be helpful. But what we needed to hear was from the community."

Ms. Pelosi also praised Ms. Plaskett for what was described as her tireless work on behalf of the USVI following the 2017 storms, and spoke of the respect the delegate commands in Congress as part of what made critical funding to the territory possible in the disaster funding bills. "Now we have to make sure the administration spends the money in a much more accelerated way," the minority leader said.

She later added: "I always see everything as an opportunity. These hurricanes were an opportunity to do something and to leapfrog from the past ways of doing things to make the future so much better."