

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Board Of Elections Denies Brian Smith's Request For Recount Of Ballots

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The Board of Elections during a contentious Monday meeting denied Senator Brian Smith's request for a recount of the Senator-At-Large primary election votes.

In his letter to the board, Mr. Smith had cited what he said were irregularities with the results. "I am respectfully requesting a manual recount of the votes for the Senator-At-Large race," he wrote. The senator listed the following as cause for the recount request:

- The margin of victory was extremely great
- The winner of the race received more votes than the winner of the gubernatorial race

- The percentages of the votes received by all candidates were almost identical territory-wide

"Finally, it is worth noting that this situation is an irregular statistical probability, as such a thorough investigation is warranted," Mr. Smith wrote.

During the meeting on Monday, which Mr. Smith attended, the senator said the margin of victory for Steven D. Payne Sr. was too large, adding that the results made it seem as if he was a write-in candidate and not a sitting senator. "That's highly unusual," Mr. Smith said to the board.

The senator also pointed towards the margin of victory for the gubernatorial election candidates, stating that Mr. Payne "decimated" the winners of that race, the Albert Bryan and Tregenza Roach gubernatorial ticket. He contended that such an outcome was highly unusual.

Mr. Payne, in the at-large race which counts votes territory-wide, [received](#) 3,265 votes. In comparison, the Bryan/Roach team received 3,093 votes -- hardly the decimation that Mr. Smith argued. And Mr. Smith, who received 1,237 votes, contended to the board that the percentage breakdown of votes he received were also questionable. The senator received 19 percent of the votes in both the St. Thomas-St. John and St. Croix districts, while Mr. Payne received 50 percent of votes in the St. Thomas-St. John District and 29 percent in the St. Croix District.

"I think the voting bloc needs to be assured that it's the public that is actually electing public officials and not possibly errors by a voting machine," the first-term lawmaker said.

Board members Mercer and Schanfarber had expressed doubt with the machines' accuracy, but Board Chairman Arturo Watlington, who had called Mr. Smith's letter insulting and disrespectful in a letter responding to the senator, quoted Virgin Islands Code that pertains to elections, stating that when errors are alleged, it must be pointed out where those errors were made. "We are now hearing that our machines are flawed and that everything members did to certify and verify the effectiveness and the accuracy of these voting machines are wrong," Mr. Watlington said. He said board members Harriet Mercer and Max Schanfarber saw for themselves that the machines, during tests, worked.

In the end, Mr. Smith's request failed, with board members Glenn Webster, Lydia Hendricks and Raymond Williams on St. Croix, and Mr. Watlington, Alecia Wells and Barbara Jackson-McIntosh in St. Thomas voting against. Epiphane Joseph and Adelbert Bryan abstained from voting. Voting in favor were board members Mercer, Schanfarber and Jevon Williams.

A recount petition was also placed by Dale Brown of behalf of candidate Ophelia Williams-Jackson. Mr. Brown cited irregularities with the machines, "and the belief that a lack of verification of the ballots cast with the electronic system tapes of the thumb drives," -- which Mr. Brown said decreases accuracy in votes cast, as the reasons.