

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Violet Responds To Wanda Reuben: 'I Am Afraid For The Virgin Islands'

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Ernice Gilbert **September 21, 2018**



Senator Kurt Violet (Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

ST. CROIX -- Senator Kurt Violet on Thursday defended himself against an accusation that he sought a favor for his friend, attorney Richard Evangelista, from former JFL CEO Wanda Reuben, who questioned why Mr. Violet was determined to have Mr. Evangelista reemployed at the hospital during an explosive interview on The Consortium's [VIPC broadcast program](#).

"When the senator sits in a chair and tell the people of the Virgin Islands, and accuse you like I was accused, that I've hired and I'm firing people because the board is telling me... And then after the meeting they come to you and say, 'can't you find a job for so and so? Why don't you accommodate Mr. Evangelista? Why don't you put him in HR? You can accept him as a legal counsel,'" Mrs. Reuben said she was told by Mr. Violet.

"So you sit there and you accuse me, and then you come to me and ask me to hire this person. Why? My question is why?" said Mrs. Reuben.

The explosive interview with Mrs. Reuben was aired on The Consortium's broadcast platform at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday. There, Mrs. Reuben went further than any other former J.F.L. CEO in shedding light on the innards of the medical facility.

But Mr. Violet fired back on Thursday night. Speaking with The Consortium via phone, he said he did not seek any favors for Mr. Evangeslista. Instead, Mr. Violet said he was attempting to retain institutional knowledge for the hospital by encouraging Mrs. Reuben to rehire Mr. Evangelista, because as a former acting CEO he had helped the hospital keep its Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (C.M.S.) status, and navigated J.F.L. during the difficult days following Hurricanes Irma and Maria. (Mrs. Reuben was hired as CEO in October, 2017.)

We are going to be investigated by C.M.S. and we're going to lose hundreds of millions dollars; she is opening Pandora's Box. It's very selfish of any CEO to behave the way she is behaving. - Sen. Kurt Violet.

The senator recalled that Mr. Evangelista, who served as J.F.L.'s legal counsel before his acting CEO tenure, was to return to his previous position at the hospital after the board had found a CEO.

"I called her and I told her I don't think it's a wise move for you to fire Ricky Evangelista," Mr. Violet said. "He has been dealing with C.M.S. and was able to navigate the process and retain C.M.S. certification. He knows all the individuals, and I think it would be wise to keep him on as legal counsel."

Mr. Violet said Mrs. Reuben told him that she understood how C.M.S. works and that she did not need Mr. Evangelista. "I think you're making a mistake, but fine," Mr. Violet said he told Mrs. Reuben.

"My wife is retired, my children work, I did not seek any favor," Mr. Violet said. "I just asked her to retain a legal counsel."

The senator expressed concern that Mrs. Reuben's interview on The Consortium could have grave repercussions for the territory.

"We are going to be investigated by C.M.S. and we're going to lose hundreds of millions dollars; she is opening Pandora's Box. It's very selfish of any CEO to behave the way she is behaving," Mr. Violet said.

"Why it is that this one CEO is making it so personal and damaging the very institution that she claims to uphold. She is maligning everybody so she cannot care about the territory with what she's doing," Mr. Violet continued.

As for Mr. Evangelista, Mr. Violet said, "I just don't want her to malign my name or Ricky's name. He is an attorney; he could get a job any place. She needs to stop. It is so dangerous that I am scared for the Virgin Islands. We could lose the [100 percent reimbursement that we're getting](#) [for medicaid].

"I don't want to make it worse for us... I'm not trying to save nobody's job. I was trying to help her retain institutional knowledge and retain someone who had dealt with C.M.S.," Mr. Violet said.