

The Virgin Islands Consortium

U.S. Attorney's Office Vows To Protect USVI Election From Interference And Discrimination

VIC News / **Published On October 30, 2018 10:04 PM /**

Staff **October 30, 2018**



United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced today that Assistant United States Attorney Alphonso Andrews will lead the efforts of her Office in connection with the Justice Department's nationwide Election Day Program for the upcoming November 6, 2018, general election. According to the release, Mr. Andrews has been appointed to serve as the District Election Officer for the Virgin Islands District and in that capacity is responsible for overseeing the district's handling of complaints of election fraud and voting rights abuses in consultation with Justice Department Headquarters in Washington.

"Every citizen must be able to vote without interference or discrimination and to have that vote counted without it being stolen because of fraud. The Department of Justice will act promptly and aggressively to protect the integrity of the election process," Shappert said.

The Department of Justice described its role in deterring election fraud and discrimination at the polls as important, and combating these violations whenever and wherever they occur. The U.S. D.O.J. said its long-standing Election Day Program furthers these goals, and also seeks to ensure public confidence in the integrity of the election process by providing local points of contact within the department for the public to report possible election fraud and voting rights violations while the polls are open on election day.

Federal law protects against such crimes as intimidating or bribing voters, buying and selling votes, impersonating voters, altering vote tallies, stuffing ballot boxes, and marking ballots for voters against their wishes or without their input. It also contains special protections for the rights of voters, and provides that they can vote free from acts that intimidate or harass them, according to Shappert. For example, actions of persons designed to interrupt or intimidate voters at polling places by questioning or challenging them, or by photographing or videotaping them, under the pretext that these are actions to uncover illegal voting may violate federal voting rights law. Further, federal law protects the right of voters to mark their own ballot or to be assisted by a person of their choice (where voters need assistance because of disability or illiteracy).

The franchise is the cornerstone of American democracy, and all citizens must ensure that those who are entitled to the franchise exercise it if they choose, and that those who seek to corrupt it are brought to justice, the U.S. D.O.J. said.

In order to respond to complaints of election fraud or voting rights abuses on November 6, and to ensure that such complaints are directed to the appropriate authorities, Shappert stated that Mr. Andrews will be on duty in the USVI district while the polls are open. He can be reached by the public at the following telephone numbers: (340)773-3920 or (340)344-0503.

In addition, the FBI will have special agents available in each field office and resident agency throughout the country to receive allegations of election fraud and other election abuses on election day. The local FBI field office can be reached by the public at (340) 777-3363.

Complaints about possible violations of the federal voting rights laws can be made directly to the Civil Rights Division's Voting Section in Washington, DC by phone at 1-800-253-3931 or (202) 307-2767, by fax at (202) 307-3961, by email to voting.section@usdoj.gov or by complaint form at <http://www.justice.gov/crt/complaint/votintake/index.php>.

"Ensuring free and fair elections depends in large part on the cooperation of the American electorate. It is imperative that those who have specific information about discrimination or election fraud make that information available immediately to my Office, the FBI, or the Civil Rights Division."