

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Albert Bryan Becomes Ninth Elected Governor Of U.S. Virgin Islands

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Albert Bryan, the Democrat who beat his competitors during the August 4, Democratic Primary Election to face the Independent candidates and sitting governor during the General Election, today went head-to-head with Governor Kenneth Mapp in the runoff and has emerged victorious over Mr. Mapp to become the ninth elected Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Mr. Bryan ended the night with 11,796 votes to Mr. Mapp's [9,766](#), according to the Election System of the Virgin Islands.

The bid was one long in the making, as Mr. Bryan started preparing for his run over two years ago. The hard work and dedication has paid off; Mr. Bryan stunned the incumbent governor by overwhelmingly carrying the St. Thomas-St. John District, while collecting enough votes in St. Croix to take him over the edge.

For Mr. Mapp, the story was different. He was able to hold St. Croix and won there by a definitive margin (the governor collected 7,133 votes on St. Croix to Mr. Bryan's 3,838), but Mr. Mapp's weakness in St. Thomas -- where he was trounced by Mr. Bryan who had 7,958 votes at the end of the night to Mr. Mapp's 2,633 -- ultimately ended his political career. Governor Mapp is only the third incumbent governor in U.S. Virgin Islands history to be defeated after their first term; the other governors to realize a similar fate was Roy Lester Schneider, who was roundly beaten by former Governor Charles W. Turnbull in 1998, and Melvin Evans in 1974.

With the catchy slogan "Change Course Now", calling on Virgin Islanders to abandon the current administration's style of governance for something different, the Bryan-Roach campaign was able to successfully capitalize on Governor Mapp's many self-inflicted wounds, much of which were caused by the governor's boorish character and unbridled tongue. During his four-year tenure, Mr. Mapp levied many verbal assaults on residents, all of which were unbecoming of the governorship. He once called a female lawmaker, Senator Janette Millin Young, a [jackass, setty fowl, stupid and crazy](#). He also told a constituent to "[go \\$#%k yourself](#)." During another heated debate on Facebook, Mr. Mapp responded to a resident who asked where he resided by telling him, "[wit ur mudda](#)," a response widely known in the Caribbean as an insult.

And on the night of October 18, 2017, during one of Mr. Mapp's hurricane recovery press conferences, the governor shouted this reporter down in a manner that many in the community found to be appalling. Following the incident, The Consortium's Editorial Board produced a widely read condemnation of Mr. Mapp's behavior. The editorial was titled "[Mapp the Cantankerous](#)".

The governor's uncouth behavior was emblazoned on the minds of Virgin Islanders, and many developed a dislike for him.

Mr. Mapp's defeat tonight, many political observers say, was not because he failed to move the U.S. Virgin Islands forward, but because of a character and demeanor that was rejected by residents.

Mr. Bryan, who ran a brilliant and first-rate campaign that took advantage of social media, simply capitalized on the governor's own mistakes and presented himself as a unifier of the U.S. Virgin Islands and a competent leader. The flood of endorsements that Mr. Bryan received, including that of Senator Alicia Hansen and Adlah Donastorg, also appeared to have aided in sealing the victory.

And Mr. Bryan is also seen as the contrast of Mr. Mapp. A former Department of Labor Commissioner, Mr. Bryan, 50, is perceived as young and charismatic with a wife and two children. He was also the chairman of the Economic Development Authority board.

During Mr. Mapp's tenure, unemployment was lowered, tax refunds dating back to 2010 through 2016 were paid (some 2016 tax refunds are still being issued). He signed into

law a bill raising the private sector minimum wage to \$10.50; the governor then moved to raise the minimum wage of government employees to \$13 an hour or \$27,040 annually; he also raised the base pay of government employees, including that of teachers and police officers, to roughly \$44,000 annually. He approved step increases for a number of unions, including teachers and police officers -- increases that were not realized in over 9 years.

Mr. Mapp worked to secure contracts for two state-of-the-art horse racing facilities on St. Croix and St. Thomas, both of which are currently in the development phase. His efforts led to a deal with Limetree Bay Terminals, LLC to operate an oil storage terminal on the south shore of St. Croix, where the former HOVENSA oil refinery sat idly for years. The terminal brought more than 700 jobs to St. Croix. Recently, a deal for oil refining on the big island was reached with British Petroleum -- which is expected to add another 700 jobs to St. Croix. [The Veterans Drive Improvement Project](#), the single largest road construction project in the history of the U.S. Virgin Islands, broke ground in May after 34 years of delay.

And the governor, following the 2017 storms, led a successful strategy -- with the help of Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett -- and secured \$8 billion for the recovery of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Mr. Mapp's work led to the securing of \$430 million in federal funds for road projects territory-wide. Added to the \$90 million in GARVEE Bonds funding for road work, which was championed by Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, the government has more than \$500 million to fix the territory's roads.

Taxes deriving from recovery work in the the USVI have bolstered the government's coffers, leading to a more stable government [that once teetered on the brink of collapse](#).

The governor did all of this after meeting a broken government with no access to the bond market at the beginning of his tenure in January, 2015. But even with all his efforts, what mattered most to Virgin Islanders was respect. Mr. Mapp's uncouth character was his greatest achilles heel, and it brought him down on Tuesday night.