

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bryan Administration Defends Yolanda Bryan's \$76,500 'Business Ambassador' EDA Job

Business / **Published On August 20, 2019 09:41 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **August 20, 2019**



During the 2018 campaign season, the Bryan-Roach gubernatorial campaign [whiplashed then-Governor Kenneth Mapp](#) for alleged nepotism. The campaign even created what it dubbed the "Mapp Family Tree", which highlighted members of Mr. Mapp's family who worked in government, and whose jobs, the flyer sought to convey, were secured because Mr. Mapp was the governor of the Virgin Islands.

Fast forward less than a year later, and Governor Albert Bryan's wife, Yolanda Bryan, is employed at the Economic Development Authority as the E.D.A.'s business ambassador, making \$76,500 annually.

The Consortium for months has reached out to the EDA for more information on the position. Two of our emails to the authority sought information via the territory's Sunshine Act law. We asked for details on the process of hiring, a job description, and salary.

The EDA has yet to respond.

But during a press briefing at Government House on Monday, the first of what the Bryan administration says will be held weekly, the administration's communications director, Richard Motta, after being pressed by a reporter, tried to explain why the E.D.A.'s hiring of Mrs. Bryan was not nepotism -- the practice among those with power or influence of favoring relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs.



Governor Albert Bryan, his wife Yolanda and their dog (Gov't House)

Many have raised concerns about Mrs. Bryan's job at the E.D.A. For example, Government House recently announced that Mrs. Bryan partnered with the Department of Education to host events being held on Wednesday and Thursday in St. Thomas and St. Croix respectively. The question remains, though, as the EDA's business ambassador, does Mrs. Bryan have the leeway to simply go about first-lady initiatives even as she's being paid by the authority.

"Traditionally first ladies at Government House have taken on their own various initiatives. From the Summer Reading Challenge to this first lady's healthy eating with students, but they're not duplicative," Mr. Motta said, speaking of Mrs. Bryan's dual roles. "They're separate and apart."

Mr. Motta said Mrs. Bryan interviewed for the role at the E.D.A. and that she was selected through a competitive hiring process. The Consortium on June 11 requested from the E.D.A. the annual salary of the position along with perks and bonuses, if any. We requested qualifications needed for the job and who Mrs. Bryan reports to, among other inquiries. To date, however, the E.D.A. has not responded, although the publication was able to obtain a document listing the salaries at the E.D.A., which included Mrs. Bryan's business ambassador job at \$76,500 annually.

"The E.D.A. can speak specifically to what her job spec is and what they require of her on a weekly basis," Mr. Motta added.

When it was pointed out that Mrs. Bryan being hired by the E.D.A. was the behavior then-candidate Bryan criticized former Governor Mapp for, Mr. Motta said, "E.D.A. is not a government entity so I don't know why it would be nepotism."

The EDA, [in fact](#), is a government-owned semi-autonomous entity whose board of directors are selected by the governor, giving Mr. Bryan outsized influence at the authority.

Mr. Motta stayed on his narrative that the E.D.A. and the first lady's role were "two separate entities," and that Mrs. Bryan was selected through a competitive hiring process. "The governor was not involved in that process so I don't know how anyone would conflate the two," Mr. Motta said.

He added, "I mean I get what you're saying, but... I'm speaking to the facts and those are the facts."

During a VI Ambassador event in Atlanta, Georgia last week organized by the Department of Tourism, Mrs. Bryan made her speaking debut as E.D.A. business ambassador.

"In this place, in this space, I am the first lady of the Virgin Islands and there is a lot to do. But I'm also the (E.D.A.'s) business ambassador. So in this place where I have two hats, there is a lot going on," Mrs. Bryan said. "I know people must be going, 'what... what's she doing?' Right?"

Mrs. Bryan said she's been to at least five conferences as the E.D.A.'s business ambassador, "with strategic goals in mind to try and speak with developers." She also

announced that at least three hotels were "poised to come to the Virgin Islands."

Mrs. Bryan said she recently attended the Essence Global Black Economic Forum in New Orleans, Louisiana, where she made great contacts. She also attended the Latino Hotel Association Conference, which was held in July in Miami, Florida. "I just flew in from L.A.," she made known at the VI Ambassador event, "so first lady is kinda tired right now, but I've been doing a lot."

She added, "And in addition to that, in my spare time, I'm working the platform as well. I know folks are kind of like, 'what is she doing? How is she doing... how?' Is she the ambassador? Is she working? is she...?"

Mrs. Bryan then emphasized: "I am working on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands."

[View the original embedded media](#)

© Viconsortium 2026