

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Some Voters Turn Back as Long Lines Persist at Certain Polling Places on St. Croix

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Voters waiting in line at the St. Croix Educational Complex By. VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — The Election System of the Virgin Islands consolidated polling places for this year's General Election, and the move caused major problems at the larger locations, with some voters turning back and others expressing frustration with what they deemed a protracted, unprofessional process.

"I waited for over two hours but I have to leave to go back to work," a registered voter who left before casting her ballot told the Consortium earlier today. This voter attempted to vote at the St. Croix Educational Complex, but the line at the school was extremely

long.

A number of other voters expressed waiting for hours in the line. Some seniors, tired of standing, broke protocol and moved to the front at the St. Croix Educational Complex. The Election System stepped in to stop the action, and said everyone would simply have to wait their turn — senior or not.

The lines were still all the way to the parking lot at the St. Croix Educational Complex after 6:00 p.m. Terrel Alexandre, assistant to Election Supervisor Caroline Fawkes, said voters who arrive to vote by 7:00 p.m. would be allowed to stand in line. He said the Election System was aware of the issue, and that changes would be made for the next election — the gubernatorial race in two years — to prevent a reoccurrence.

The reason for the bottleneck is the Board of Elections' decision to consolidate five polling places into one. The board took this action in part because the 2017 storms had affected a number of polling sites. Even so, there was no such problem during the 2018 General Election — just over 1 year after Hurricanes Irma and Maria ravaged the territory. The Educational Complex facility now accommodates voters who previously casted ballots at the Alfredo Andrews Elementary School, Eulalie Rivera Elementary School, Evelyn M. Williams Elementary School, Ricardo Richards Elementary School, and also voters whose polling place was already the Educational Complex.

There were also bottlenecks at the Canegata Recreational Center, which serves voters who previously casted ballots at the Florence Williams Public Library, Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School, and the Juanita Gardine Elementary School. The issues at Canegata, however, were not as bad as the situation at the St. Croix Educational Complex.

Asked if the Election System would allow more time after the 7:00 p.m. deadline, Mr. Alexandre said the 7:00 p.m. deadline would hold, but anyone in line at that time would be allowed to vote.

"Simply put, the USVI Board of Elections did not do a great job in preparing for this midterm election on St. Croix," [wrote](#) Ashley Scotland, who ran for and won a seat on the Territorial Committee District of the USVI Democratic Party during the Democratic Primary in August. "There is no reason why people should have to stand in line for 3 hours to exercise their right to vote, in a population of our size and with a voter turnout of our population. The consolidation was ill-planned and not executed well. Hopefully this is fixed for the upcoming Gubernatorial election year in 2022. We must do better."

He added, "'I'm writing this post while I am standing in line, a line I have been in for over 2 hours. (Numerous people have already left without voting)."