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Independents Janelle Sarauw and Samuel Carrion Join Senate Majority, Given Committees

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Senators Janelle Sarauw and Samuel Carrion. By. VI LEGISLATURE

Seasoned lawmaker Janelle Sarauw and freshman Samuel Carrion, both independents, have joined the Democratic Majority Caucus in the 34th Legislature, according to official Senate documents. Ms. Sarauw confirmed her decision to the Consortium Monday night, while Mr. Carrion issued a release with a statement on the move.

Both lawmakers vowed to keep their independence but stressed the importance of working collaboratively as a body.

"I will continue to work on behalf of the people, continue to maintain checks and balances; I'm not afraid to speak up," Ms. Sarauw said. Her knack for holding leaders accountable, doing research to

ask pertinent questions -- all in the quest for positive change, will continue, the senator said, telling the Consortium she would "never" rubberstamp a Democratic agenda, but would instead do what's best for the territory and its people.

As part of joining the Democratic majority, the Committee on Infrastructure and Disaster Recovery was created and will be led by Ms. Sarauw. The committee will seek answers from government departments and agencies responsible for the territory's disaster recovery such as the Office of Disaster Recovery and the V.I. Housing Finance Authority, along with its infrastructure improvements, such as the Dept. of Public Works, among others. The committee also has jurisdiction to summon prime contractors involved in the USVI's rebuild such as AECOM and APTIM, and crisis and disaster management firms such as Witt O'Brien's, all of which play a role in the territory's recovery following Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Mr. Carrion said in a release issued late Monday that while he remains an independent lawmaker, he is proud to serve in the majority. "This demonstrates a commitment by the body to working cooperatively and putting the people of the Virgin Islands before party politics," he said. "I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to move our islands forward."

He will lead the Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks and Recreation, formerly held by Senator Javan James, [who bolted from the Democratic Party and the Majority Caucus](#) last week in a move that stunned party members and political observers alike. Mr. James said he saw "turmoil and chaos" in the majority's future. "I am a man who always deal with futuristic thinking; I don't want to be a part of that drama," he told the Consortium.