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Senators' Criticism of Bryan's SOTA Was an 'Oxymoron,' Letter Says, Because No One Can Have Achievements Without First Solving Problems

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Governor Albert Bryan on Mon. Jan. 24, 2022 Delivered his final State of the Territory Address ahead of his reelection bid. By. THE V.I. LEGISLATURE

Dear V.I. Consortium,

Thanks for your article: "Senators Say Bryan's Speech Was Heavy on Achievements, Short on Solutions to Challenges," (Jan. 27, 2022). Their comment was an oxymoron. It's contradictory because no one can achieve anything without having solutions to the problems over which they have triumphed. That response also sounds like a Freudian slip that they could not find an honest criticism of it.

Impressed with Gov. Bryan's management of COVID-19, Hurricane Maria recovery, the GERS low-interest refinancing bill, and blocking the Legislature's attempt to cut back his right to appoint members of various boards, my hopes were high. With eloquence and trustworthiness, he delivered beyond expectations. He has surprisingly changed the landscape, indeed the culture, of executive governance very much for the better of us the people.

A past professional experience might shed some light. Some years ago, I was retained by a Wall Street bond agency to be its local due diligence attorney for a bond issuance to finance certain local infrastructure projects. It was my duty to investigate all contractual debts owed by the V.I. I interviewed the then-budget director, government services vendors, GERS, union leaders and lawyers awaiting payments in favor of local plaintiffs. One of those debts is still owed to a union group of retirees for whom the Legislature has appropriated the funds. Still, for decades they have not received their earnings.

When my bond client faced the budget director with those local debts, I got a call from the budget office scolding that I "messed-up" the protocol to not factor-in "domestic" debts in bonds requests. Thanks to Hess Refinery, doing very well at the time, the bond values were yet guaranteed.

Gov. Bryan has renounced that treatment, reminiscent of past inhumane oppression of locals of African descent, and has paid out more than \$150 million in debts he did not incur. And he did not borrow a penny to do so. Continuing with his "fresh leaf," GERS is on track for a rescue plan. But some "filled with themselves," as our elders would say, will put up roadblocks as was done with his GERS refinancing plan. In same vein, numerous projects such as renewable energy, millions for hospital staffing, schools rebuilding, and children grants, etc., will be met with grumblings from some politicians. Blind ambitions will then brazenly claim Gov. Bryan got nothing done.

Luckily for us the people, they are too late. Besides shifting the paradigm of disrespecting debts owed by the government on local contracts, Gov. Bryan has built human resource infrastructures within the executive branch of such brilliant quality, there is hardly anything that is within reasonable governance they will not achieve. Of course, obstacles will be generated by inexperienced, and even unqualified, want-to be "throne snatchers." But we cannot afford to experience any more of the unexpected. Hurricane Maria and COVID-19 were surely enough.

Confidence in Gov. Bryan is based on my time in politics. The late Gov. Juan Luis often chatted with me. As Legislative Director for Delegate to Congress Ron De Lugo, we worked together to pass the first ever U.S. immigration general amnesty law, "Alien Adjustment Act of 1981." In a chat, I raised an article I'd read. Gov. Luis, a Christiansted High School valedictorian, startled me: "I don't read newspapers anymore. Politicians are not thinking anymore."

Speaking of valedictorians, one from St. Joseph High School and now a businessman, said to me about Gov. Bryan's Address: "Anybody who listened to that speech would want to live in the Virgin Islands. It is obvious he is a compassionate man." Need more be said other than to leave well enough alone and allow Gov. Bryan to continue his course?

Submitted on Jan. 29, 2022 by: Michael Joseph.