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Kent Bernier Files Paperwork to Challenge Bryan in Democratic Primary With Running Mate Oakland Benta

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From left to right: Kent Bernier and Oakland Benta participate in a nurses protest in downtown Christiansted on Thurs. May 12, 2022. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY/VICONSORTIUM

Kent Bernier Sr. on Wednesday filed the necessary paperwork to launch a primary bid for governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, challenging the incumbent Democrat Governor Albert Bryan.

A release from Mr. Bernier's campaign described the candidate as a businessman who served as economic advisor for former Governor Charles W. Turnbull. It further stated that Mr. Bernier owned and operated Joe's Discount, a chain of small cash-and-carry stores, for 18 years. At the height of operations, there were seven locations throughout the territory- St. Thomas, St. Croix,

and St. John, according to the release.

[A former member of the Public Services Commission](#), which regulates WAPA and other utilities, the release said Mr. Bernier has always had a desire to serve the people of the Virgin Islands. He is also a former board member for St. Thomas Rescue.

In selecting former Senator Oakland Benta as his running mate, Mr. Bernier said he was looking for a partner with a similar background in business and a history of serving people, "to join a grassroots effort for governor and lieutenant governor of the territory."

"I am running for governor because I believe Virgin Islanders deserve a better quality of life," Mr. Bernier said, according to the release. "This won't happen until there are political leaders who care about the needs of the people and have the wisdom and ability to make the necessary changes needed."

Mr. Benta served as a senator during the 33rd Legislature and is a former St. Croix police chief. He was a member of the V.I. Police Department for more than 15 years.

"I've always loved having the opportunity to serve my community from a young age," stated Mr. Benta. "There were many areas of concern that drove me to run for office, such as a failing economy. I want to execute proper service to the people, from policing to politics."

According to the release, both candidates are looking forward to the official launch of their campaign in June and being on the ballot during the Democratic Primary in August.