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Bryan Declares Week of Mourning Following Death of Governor Turnbull as Condolences Pour In

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A portrait of former Governor Charles W. Turnbull was unveiled at Gov't House on St. Croix on June 5, 2018. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Governor Albert Bryan has declared a week of mourning in the U.S. Virgin Islands following the death on Sunday of former Governor Charles W. Turnbull, the 6th elected governor of the territory who was 87 when he passed while on the U.S. mainland.

"Governor Bryan has ordered all Virgin Islands flags in the Territory to be flown half-staff beginning Sunday, July 3, until sunset on July 10 and declared a period of mourning to be observed during that time," Gov't House said Sunday.

Mr. Bryan described the former governor as "a true pillar in our community," and said that "no words can overstate the significance of his contributions to our territory."

Former Governor John P. de Jongh, Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach and Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett along with Mr. Bryan [all shared condolences on Sunday](#).

Subsequent statements were issued by the V.I. Board of Education, Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory, former Senator Shawn Michael Malone, former Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen and former Lt. Gov. Vargrave Richards.

"The members of the 34th Legislature are saddened by the news of the passing of the Former Governor Charles W. Turnbull, and joins the Virgin Islands community in mourning his loss," said Ms. Frett-Gregory on behalf of the Legislature. "The 6th elected Governor of the Virgin Islands, was a gentle giant that served the Virgin Islands in many capacities. He served as teacher, principal, of Charlotte Amalie High School, Commissioner of Education, Member of the Virgin Islands Board of Education, and eventually serving in the highest office in the territory, Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands. He was a proud Virgin Islander that served the Virgin Islands with distinction, grace and humility."

Mr. Malone stated, "I join the family and legions of Virgin Islanders at home and abroad in celebrating the life and legacy of the 6th elected governor of the Virgin Islands of the United States, the late Honorable Charles Wesley Turnbull.

"With such a distinguished public service career in education and politics spanning several decades, he has influenced and impacted many generations of Virgin Islanders that is certain to continue into the foreseeable future."

Mr. Richards, the former lieutenant governor who served with Mr. Turnbull, said, "The tributes to date since his passing have been accurately descriptive of the magnanimity of his character as a man, leader and fellow Virgin Islander. He is most deserving of the accolades shared for he worked wholeheartedly on behalf of every Virgin Islander, especially for those he thought less fortunate. He was a true and sincere public servant, humble, approachable and affable to everyone. I came to understand and appreciate that his life's goals were driven by a deep compassion and deep desire for wanting to improve our quality of life, which history would undoubtedly say he indeed accomplished."

According to Board of Education Chairman Dr. Kyza A. Callwood, Mr. Turnbull "served the Virgin Islands community remarkably well as a statesman, historian, educator, professor, high school principal, Education Commissioner, and a Virgin Islands Board of Education member. His unsurpassed prowess was debonair as he was regarded as a Virgin Islands historical icon who was never afraid to share his wealth of knowledge with everyone in reach. "He always displayed warmth, professionalism, and high standards of excellence with his students, colleagues, and employees alike, and he was respected by everyone who had the great fortune of knowing and loving him."

Ms. Christensen, the former congresswoman, stated, "We have today lost a giant of a man - in stature, but more so in his significant contributions to us, the people of the Virgin Islands. Governor Turnbull was foremost a historian and an educator, but at a critical time he stepped in to lead us through that period as our governor. I was honored to have had the opportunity to work with him as the then Delegate to Congress. I recall that one of the frequently used themes in his first election campaign was "the wolf is at the door" referring to the very difficult fiscal times facing us. By the time he ran for a successful re-election, those challenges were well on the way to

being met. And when he left after eight years as governor, there was no question that, because of his leadership, we were in a far better place and with a strong foundation for the future."

Correction: July 5, 2022 at 9:17 a.m.

A previous version of this story, because of a text error, stated that former Lt. Gov. Vargrave Richards served with de Jongh. That's incorrect. Mr. Richards served with Gov. Charles W. Turnbull. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.

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