

Bolques Overwhelmingly Wins At-Large Senatorial Race Against Steven Payne

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Angel Bolques Jr has been selected as the Senator-at-Large candidate to represent the Virgin Islands Democratic Party in the November 8th general elections, where he will face Senator-at-Large candidate and new political entrant Sherry-Ann Francis.

The former educator won by a margin of 3546 votes territory-wide against 1010 for Steven Payne Sr, who Bolques replaced in the 34th legislature. Bolques is currently serving out the remainder of Payne's term until January 9, 2023.

Bolques' victory is yet another blow to Payne, whose senatorship ended on July 20th when his 14 colleagues voted to expel him from the legislature over allegations of sexual misconduct – a matter he is now challenging in court.

The expulsion of Steven Payne Sr follows exclusive reporting from the V.I. Consortium which prompted the Senate to launch an investigation after a staffer in Payne's office accused him of sexual harassment.

The senator was already being investigated by the Senate Committee on Ethical Conduct when the Consortium reported on two other incidents of alleged sexual harassment and assault. Although the Ethics committee recommended a term of suspension for Payne, an amendment to the censure motion co-sponsored by several senators called for his expulsion instead. That motion was ultimately approved by every senator except Payne.

Bolques was sworn in as a member of the 34th Legislature on June 25th in the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Chamber, days after Payne's expulsion.

His campaign is not without opposition, however. In June, Linford Warner and Harriet Mercer filed a complaint with the Board of Elections that challenged Bolques' candidacy, contending that he had not resided in St. John for the length of time stipulated by law.

A motion was called and seconded in support of the complaint, moving that Bolques be required to provide his St. John address along with the date of his residency on island from November 2019 to now.

However, that motion was denied when Elections Board Chair Raymond Williams ruled that it is the Office of the Supervisor of Elections which is responsible for conducting due diligence on candidates and subsequently verifying that information, and that work was duly completed.

Ultimately, a roll-call vote resulted in the majority of the 6-member board siding with the chair.