

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Elections System Provides Important Updates Ahead of Election Day; Board Approves New Site on St. Thomas as Early Voting Begins

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During a regular meeting on Thursday, the V.I. Board of Elections voted to approve an additional voting center in the St. Thomas-St. John District. The board also announced that the Dept. of Education, which has secured a lease for a space in the Tutu Park Mall that was formerly utilized by Scotia Bank, had approved the use of the space for early voting, which starts today. The Elections System will also utilize the space for voting on election day, which is set for Nov. 8 this cycle.

The Ivanna Eudora Kean High School Cafeteria will be added to the list of voting centers that already include the University of the Virgin Islands' Sports & Fitness Center, the Charlotte Amalie High School Gymnasium, and the Tutu Park Mall (former Scotia Bank location) in St. Thomas.

Early voting on St. Croix is being held at the Elections System Office in the Sunny Isle Shopping Center, and the St. Joseph Church Hospitality Lounge.

Board members also discussed absentee ballot counting dates, and a motion was made to start counting these ballots on Nov. 10. The board agreed to meet at 4:00 p.m. Nov. 10 for that purpose.

Though the Elections Systems was still working on the active/inactive voting list, Supervisor of Elections Caroline Fawkes provided a status update. She noted that St. Croix had started the process a few days before St. Thomas and as of Thursday there were 7,036 inactive voters recorded on that island.

"If they come to vote, we will let them vote but we're telling you, they're not here," Ms. Fawkes said. She revealed that St. Thomas as of Thursday had 3,242 inactive voters. "As of today, there are 5,000 more to do and check," she said Thursday.

"This has nothing to do with voting," Ms. Fawkes explained. "If a person shows up, they're going to vote, and then we're going to make the correction whether we need to send them a letter or put them inactive. It's just a switch on the computer, but they are allowed to vote."

In terms of absentee voters, Ms. Fawkes noted that the number was 468 currently — 193 on St. Croix, and 275 requested on St. Thomas.

"Some are mail-in, some are walk-in," she said while encourage more frequent meetings as the general election draws near. "I foresee and I recommend that the board meets for three days. Two days is not good enough. We need to gauge where we are so we can process certain things ahead of November 18th." The board has 10 days to certify the process after the election, and this year's general election falls on November 8. During Thursday's meeting, members agreed to meet on November 18 at 5:00 p.m. to ensure that any outstanding ballots are counted.

An update was also provided on the status of the ESS Tabulation Software and Equipment, the systems used to tally votes in the territory. "We are getting servers in both districts and they should arrive here by October 16th," Ms. Fawkes said. "We had a meeting last Wednesday with the team from ESS so the team is going to be on the ground."

One team will be on St. Croix and the other in the St. Thomas-St. John District on Tuesday, October 18 for network set up and testing, according to Ms. Fawkes, "to make sure it'll be ready for election night."

"They'll be here testing the 19th and 20th," she said. "If they have any issues, they'll extend their time. They do not foresee any issues... it's similar to the servers we have, just that it'll be an ESS server from St. Thomas to St. Croix that pings back to Nebraska."

In terms of early voting preparations, Ms. Fawkes stated that everything was completed and the team was ready to go. Early voting begins on Monday, October 10 and ends on Monday, October 31.

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