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Senator Vialet Says During Debate He Would Vote Against Recreational Marijuana Legalization

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Senator Kurt Vialet. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

Senator and gubernatorial candidate Kurt Vialet bluntly stated on Thursday that he would not support a bill to legalize marijuana for recreational use, clearly putting his position on the record during the V.I. Consortium/WTJX debate where a plethora of policy topics took center stage.

"Definitely I'm going to vote no, it's not secret, I've told everybody I'm going to vote no for the legalization bill and that is a personal choice," Mr. Vialet said in response to comments from the governor, who had said, "Tell the people the truth, you do not support the legalization or adult use recreation."

Mr. Violet said that while his colleague and running mate is the sponsor of that bill, "I defer, and I defer because the Virgin Islands has serious issues enforcing rules and regulations for the basic items."

The senator's stance on recreational marijuana legalization has been consistent. [In September 2014](#), he said he would not support such a bill because he's seen its effects on young people.

"I in no way agree with the legalization [of marijuana] at all," Mr. Violet said in an interview on 102.1 FM in September 2014. "I don't agree with it because I have seen the effect on our young population. We're losing a lot of our young males and females because of marijuana."

VIALET-VIPC-2014

Then-candidate Kurt Violet, in Sept. 2014, talks about his stance on legalizing marijuana for recreational use.

Mr. Violet's strong opposition to the legalization of the drug stems from his experiences as an educator. He pointed out that he has seen students arrive at school in the mornings "stoned" due to marijuana use, and saw how the drug destroyed others who at first came with a great deal of potential.

"On the junior high school level, I had students coming school in 7th grade literally stoned in the morning," he said. "You could literally see the changes."

"When I was at Complex, I saw students who came in 9th grade, such nice students [and] you just look at them and you're like, 'Oh, wow', and you see them three years after and you're like, 'What's really going on? What happened to that person?' But they were just consistently using marijuana," he said.

The matter of marijuana legalization for recreational use has long been a topic of discussion in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the conversations grew louder when the Bryan administration took office, as Mr. Bryan and administration officials pressed for Senate approval, sending down a bill to the Legislature to that end.

But Mr. Bryan's bill could not move forward because Senator Janelle Sarauw, Mr. Violet's running mate, has authorship of the measure and therefore it must be introduced by the senator. However, it's been about three years since the legislation has been held up, a protracted delay Ms. Sarauw blames on legal counsel deliberations and the need to present a comprehensive measure. She also said a companion bill that addresses the expungement of records for simple possession of marijuana also delayed the bill's introduction on the Senate floor.

In October 2021, Ms. Sarauw promised that the measure would be introduced before the end of that year. "By the end of the year I promise you, you'll have a bill on the floor," she said while in Colorado with other lawmakers exploring the state's cannabis operations.

The senator on Monday told the Consortium that the bill would soon be introduced because it was finally out of the Senate's legal counsel.