

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bryan Calls Out Violet For Not Introducing Legislation Aimed at Transforming Education System After Spending 8 Years in Senate

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The St. Croix Educational Complex High School, where current Senator Kurt Violet was principal from 1995 through 2011, before moving to the Arthur A. Richards Junior High School. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Governor Albert Bryan and Sen. Kurt Violet were both given an opportunity to ask each other a question of their choosing during the V.I. Consortium/WTJX debate held Thursday, and Mr. Bryan called out the veteran senator for what he contended was Mr. Violet's failure to introduce legislation that would positively transform the education system.

Mr. Vialet, the well-known former educator at the St. Croix Educational Complex and the Arthur A. Richards Junior High School, has spent eight years in the Senate, and Mr. Bryan argued that the senator has nothing to show for it in terms of policy.

"Senator Vialet, you have worked in the education system for more than 20 years and most of that as an administrator. There's no one who knows more in the Senate of the ills of education than you. In 2010 while you were still principal [at the St. Croix Educational Complex High School], the [U.S.] Dept. of Interior said we needed \$1 billion to repair our schools, and that's before the hurricanes. Why have you not been a champion for our students, and for our education system and for the teachers, by chairing the [Senate] Education Committee and leading legislation that would lead us into a better education system that you constantly criticize now?" Mr. Bryan asked.

In Mr. Vialet's response, he pointed to legislation he has sponsored to provide funding for a number of educational programs. "You don't have to be the chair of the Education Committee in order to move legislation," he said. "If you look at my record on education, I have offered numerous bills to make sure we're able to improve the system. Monies for repairs and maintenance, monies for the University of the Virgin Islands to start the first bachelor's of science in nursing, monies for UVI to start the master's in social work, monies for the agriculture program — a new program to be able to get surveyors and appraisers through UVI Cell; monies to start academically talented programs in every single school. I have championed education from the day that I have been in the Senate and have been working hard on a regular basis to make sure that the needs of education are met. Union contracts, funding for raises — every item that you can think about literally, I have made sure that I have been at the forefront, and have been able to fund or support those particular projects."

Addressing Mr. Vialet's response, the governor stated, "Monies is not the system. The education system is broken, you are an education expert and you should have policy that will ease the education system such as the one Sen. Donna Frett-Gregory [has proposed that you are opposing](#)." He said the bill aims to take school maintenance "away from educators and puts it in another department with maintenance people in order to address the ills of the schools."

"Those are the kinds of things that we're talking about. And you're talking about all these monies, monies, monies, but you haven't really done anything or championed any piece of policy that would change the quality of education for our children," Mr. Bryan contended.

Mr. Vialet responded by stating that the funding he referred to "are for quality of life issues." He further stated, "It wasn't for a stimulus payment for paying something that doesn't affect education or healthcare. Look at my voting record on education. The bill brought forth by Sen. Donna Frett-Gregory would have just created a next level of bureaucracy in government. I am tired of bureaucracy, we need to get the job done. The governor has access to over \$200 million in K-1 and K-2 funds that can be utilized for learning loss, for a better environment in the classroom, etc., so the monies are in his hands."