

# Governor's Press Conference on Waste Management Authority

December 1, 2007

After the Governor's press conference on November 30<sup>th</sup> you could hear a collective sigh of relief throughout the Virgin Islands.

The Governor took a firm position that the Waste Management Authority was out of control demonstrating the type of leadership that the people of the Virgin Islands deserve.

Clearly, Lorin Kleeger, the hearing examiner for the Public Service Commission laid the groundwork for any reasonable thinking person stating that the rates that were set by this rogue authority were ill-thought out, unreasonable and would bring the Virgin Island's economy to it's knees.

From the tone of the Governor's press conference and his obvious dissatisfaction with the Waste Management Authority and its proposed rates, there is no question that he was busy working behind the scenes to turn this issue around. It is also obvious that the PSC was looking to Government House for political direction or cover in handling this hot potato thereby side-stepping a clash between the Executive and Legislative branches of government.

We were pleased when the PSC took ques from Government House & Atty Kleeger and soundly rejected these proposed rates.

It was our position that the rates proposed by the Waste Management Authority would be dead-on-arrival when it reached the PSC. And further, it was our position that the Governor had to step into the middle of this issue and take the Waste Management Authority to the woodshed.

We now look to the Legislature to finish this process and rescind the enabling legislation that created the monster known as the Waste Management Authority.

Senator Norman Jn-Baptist has indicated that he is moving early in December to do just that. We're also pleased that Senate Majority leader Celestino White, Sr. has denounced the Waste Management Authority and its fees with some rather strong language. It is also come to our attention that Senate Minority leader Ronald Russell has been working behind the scenes with the administration and supports a solution to this issue.

We call upon the legislature to support Senator Baptist's initiative and to not let this issue get bogged down in a majority/minority conflict. This is an opportunity for the 27<sup>th</sup> Legislature to demonstrate leadership by putting their constituents first. This should be passed with 15 solid votes and it is our hope that the Governor looks upon this legislation favorably.

By his press conference it would appear that the Governor is thinking of moving the responsibilities of waste management back under the Department of Public Works where the funding source could fall back under the General Fund and where the commissioner works solely at the pleasure of the Governor.

We stick firmly to our position that the best way to fund the waste management issue is to move away from the tax & spend approach and to move towards a self-funding approach, embracing a recycling model as well as bringing Virgin Islands residents in as stakeholders.