



LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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ADLAH "FONCIE"
DONASTORG

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Government House continues political hires

ST. THOMAS – Senator Adlah “Foncie” Donastorg said Thursday that Government House continues politically driven hiring despite a year-long “hiring freeze” and at the expense of less well connected Virgin Islanders.

Earlier this week Donastorg obtained documentation from the Department of Agriculture indicating that two individuals were laid off from the Department late last year in order to bring in a new employee at \$70,000 annually.

“While I am a supporter of Agriculture, the Department and its Commissioner, I cannot see the justification in terminating these two employees and then listing their positions as vacant in order to bring someone in with a vague job title and a high salary,” Donastorg said. “We would likely be better off giving 70 Virgin Islands farmers a \$1,000 grant than hiring someone as a “Special Outreach Program Coordinator”.

Donastorg said he could not speak to the qualifications of the Agriculture Department’s “Special Outreach Program Coordinator”, but that the termination of two lower paid employees was highly suspect. According to their NOPAs, the employees were discharged because the grant funding their positions was terminated.

“The bottomline is that this kind of thing is indicative of the hypocrisy of this Governor and this Administration,” Donastorg said. “There have been hundreds of political hires and raises since the so-called hiring freeze was put in place in May of 2008. How can anyone justify laying off these employees because there is no money and then hiring someone for even more money?”

Donastorg said that at his May 7 press conference he provided the media with a sample list of recent Administration employees, the majority of which do not meet the criteria for exemption from the hiring freeze.

“The public needs to be made aware of what is actually taking place,” the Senator said. “This Governor is spending and borrowing like the proverbial drunken sailor. It is time we get some actual fiscal controls in place. You can say there is a hiring freeze over and over again, but that does not make it so. There needs to be a serious inquiry by the Legislature and the media.”

Donastorg said he is calling on his colleagues to push for all records related to new Administration employees.

“I have written Governor deJongh asking him to explain why these two gentlemen were laid off from the Department of Agriculture,” Donastorg said. “In these challenging economic times it is more important than ever to offer real assistance to our struggling farmers and I know that few, if any, of them are taking home \$70,000 per year toiling in the sun each day.”