



LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Capitol Building P.O. Box 1690 Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas U.S. Virgin Islands 00804

**ADLAH "FONCIE"
DONASTORG**
Senator, 28th Legislature

Member, Committees on:

*Financial Services,
Infrastructure and Consumer
Affairs*

*Housing, Sports
and Veterans Affairs*

*Planning and
Environmental Protection*

June 22, 2009

Mr. Hannibal Ware
Inspector General
2315 Kronprindsens Gade #75
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00802

Dear Mr. Ware

In my ongoing pursuit of Government transparency and accountability, I bring to your attention the issue of expenditures beyond what appears reasonable at Governor John P. de Jongh's personal residence.

The Organic Act indicates that the Governor of the Virgin Islands "shall maintain his official residents in the Government House on Saint Thomas during his incumbency". Realistically, we can not anticipate that any Governor will completely give up his private residence, however tax payers should not be asked to subsidize anything aside from basic security improvements at the Governor's private home. In fact, many would argue that no public funds should be utilized to make improvements on a private residence, especially given that the Governor and his family also have access to Estate Catherineberg on Denmark Hill, which remains the property of the people of the Virgin Islands.

It is my understanding that a great deal of public funding has been allocated via the Public Finance Authority and other sources for improvements to Governor de Jongh's personal residence. These expenditures set a terrible precedent that must be addressed. These home renovations represent defacto compensation to the Governor as he is certain to realize increased profits on the sale of his much improved home. The question is twofold – where do we draw the line and has this line yet been crossed? Evidence suggests an abuse of public funds, but at the very least some permanent guidelines must be established for any future requests submitted by sitting Governors.

It must also be said that, by law, the Governor is the Chairman of the Public Finance Authority and also appoints the majority of its membership. Is it a conflict of interest to have oversight over the approval of money spent for his own benefit? And, even if he were to recuse himself from the vote, does he not basically control the PFA board itself?

As I previously indicated, the Governor's legal residence is clearly defined in the Organic Act and there is no provision in place for renovations to a private home. Residing in one of the three public buildings made available for the Governor's use, is simply part of the job and in the best interest of the sitting Governor for security and economic reasons.

In these fiscally challenging times, we must remain vigilant in our management of tax dollars. I am asking that the U.S. Interior Department investigate this matter to ascertain whether or not any improprieties took place.

Sincerely,

Adlah "Foncie" Donastorg