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CHS STUDENTS CAST BALLOTS IN MOCK ELECTION FOLLOWING CANDIDATE FORUMS

ST. CROIX, USVI - Results of an October 22 Mock Election held among St. Croix Central High School students registered the three top gubernatorial vote-getters as Adlah Donastorg/Alicia Hansen in first place, with 294 votes; Governor Kenneth Mapp/Lt. Governor Osbert Potter in second place, with 211 votes; and Albert Bryan/Tregenza Roach in third place, with 61 votes.

The mock election was the culmination of three days of forums hosted by Central High's Social Studies Department in an effort to expose students, some of whom will be voting for the first time in the November 6 elections, to the gubernatorial, senatorial and congressional candidates, and the overall voting process.

At an October 15 forum for gubernatorial candidates held in the school's cafeteria, Soraya Diase-Coffelt and running mate Dwight Nicholson gained the applause of students and teachers for being the only team that attended the 8:30 a.m. session.

Following a brief recounting of her personal and professional background, Diase-Coffelt answered students' questions, one of which asked the candidate to identify the primary change she would make if elected governor. Diase-Coffelt said she would give attention to government corruption, and promised to have a transparent and citizen-focused administration where the public can access critical information about government spending online.

Students went on to pepper the candidate with questions on immigration, local prison reform and Diase-Coffelt's experience as one of only two female candidates running for governor.

"My advice to other women wanting to run in political races is if you feel this is something you can do...it's a fight, an uphill battle, but worth every moment of it," she said.

Senatorial candidates Robert Moorehead, Daren Stevens and Troy Mason participated in the afternoon session on the final day of the forums, October 17.

A student asked the candidates "what are some things you can give in your life to sacrifice for the Virgin Islands" if they were to be elected.

Moorehead said being on the campaign trail "is a sacrifice in itself," noting that he is a father of six young children.

Stevens pointed to the stalling of long-standing entertainment and cultural activities he's been a part of in regional circles.

"I have been committed to these Virgin Islands, especially St. Croix, for over twenty years now," he said. "After I decided to run for office, all [my entertainment] job opportunities failed me. I didn't get called to St. Martin for carnival anymore and I didn't get any calls from Tortola for carnival. But that's okay because it's about stepping up and stepping out of the norm to help our community."

Mason said he would be sacrificing his career.

"I would be sacrificing my career when I become a senator," he said, noting that he has been a longtime employee at Limetree Bay and is currently in management.

"I make a six-figure salary...and I don't mind giving that up because it's not about money for me. It's about fixing where I want to be," Mason said.

Principal Carlos McGregor said the forums were "serious business" and that they were held for students to "learn, be informed and to engage with the candidates."

English Department Chairperson Joseph Bess moderated the discussions and posed what he defined as an "essential question" to candidates.

"There is a gap between the older generation and young people today, and we want to find out how the candidates would bridge that gap," he said. "A lot of our students need to be engaged civically and it starts in the classroom with the ideas they are learning. Politics, at the end of the day, is essential to our democracy."

Some students offered their reactions to the information candidates shared.

"I felt that they could have made it a bit more lively," said senior Shanai Scott of the gubernatorial forum. "If you want my vote, show me why you want my vote."

Scott, who is 17 and not eligible to vote in this year's election, said she felt some gubernatorial candidates were mostly "focusing on St. Thomas, and what about St. Croix? People are basically voting off of popularity and that's a problem."

Careem Williams, an 18-year-old senior who is eligible to vote, has opted not to vote in the November 6 elections.

"I refuse to vote for people who do not do anything for their community," he said.

Scott, Williams and 11th grader, Nikquante Laudat said they were disappointed more gubernatorial candidates did not attend the October 15 forum.

The full results of CHS Mock Election are as follows:

DELEGATE TO CONGRESS

- Stacey Plaskett (361)

GOVERNOR/LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

- Adlah Donastorg/Alicia Hansen (294)
- Kenneth Mapp/Osbert Potter (211)
- Albert Bryan/Tregenza Roach (61)
- Soraya Coffelt/Dwight Nicholson (42)
- Moleto Smith/Hubert Fredrick (16)
- Janette Millin Young/Edgar Bengoa (15)
- Warren Mosler/Ray Fonseca (0)

VI LEGISLATURE

At-Large Senator

- Angel Bolques, Jr. (193)
- Sherry-Ann Francis (169)
- Steven Payne, Sr. (78)

STX District Senators

- Alicia Barnes (461)
- Allison DeGazon (305)
- Kurt Vialet (273)
- Novelle Francis, Jr. (262)
- Kenneth Gittens (233)
- Patricia James (173)
- Oakland Benta (152)
- Javan James (145)
- Lilliana Belardo de O'Neal (142)
- Emmett Hansen (138)

- Daren Stevens (135)
- Robert Moorehead (102)
- Michael Springer (100)
- Genevieve Whitaker (66)
- Troy Mason (63)
- Carew Felix (60)
- Abraham Ortiz (59)
- Norman Jn Baptiste (48)
- Malik Stridiron (37)
- Omar Henry (34)

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