

Testimonial for Governor Kenneth E. Mapp

It is with great honor and profound respect that I share my reflections on the life and service of my friend and colleague, Ken Mapp, the eighth elected Governor of the US Virgin Islands. Ken and I share a special kinship. Like me, he was born into modest surroundings in Brooklyn, New York. While I remained for decades in the “County of Kings”, early in his life, Ken and his family moved to the beautiful island of St. Croix, where he began a lifetime journey marked by an unwavering commitment to public service and a passion for the well-being of his community and the US Virgin Islands.

In 2002, Governor Turnball appointed Ken as the Director of Finance and Administration at the Public Finance Authority. At the time, I was leading a team of financial professionals who were engaged to serve as Financial Advisors to the PFA. Working closely with Ken and the rest of the team over many months, we developed and implemented a plan that enabled the US Virgin Islands to secure an investment grade credit rating. With a rating, the Territory would have greater access to the financial markets and at significantly lower interest rates. When we first started to work together, I was immediately impressed by Ken’s intelligence, integrity and ability to understand the complexities of the municipal finance world. My team and I focused on financial issues, possible solutions and the immediate need to develop a path to fiscal stability for the VI. We spent months analyzing multifaceted and complex financial solutions in order to create a financial plan that would restore the Virgin Islands to fiscal health. At the time, the USVI did not have a credit rating. After a tremendous amount of work by Ken and the entire team, and with the strong support of Governor Turnball, we finally received word that we had achieved an investment grade credit rating for the Territory. That is a day I will never forget.

Ken's tenure as Governor from 2015 to 2019 was marked by transformative achievements. He faced significant challenges, particularly during the two, catastrophic, Category 5 hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. Leading up to each of the storms, Ken often addressed the islands' residents on the radio advising them to find a safe place to ride out the storms, adding that they should find a second shelter, as well, in case the first one failed to keep them safe. It was these second havens that saved the lives of many residents who sought them out as the islands were relentlessly battered for days. Following the storms, Ken's daily reports continued for months, bringing a sense of security and comfort to the storm-weary islanders. His leadership during this crisis was nothing short of remarkable. I worked with him as he established a 20-member Hurricane Recovery and Resilience Task Force to spearhead recovery efforts, showcasing his leadership and vision for rebuilding stronger communities throughout the islands. For months, we worked closely together to monitor the use of the hundreds of millions of federal grant monies that he helped to secure to rebuild the ravished Territory. Ken's ability to foster relationships with national leaders and secure vital funding to rebuild and strengthen the Islands' infrastructure is further testament to his dedication and skill.

The conferral of the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor on Ken Mapp is a fitting tribute to a life devoted to public service. It is a fitting acknowledgement of his tireless work on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands. As we celebrate Ken Mapp's contributions, let us remember the values he embodies: leadership, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to the betterment of our society. His legacy will continue to inspire us all, reminding us of the importance of service, resilience, and community engagement.

Ken, I thank you for your friendship which I value greatly. I also thank you for your extraordinary service and for setting a high standard for all who follow in

your footsteps. Your dedication to the people of the Virgin Islands has changed lives, fostered hope, and built a foundation for a brighter future. Your journey is a testament to what can be achieved through hard work, determination, and a genuine love for one's community. We are forever grateful for your leadership and vision.