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## Plaskett Launches Governor Bid in Frederiksted With Hospital Plan, WAPA Overhaul Pledge and Epstein Pushback

At Saturday's Frederiksted launch, Stacey Plaskett pledged two nationally accredited hospitals within six years, senior and mental health facilities, better schools and WAPA reform, while blasting Jeffrey Epstein attacks as lies meant to distract voters.

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Stacey Elizabeth Plaskett said the Virgin Islands needs new leadership focused on results, accountability and delivering better healthcare, schools and reliable power. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

FREDERIKSTED — Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett formally launched her campaign for governor Saturday night in Frederiksted, pairing an expansive governing agenda with a forceful response to Jeffrey Epstein-related political attacks and an emotional reflection on family, sacrifice and caring for her dying father at home.

Taking the podium to thunderous applause from supporters, Plaskett said the ticket — with Senator Milton Potter running for lieutenant governor — would bring “new energy, real urgency and an unshakable belief in the people of the Virgin Islands,” arguing that the territory can no longer afford delays, excuses, or leadership that fails to turn major federal funding into visible results.

Plaskett centered much of her remarks on what she said a new administration would deliver if elected. She pledged that a Plaskett-Potter administration would produce “two nationally accredited hospitals within six years,” recruit top medical professionals and build a healthcare workforce that creates opportunities for residents to remain and serve at home. She also said her administration would prioritize senior and mental health facilities, invest in measurable gains in math and reading, expand early literacy and after-school programs, use incentives to attract and retain teachers, and strengthen technical and trade pathways for students.

She also laid out broader plans for government and the economy, saying her administration would leverage the Virgin Islands’ location to expand transshipment and technology while making government more efficient, transparent and accessible through public dashboards and a 311 system. A 311 public service request system is a non-emergency government service platform that residents can use to report issues, request assistance, and be directed to the appropriate agency for concerns such as potholes, broken streetlights, trash pickup problems, abandoned vehicles, and code enforcement matters.

On WAPA, Plaskett said her team would move immediately to rebuild the utility using the \$4.7 billion already secured, with the goal of delivering reliable and affordable power while breaking what she described as the cycle of outages and high costs.

Plaskett argued that securing federal money is only part of the work, saying the real responsibility of a governor is putting those resources to use in ways residents can actually feel through better healthcare, improved schools, stronger infrastructure and expanded opportunity. She framed that contrast as central to her campaign, saying Virgin Islanders deserve progress in their daily lives rather than more ceremonies and announcements.

She also took direct aim at attacks tied to Epstein, accusing political opponents of trying to distract voters from issues affecting everyday life. Plaskett said opponents would “desperately distract you with Jeffrey Epstein,” but added that “they are not going to tell you that they took a whole lot more money than the \$8000 my campaign received and gave to women and family organizations.” She further said she had been “cleared by the victims themselves” and was “not afraid of any investigation,” while urging voters to ask whose interests were being protected and why “boldface lies” were being told instead of debating issues that affect families and children in the territory.

At one of the more personal moments of the night, Plaskett became emotional as she shifted from policy to family. After telling the audience that “the most important thing in my life has been my family, my husband, my amazing children, my grandson, the life we built together,” she paused before speaking about her father’s final days. She said that when her father was dying, the family honored his wish to transition at home and cared for him together across generations. She tied that experience to a broader message about the values she said define Virgin Islanders — caring for

one another and building a future where residents can stay home, raise families, access quality healthcare and find real opportunity.

Potter, whose remarks were shorter and more tightly focused, said he was running “not from a place of ambition” but from “a place of obligation.” He spoke about watching his mother struggle with a healthcare system that could not meet her needs and said too many families are still sitting at that same “kitchen table,” facing problems that remain unresolved.

On WAPA, Potter said the territory has endured blackouts lasting not hours but days, with residents losing medicine, businesses losing income and families forced to replace damaged appliances after power surges. He said that as lieutenant governor he would push for “a more reliable, more affordable energy system” and bring “real accountability to WAPA and how it operates.” Pointing to the territory’s year-round sunshine, he said residents should not be paying some of the highest energy rates in the country.

Potter also said healthcare access should not depend on “the size of your pocketbook,” noting that residents continue to leave the territory for basic services that should already be available here. He said Plaskett’s federal reach and his legislative experience would create a governing partnership built on “federal access and local execution.”

Senator Franklin Johnson, who also addressed the crowd, framed the ticket as a people-first coalition that should rise above party divisions. He told supporters that the campaign had “opened up the door to every single person in this territory,” adding, “This is not a Democrat, Republican, ICM, independent. This is about people, voices.”

Johnson also vouched for both candidates from his own experience, praising Potter’s responsiveness and saying Plaskett had carried out her congressional duties “with excellence.” He urged voters not to be sidetracked by what he called “little firecrackers” and said the focus should remain on the economy, infrastructure and the larger issues facing the territory.