



UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Second Inaugural Address
by
Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr.
United States Virgin Islands

January 3, 2011

St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

Reverend Clergy, Mr. Chief Justice, members of the Judiciary, Lt. Governor Francis, Delegate Christensen, Senate President Hill, members of the Legislature, Senators-elect, Honorable Premier Ralph O'Neal and members of the delegation from the British Virgin Islands, Mrs. Luz Luis, distinguished platform guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you all for joining us at the beginning of this New Year, and as Greg Francis and I begin the second leg of a journey that we started together four years ago at this very spot with many of you in attendance and with your good wishes.

My only regret today is the same as it was four years ago: that my parents are not able to be with us and witness this event, and share this moment with so many of their friends who are here today and with my sister and her husband, my brothers and their wives, their children, my wife and our children. But, I am comforted by the fact that my being here is because of the foundation they provided, and because of the strength and support of my wife, Cecile, as we have journeyed together these past twenty-six years. For the last four years, Cecile has played a tremendous role in our community through her commitment to the well-being of children and elders, through the Children and Family Council, her attention to children with special needs,

and through her continuous promotion of wellness for all members of our community. And in doing all this she has, with great grace, mastered the ultimate balance between being a wife, a mother, an advisor and being a role model. I am also both proud of and comforted by all my children: my older son, JP, who graduated from high school the year I took office in 2007 and this year graduates from college; by Rene, who is now a college sophomore; and by Julian, who is in junior high and accepts in his unique way that I cannot be at every one of his games or school performances, but that I will be at more than I miss.

These past four years have also been based on a partnership that began with our first campaign together in May 2006 and has strengthened each month as we got to know each other better and worked closer. I am proud not just of the accomplishments that Gregory Francis and I have achieved, but more so by the example that I hope that we have set which shows that respect is possible, and that there is more than a concept at work in the term "team work." This has been furthered by the guidance and commitment of Cheryl Francis and her involvement not only in the advice she provides each of us, but by her own commitment to the family circle and to the community at large in giving a voice to our young people through her foundation, constantly reinforcing to parents and guardians the importance of their active engagement in the lives of their children and her involvement on the Board of Education.

There is a famous quote from the author Ralph Waldo Emerson that tells us that "The reward of a thing well done, is to have done it." Now it seems to me that that quote usually refers to things that have already been done. That Emerson is conveying the sentiment that we should take pride in what we have done when we have done it well. But far more interesting to me, especially as we face the challenges that confront us today and as we create new opportunities for tomorrow, on this day which marks not only the beginning of a new term of office for me, and for Greg Francis, but of a new year for us all, is not what is it that we have done that we might take pride in, but what is it that we want to do to earn that reward in the future? What is it that if we do well, will be a fitting and full reward for having done it? And so begins our journey -- to define, and to do, the work that we have to do. Greg and I hold open the door to one and all and invite you to continue to work with us, with all of good heart and good intent in your government, in our Administration, in the months and years ahead. God willing, we have four years to do this work together, and with His guidance and help that work will be in service to all who call these Virgin Islands home.

We are blessed. We are blessed to live as citizens of the greatest democracy the world has ever known. A country that, at times, may appear to stumble towards the future, but one that never gives up its faith in the future and its quest to perfect the dream of equality and justice that makes us all Americans.

And though we are living through one of the greatest economic recessions our country, and Territory, has ever experienced, who amongst us would willingly trade places to go and live in another place. We are blessed that even in these times of challenge and downturn, our children can go to free public schools and receive an education, our elders can receive healthcare and hospital care as they need it, and that all of us can reasonably believe that if we work hard we can be rewarded for those efforts by employment and advancement and the means to raise our families in peace and freedom.

We do not and should not take this for granted. And if we need to be reminded, we need only to look around the world at the suffering and misery of others to be reminded of our blessings. We need also to take a moment and remember the many soldiers of the armed forces and the Virgin Islands National Guard whom we have had to bury and bid farewell. Since January 2007, Greg and I have represented our community as we have laid to rest our soldiers and stood with their families as we paid our respects for the ultimate sacrifice they made on our behalf, to preserve our way of life and the dreams we hold most sacred for ourselves and our families. I ask that we continue to think of them as the heroes they are, and also to keep in our hearts a special place for their family members, and their children, and remember what we, as a community, owe them for the sacrifice they experience and bear each and every day.

And yet we can also reasonably state that each and every one of the blessings we enjoy in our Islands, all of the advantages that I have just mentioned that are provided both through or with the regulation of government, can be done better, made better, delivered with greater efficiency, with greater competence and with greater respect for the individuals involved. Additionally, we know that most of the effort that makes our reality real, and produces most of the rewards we seek, is to be found in the realm of private enterprise, in the private sector. Indeed if we are honest with each other, we will acknowledge that whatever government does it does so because it is provided the means, the funds, the revenues, to do so by the labors and profits of those in the private sector. And so we know that ours is not a community of "Us and Them" -- it cannot be such and thrive.

Ours is not, and cannot be, a mindset or attitude that focuses on what government can do to the private sector, but is and must remain one where government acts in a way that is cooperating with, and assisting, the private sector so that we can then have the means to fill in the gaps that we wish government to fill, so that we can educate, train and assist those coming up, so that we can care for those who need extra care, and so that we can protect our community.

And determining how to do that, how to do that to the best of our abilities, and how to do so using the resources we have to the fullest extent, is the work we have to do, and do together, in these coming years. Today is the day we start that work anew. Today we renew our joint

commitment to work in common purpose to build our common future. For we need to start again our work to build our tomorrow – a better tomorrow for all.

I am concerned not just with what tomorrow brings, or what next year's new challenges will be, but with also what I will hand-off to the next man, or woman, who stands in this place in January of 2015. I want that to be a Virgin Islands that is the envy of others everywhere, a Virgin Islands that embraces all regardless of race, religion, place of birth or economic status, a Virgin Islands that is safe, a Virgin Islands that takes better care of its elders, that reaches out to those most in need, and that provides real opportunities to its young and to all those who work hard. But, to get to that place, requires we first find our way through the dangerous passages of 2011.

I have the duty and the obligation to make choices on your behalf, and to communicate why these choices were taken for the collective good. In order to perform my job well I need to have your assistance, your cooperation, your information. I need to have the assistance, the input, the cooperation of those you have elected to serve you as legislators. And I need the very best efforts of each and every person who has accepted a public position, everyone who works for this government, all of whom must think of themselves as public servants -- must work and work hard every day to be of service to the public, of service to all. We have weathered the last four years, and in those years we have withstood a very difficult economic situation, by our creativity and our willingness to engage with others, to work within our limitations, to take advantage of new opportunities thereby setting a foundation for the future. And when many say the recovery does not feel like a recovery we know they are describing reality. We must recognize that our resources are limited, and that they are stretched. Our future is linked to a world economy that is on every continent experiencing a financial and economic transformation.

We all have experienced our very real limitations as a result of all the destruction that was done over the past months by the terrible weather and flooding that did so much physical damage to our roads, our infrastructure, our homes. We have neither the money nor the manpower to simply snap our fingers and have everything repaired and repaired promptly. We can only do so much, and we must be sure that in every case what we do is, in deed and in fact, the best that we can do. And within our challenges and our very real limitations is the responsibility to not just create growth but to ensure that growth translates to prosperity.

But we must also realize that there are many things that we must do differently in order to do them as well as we can. We must not be unmindful of the past, but we must not be bound by it, we must not be held back by it. Our history, even our recent history, has taught us of great progress and great sacrifice, but it has also shown us many wrongs that we knew had to be made right and some we know still require our efforts to make right. We were not afraid or

unable to make changes in the past, or to hold those accountable for their actions, and we should not be now. We know there are things that must change. We know that we still do not treat each other with the full respect and dignity that our common humanity demands of us. One need only think of the rhetoric of the past months to know that both truth and civility can go missing in the most lamentable of ways. And looking ahead, we should never allow any document proposed and drafted in our Territory, subject to our vote, to take away any of our equality or any of the rights that we send our soldiers to fight for around the world.

We know that we have experienced a level of violence that we all decry as unacceptable. And we know that only when we cooperate with each other, and with the authorities, will we be able to intervene to save ever more of our young people from the bad choices that too many of them are making. And this is also the only way that we will be successful in our efforts to stop and arrest and convict those who go too far, those who take the law into their own hands, or who think that they can live outside the law and rules that must govern us all.

And we know that there is more that must be done for our children, our students, so that they learn what they must learn, both from the example of us all, as well as from the efforts of their teachers and coaches and pastors and priests, in order to succeed in this ever more demanding and unforgiving world. We cannot leave our young people in a position where they do not know what they need to know, where they do not have the discipline, work ethic and the attitudes necessary to succeed, where they cannot communicate positively and clearly to people here and people everywhere so that their choices are unlimited.

But even as we acknowledge these highest priorities, duties really, we must also accept that we can no longer be everything to everyone and make promises we cannot keep, create expectations that cannot be met and, most importantly, fail to speak truth as to our intentions given our responsibilities.

Our challenge as we work to achieve our next opportunity is to do what we need to do better than has been done in the past. We must raise the bar. We must measure and judge the performance of all who provide services in our government -- and to our government -- so that all can learn how to do better and so that those who cannot, or will not, improve are replaced by those who are coming up who can and who will. This is the challenge to each and everyone one of us - To raise the levels of our performance, to do what we are charged with doing with greater skill and greater efficiency and greater commitment. As we ask our government to be more efficient, we must also ask our private sector to be more creative – for each of us, what we have done in the past will not necessarily work in the future.

We must step out of our comfortable patterns. We must be more competitive if we are to attract more visitors or do more business, we must embrace the change that is upon us and

know that the 'new normal' requires us to think differently, work differently and respond differently. We have to teach our young to accept risks that will offer them greater opportunities, to not just prepare themselves for success, but to then act with confidence and self-reliance to try for success. The job-creating industries of our future will come from those that are not constrained by 'what if' but by those that have the creativity, the innovation and the imagination to create.

In the coming days, we will be making changes to help make this so. Our financial plan will address our economic reality and will ensure that our schools stay open, that we meet the challenges of healthcare reform, that we protect our community and that we provide the services critical to our community. The choices are not just difficult they are necessary. This we shall and must do because we know that when this is done we will restore to all in these islands the pride of place, and the pride of people, that we, all of us who choose to call ourselves Virgin Islanders, want to feel. Then, and only then, will we have earned the well-deserved reward for having done what we set out to do and having done it well. Then, as Emerson wrote, we will have earned the reward of having done well. For as it is written in scripture, Second Chronicles, Chapter 15, Verse 7 "Be strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak and slack, for our work shall be rewarded."

I commit myself to work hard to do this work in the coming years; I ask each of you to commit yourselves to do as well. Much of our present reality, many of our current problems, were thrust upon us by economic forces not of our own making and beyond our control. But some of our problems are of our own creation caused by our attitudes. Our future success depends largely on our own attitudes and conduct.

Greg and I are standing here today because we said, and the vast majority of you agreed, that we can and we must work together, Together For Tomorrow! That work starts now.

May God bless each and all of us, may God Bless our Virgin Islands, as we commit ourselves to working together for a future that will be blessed for us all.