



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Benjamin

## Senator Benjamin & Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, & Asian Caucus embark on Humanitarian Effort to U.S. Virgin Islands

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(Saint Croix, VI) Today, New York State Senator Brian A. Benjamin (SD30 - Harlem) arrives in the U.S. Virgin Islands as Manhattan's representative in a New York State Delegation which will spend time on the islands of St. Croix and St. Thomas meeting with residents, government officials, and community leaders to survey the extent of the damage caused by the hurricanes, providing physical assistance to ongoing recovery efforts, and discussing ways in which the Caucus can continue to lend support upon returning to the mainland.

After a similar effort in November of 2017 in which State and City officials visited Puerto Rico to lend help on the ground in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, Senator Benjamin hopes to bring attention to the needs of the U.S. Virgin Islands—another United States territory similarly devastated by the double hit of these hurricanes.

“Climate change and reckless disregard for our nation’s precious natural resources will continue to threaten the peace, security, and safety of our global community, so we must organize ourselves to fight back and provide support,” **said Senator Benjamin.**

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*I represent an incredibly diverse district, and the impacts of these natural disasters hit very close to home for a lot of my neighbors, including my mother, who is from the Caribbean. That is why we need to create an infrastructure to respond quickly when our friends are in need.”*

“Six months later, the residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands continue to rebuild after the destruction of Hurricanes Irma and Maria,” **said Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie**. “This trip will give us an opportunity to meet with residents and officials, and see firsthand the challenges they continue to face. There is a long road ahead -- we will lend a hand in the recovery efforts on the ground and identify additional ways that we can support their progress.”

“As Members of the Caucus, we represent communities of color who have roots that extend far beyond our individual districts in New York State,” **said Caucus Chair N. Nick Perry**. “When our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean face natural disasters, there are very direct implications for New York—a state known for open arms and an extended hand to all. So it is only right that we not only speak of our support, but that we roll up our sleeves and join in to do the hard work that is needed as these islands recover from two very devastating hurricanes.”

In response to natural disasters last year, Senator Benjamin announced the formation of the Senate District 30 Relief & Recovery Task Force. Co-chaired by community activist and retired Transit Officer Mary Pannell, and entrepreneur, educator, and Obama alumna Ny Whitaker, the Relief & Recovery Task Force will coordinate Manhattan’s response to natural and man-made disasters by creating a database of volunteers with emergency response and disaster recovery experience that can be dispatched to immediately respond to the areas in need. The Task Force will also host quarterly events in cooperation with local city and state

agencies, consulates, nonprofits, and corporations that provide the aid, infrastructure, training, and technology needed to support sustainable communities.