

The Virgin Islands
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A Pulitzer Prize-Winning Newspaper

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What helps voters decide?

Like any American who cares about this country, I have a deep interest in the results of this election. But I take a professional interest, as well. I'm always interested in how people make up their minds on how to vote.

I was on the ballot 34 times over the course of my career and have spent a lot of time thinking about why people vote as they do. And I think there's one key factor that doesn't get taken as seriously as it should: likability.

We've all heard this notion expressed as, "Who'd you rather have a beer with?" This is not frivolous. I'd argue, in fact, that "likability" is actually a complex decision.

We tend, for instance, to like people who are positive, constructive, and forward-looking, and who enunciate or profess a feeling of hope. We also, whether we know it or not, pay attention to authenticity. It's a favorite word in politics these days, but I think it's always been the case that we want candidates who give you a sense of a genuine personality undergirding their public persona.

There's a policy element to all this, as well, in that we like people who have views and values we can relate to and who hold roughly the same goals and interests we do. Which is also why we want our candidates to be reliable and steady in their views.

I think Americans also prefer candidates who display a basic sense of honesty and decency, who possess a strong moral compass, and who



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show compassion for people who are struggling in their lives. This does not mean we always vote for them — political circumstances or straight-on political calculation can get in the way—but I believe that for most Americans, those qualities matter a great deal.

Campaigning is a matter of going from one group to another— sometimes small, sometimes large—and the question always on your mind is how you appeal to this group or person, and how you make yourself likable to them. In the wake of the election, the winners will be patting themselves on the back for having figured it out. And the losers will be left wondering how they might have behaved differently... and been more likable.

— Lee Hamilton is a senior adviser for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

See Your Views In Print

The Daily News is always interested in publishing local views on topics of general interest affecting the Virgin Islands and its people. Space limitations do not always allow us to publish all the letters we receive, so we select those we believe will be of the greatest interest to our readers.

Send Letters, Essays, Halos and Pitchforks, Cartoons or other original material about local issues of general interest to letters@dailynews.vi

Letters to the Editor

Sustaining long-term risk reduction strategies

Dear Editor,

Natural disasters are deadly and costly. They destroy our physical and economic health and reverse any progress we have made. They set us back and dramatically alter our reality into something we never wanted or do not recognize. Disasters also act as mirrors. They show our strengths and bring out the best in us, but they also magnify our physical and social fault lines and force us to recognize our deficiencies.

Over the last 30 years, the footprint of development in the Virgin Islands has increased dramatically, and for a few years, things were going relatively well. However, together we have experienced four major hurricanes, a myriad of storms, floods and droughts. We are currently experiencing another (the third since 2008-09) economic crisis, this one caused by a pandemic.

We have emerged from the disruptions; Virgin Islanders are strong and resilient people who help and care for each other. But the fact remains that after each of these events, our population decreased and our economy shrank. Disasters have repeatedly set us back and changed us.

Unfortunately, things are likely to get worse. Climate change is amplifying the strength and frequency of some hazards, and the intensity of their physical and economic impacts. The question of how we prevent these hazards from becoming outright disasters for the health and well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands is



Greg Emanuel

becoming more urgent.

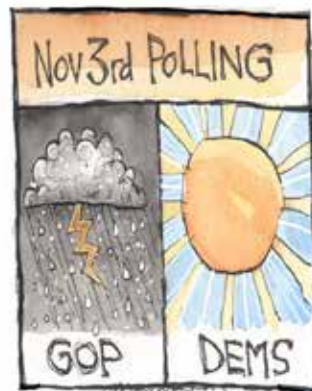
We know that we cannot fully predict future shocks and surprises. But we have the power to build a more complete understanding of the socioeconomic and natural dynamics of our islands, and develop strategies that will reduce transform disasters into mere disturbances. To do this, we must take stock of how we are doing as a territory today, and address our chronic and acute vulnerabilities. We can do this by improving the robustness of our infrastructure, building the necessary operation and maintenance processes, and protect our natural resources. We can also do this by monitoring the behavior of the constantly evolving infrastructure systems, and by developing skills that will allow us to anticipate and adapt to unexpected events. Lastly, we need to recognize that comprehensive risk reduction is a collective effort, and work with nongovernmental organizations and community partners. In other words, by understanding how we are doing today, and through mitigation and resilience strategies implemented by multiple actors, we can reduce risk

and ensure we always have access to what we need to thrive.

The Hazard Mitigation and Resilience Plan is creating a framework for comprehensive disaster risk reduction in the USVI. The HMRP seeks to understand how things are going in the territory, and asks the question of whether we have the resources and capacities necessary to handle the impacts of future hurricanes, earthquakes, drought, increase in sea-level or rise in temperatures. The plan evaluates our strengths and our weaknesses, and identifies where and how we can invest in risk management and reduction initiatives. The plan also looks at where we can foster practices and processes that allow us to anticipate issues and adapt during events that sneak in on us. Finally, the plan evaluates expected major shifts in our development pathways and their impacts on social and natural systems, and imagines ways in which our territory can positively transform itself in the face of anticipated future developments.

This plan will not be successful without broad participation of relevant governmental or non-governmental stakeholders like you. Please join us at our upcoming workshop on Thursday and Friday to learn how we are doing, and to discuss ways we can sustain long-term risk reduction strategies. And how we can prepare for tomorrow — today

— Dr. Greg Emanuel is the director of the Green Caribbean Center at the University of the Virgin Islands.



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