



Special Bulletin with candidates profiles

sabagov.nl - March 2019



As a service to the people, the Public Entity Saba took the initiative to compile profiles of the candidates running in the March 20 Island Council elections. There are eight candidates of the Windward Islands People's Movement (WIPM), five of the Saba Labor Party (SLP) and the sole candidate on the blank slate, Dave Levenstone. In this special bulletin, the voters will find profiles of all 14 candidates. The candidates were asked to introduce themselves, to explain why they are running in these elections and what the main issues are that they want to see addressed. Two elections actually take place on March 20. Besides electing the new Island Council, eligible voters with the Dutch nationality will also cast their vote for the Electoral College, which in turn will vote for the members of the First Chamber, the Senate. Saba has 1,105 eligible voters for the Island Council elections. Of this number, 549 are men and 556 are women. There are 906 eligible voters for the Electoral College elections. This is a lower number, because only persons with the Dutch nationality may vote for the Electoral College. In 2015, during the previous Island Council elections, there were 1,058 eligible voters, of which 848 with the Dutch nationality. This year, two international observers will be present at the March 20 elections. They observers are of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), a non-profit, non-partisan electoral assistance organization that has worked with over 145 countries in the past 30 years. The two voting bureaus, the Fire Station in The Bottom and the Eugenius Johnson Center in Windwardside, will be open on Election Day from 7:30am to 9:00pm. The Central Voting Bureau, chaired by Island Governor Jonathan Johnson, will count the votes that same night. Voting cards have been distributed.

Rolando Wilson (WIPM, number one)



Dedicated to the community, committed to progress. That is the slogan of number one on the WIPM slate, Rolando Wilson, born and raised on Saba, with more than 35 years of experience in government service and current leader of the WIPM party. Rolando has done most of his studies in Aruba. Rolando, or Rolly as he is affectionally called, entered the political arena for the first time about 30 years ago. He didn't secure a seat, but he continued to work for government. He re-entered the political field in 2003 as a candidate on the WIPM slate. "Thanks to the people of Saba, I was elected to the Island Council. During that period, we successfully passed ordinances that brought improvement, and we saw positive change. In 2007, I was asked to become WIPM's political leader, which I still am. On May 27 2016, I was appointed to take the vacated seat left by the previous Commissioner Chris Johnson. With my 12 years of experience as Island Council member, I understood the enormous responsibility that was entrusted upon me. The succession of challenges that I had to face and continue to encounter only makes me stronger to go on and work harder to try to succeed in helping the Saba people. Not only stronger, but this has given me wisdom to take on and deal with complex issues." Saba and her people have progressed in many ways: a new state-of-the-art hospital, a new Community Development Department where people can go for social

help, and many other investments that have been made. "But there is still a lot more that we will continue to improve on. I mention more affordable housing, being able to produce more local food through agriculture, looking for ways to create employment opportunities. I would like to thank the people who have placed their confidence and trust in me, and have continued to encourage me throughout the years to keep on moving forward. I will always be dedicated to the community and committed to achieve progress for the people, always trusting in the One that brought me this far."



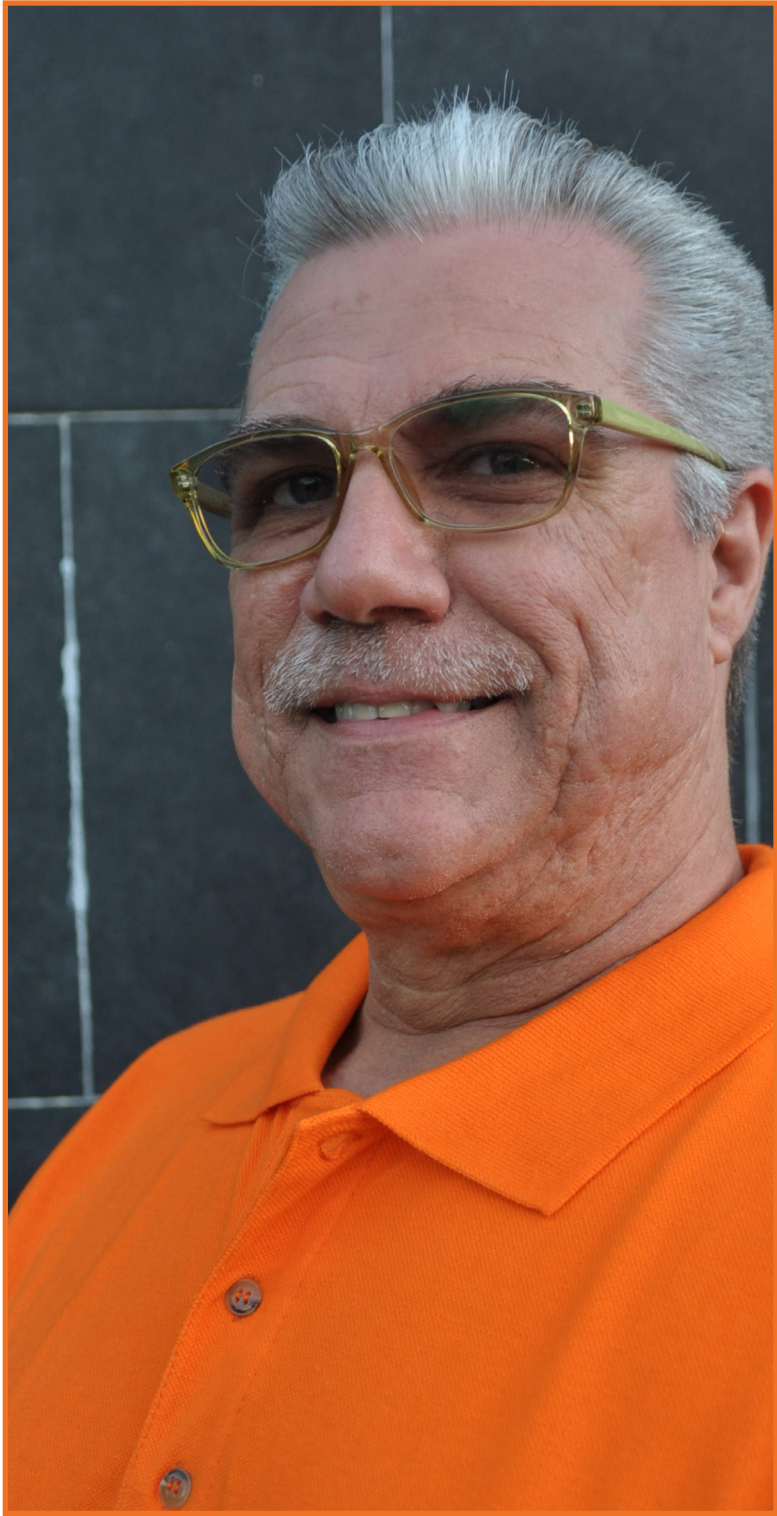
Bruce Zagers (WIPM, number 2)



“My name is Bruce Zagers and I was born and raised on Saba. I graduated from Flagler College, Florida, in 2003 with a bachelor’s degree in accounting. As soon as I returned, I started working at the finance department where I held the functions of Internal Controller and Budgetary Controller. In 2007 I entered politics and I have served as a Commissioner ever since. I am married and have two amazing kids. Although I come from a family who was never active in politics, I knew that at some point I would want to get involved and this happened in 2007. Having studied abroad and returning home, I feel that this is the best way that I can contribute to the development of Saba. Having served as a Commissioner for almost 12 years, I am still challenged daily by the function which makes it very intriguing for me as a young man. I feel that I can still make a valuable contribution especially because of my experience, my network in the Netherlands, and of course my dedication to serving Saba and her people. The most obvious issue is poverty alleviation. However, we must create an integrated model where measures are taken to reduce utilities and transportation prices like has been done with water. Increasing wages, pensions and social benefits will not be the sole solution. In addition to this we need to ensure that Saba retains more autonomy. The organization of medical referrals and the granting of work permits were both tasks done

by the local government prior to the dismantling of the Netherlands Antilles on 10-10-10. We now have a system where decisions that have a daily impact on our people, schools and businesses are being made in Bonaire without any regard to how these delayed or in some cases lack of decisions are impacting the lives of the people living here. All three of these issues will need to be tackled on a political level in the Netherlands and as such we need strong leaders who can represent Saba. I feel that with my experience, network and earned respect in the Netherlands, I can be that voice who can continue lobbying for progress on your behalf.”

Carl Buncamper (WIPM, number 3)



“From a young age it was instilled in us that you should focus on building up yourself, because when you are reduced to tearing down others to build yourself up, it is a direct indicator of something lacking and void in you.” Carl was raised in a family environment where education, respect, hard work and helping others was prominent. Having completed high school on St. Maarten and Aruba, he attended university in the United States. Carl focused on the area of business management with a minor in both hospitality and travel, and obtained a Bachelor’s Degree in Institutional Management. Carl continued the learning process and received a Master’s in Project Management certification. Additionally, Carl has achieved numerous certifications ranging from counseling, trainer vocational education (MBO), Law Rights of the Child, to name a few, as well as being fluent in English, Dutch, Spanish and Papiamentu. Carl has served his communities through the non-governmental organization NGO sector for over 30 years, including the Saba Lion’s Club, and has been active on the human rights platform. In 2007 Carl contested the local elections and won a seat in the Island Council. Carl has vast experience having been an Island Council member for 12 years: he is presently serving his third term in the Island Council and remains committed to the improvement of the quality of life for all Saban residents. Running for re-election was

an easy decision. Reflecting on the accomplishments of Team WIPM and his personal involvement, and being able to see and measure the positive impacts within the community development, is a critical driver for Carl to run again in these elections. Ensuring stable and progressive leadership is another. What are Carl’s main areas of focus? “The areas that I find myself most driven by are to continue our fight to mitigate the vulnerability of poverty and its reduction, continued educational reform, and good governance. All with an overarching mission to create an atmosphere where all of our people can live a dignified life and our island and economy can flourish.”

Eviton Heyliger (WIPM, number 4)



Eviton (41) has been an Island Council member for the past eight years. He was born on Saba. His mother was a Carib from St. Vincent. His father is Saba born. After completing primary school, his mother sent him to St. Vincent for his secondary education. He returned to Saba when he was 18 and started a pizza delivery business, after which he had his own construction company. To this day, he loves construction work. Eviton has also worked for the Postal Services: he was the third person of his family to do so, after his father and grandfather. Since 2016, he works as the technical director of the Own Your Own Home housing foundation. Politics became part of his life through Chris Johnson. "I made a promise to Chris to run when he did, so I ran for the first time in 2006. I didn't get a seat, but that did not discourage me. I wanted to fight for Saba so I ran again in 2011. Politics is not an easy thing, he said. "People come to you all the time with their issues, because you are their elected representative. Also, you have to stand your ground. As Island Council, we are responsible, and we have to make sure that the Executive Council and the Dutch Government live up to their responsibilities." According to Eviton, health care, the immigration system and labor opportunities for locals are important issues. "We have a better health care system than in many parts of the world, but some decisions affecting our people are taken without the

involvement of our government. We need to have a say. It is also not right that we have to suffer because of the overspending by the Health Insurance Office ZVK. We need to be fairly treated." Certain immigration and naturalization policies are not conducive. "The naturalization exam is too difficult. The law is the law, but people should be able to pass." Also, not enough Sabans are given the opportunity to work at departments like the Fire Department, Police, Immigration, Customs and Coast Guard. Organizing a local drive can help to get Sabans for these jobs.

Vito Charles (WIPM, number 5)



Vito Charles (39) has been an Island Council Member for the past three years. “I grew up on Saba, moved to St. Maarten as a teenager and lived there as a young adult. This played a big role in shaping my identity. Prior to becoming an Island Council Member, I was a civil servant. My last job was at the Government Information Service (GIS). I have always been active in the community. As the President of the Carnival Foundation, I have organized several carnivals, and without financial losses. I am a board member of Saba Archeological Center (SABARC) and the Saba Reach Foundation. I also volunteer with young people, to foster positive interactions with decision makers.” Attended Vito attended the Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida. Vito always had an interest in politics, and since becoming an Island Council Member he has seen how the Council can contribute to change. “It is not the overnight changes that I, like many others, would like to see, but it is slow deliberate change that is possible because of debate and dialogue. I believe that I have been a strong advocate for the people and I am running because I want to continue to help my island.” Poverty alleviation is one of the main issues that he will continue to advocate in the next Island Council. “One of the things that has really shocked me is the amount of hidden poverty that exists on Saba. Poverty can be combated on many fronts, but I think

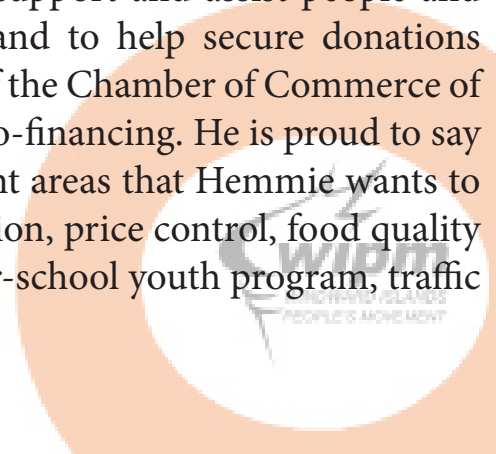
the most important way is by making sure that people earn enough. This is important, since our social benefits are too low. Another important issue is the high cost of living and doing business. We need to work with the National Government to find ways to structurally lower the high cost of electricity, transportation and rent. This will promote economic development. Other important issues for me are: youth activities, education, the environment and healthcare. People deserve an Island Council member who works in their best interest and that of Saba, and not in his or her own interest.”

Hemmie van Xanten (WIPM candidate 6)



Hemmie van Xanten (58) arrived on Saba in 1991 as teacher at the Sacred Heart School (SHS). A year later he became principal of that same school. In the seven years that he held this job, he has helped to form many Saba children in a positive way. In 1999, he moved to Malaysia to work for so-called Shell schools, attended by children of Shell employees, for nine years. But he missed Saba a lot, the island where he felt truly at home, and in 2008 he came back to as the head of the Educational Department. In 2012, he became the head of the Saba Comprehensive School (SCS) for two years. Hemmie has studied at the Teachers' College in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, and he has done many education-related trainings and courses over the years. He also participated in many international conferences, which contributed to his wide knowledge about education. He gained his first experience teaching abroad in Kenya in 1984, after which he worked in Uganda for a while. His main motive to join a political party and to run in the elections for the first time, has to do with his motivation to “help and support and Saba in making it a better place for us all where quality of life is the main goal.” Saba is home. “Although I have traveled the world, seen many places and observed different cultures, my passion for Saba started as soon as I came here for the first time. I love to support and assist people and organizations, and to help secure donations

for churches, schools and public areas. As a member of the board of the Chamber of Commerce of St. Eustatius and Saba, Hemmie assists businesses to obtain a micro-financing. He is proud to say that so far, 11 companies have received micro-financing. Important areas that Hemmie wants to address a member of the Island Council are: minimum wage/pension, price control, food quality control, supporting small-scale food producers, and extensive after-school youth program, traffic control, health care and educational involvement.

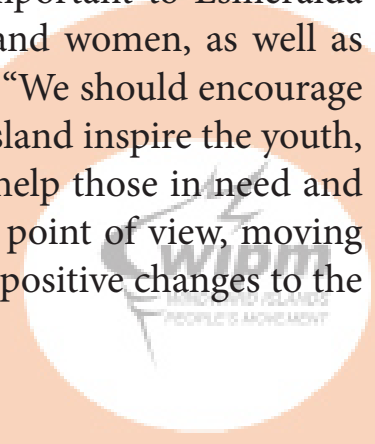


Esmeralda Johnson (WIPM, number 7)



WIPM's seventh candidate on the list is also the youngest person to take part in the March 20 elections. Esmeralda Johnson is 21 years young, but has a remarkable track record already. She left Saba at the age of 16 in 2014 to pursue an education in the United States. She graduated last year at the age of 20 with a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics and a minor in Economics from Lindenwood University in Missouri. Besides her studies, she was also a math tutor, and treasurer and president of two active organizations at Lindenwood University. Eager to keep busy, to keep developing personally and to contribute to her beloved Saba, she is currently doing an internship at the new Community Development Department. Why did a young person like Esmeralda decide to participate in these elections? "I have an extreme passion for my island and I truly care for Saba, my fellow citizens and our future of moving forward together. I want to use the knowledge, skills and ideas that I attained thus far to have an influence on the changes which the island needs. My main motivation is to get more youth to see themselves in leadership positions by being a role model for them, especially being a young woman from Saba. I decided to get into politics to try to give back to the island that I love and to get a useful experience." The issues that are most important to Esmeralda are: education, youth and women, as well as

the long-term social and sustainable wellbeing of the inhabitants of Saba. "We should encourage life- learning opportunities for all, make sure that the institutions on the island inspire the youth, women and men, and allow them to grow, offer better benefits that will help those in need and to make living here more affordable. I offer you a fresh voice and a new point of view, moving forward together into the future. I hope to bring that new voice and fresh positive changes to the citizens, with a safer, more affordable, more enjoyable community."

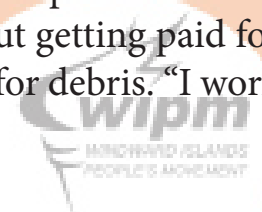


Jelle van der Velde (WIPM, number 8)



Jelle van der Velde, with 27 years the second youngest election candidate, is on a mission: a climate-change-proof Saba. He runs as number 8 and the last spot on the WIPM slate. Jelle was born in Curaçao and came to Saba in 2003. After he finished high school in St. Maarten, he returned to Saba and worked here for a while. With the intention of furthering his studies, he went to the Netherlands, but he missed Saba too much and came home early. In 2013, he started working at the Saba Conservation Foundation SCF as Marine Park Manager. He obtained his skipper's license and did multiple courses in coral reef monitoring, sea birds and different other aspects of sea life. The decision to be a candidate, for the first time, has everything to do with nature and his love for that key aspect. "The biggest threat to Saba is climate change, and even though this government has done a lot, I think we can do more and I want to help with that." Jelle has four goals: 1. Proper management of the recently established Mount Scenery National Park, 2. Manage and prevent invasive species that are a threat to the native species, 3. Stimulate the use of nature as an economic resource for Saba has a lot to offer in this area, both on land and in the sea, and 4. Development of niche markets for Saba, such as a health retreat and outdoor sports. Also, Jelle would like to see Saba develop a coral lab. Everything is related to nature, in Jelle's view. It has a huge economic

value. A healthy nature means good health for people. Nature helps to prevent erosion, it brings in tourists and jobs, which means a reduction of poverty, and it generates food. People often come to Jelle for help, but he will also offer assistance without being asked and without getting paid for it, like the time after the 2017 hurricanes when he checked the Fort Bay Harbor for debris. "I work seven days a week. I am not in it for the money."

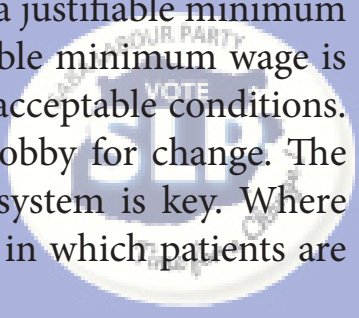


Monique Wilson (SLP, number 1)



“Mother, social worker, advocate and motivator are some of the key roles of myself, Monique Wilson. I am a mother of two. Raised on Saba until 17 when I went to further my education in Miami. Attended and graduated St. Thomas University with Bachelor degrees in Sociology and Criminal Justice, followed by a Master degree in Mental Health Counseling, all with honors. I worked in the mental health field as a therapist and educator for a community college in Florida until 2013 when I returned to Saba. Here I worked in the private sector for about a year until I switched to my current employment in the social work field. I always wanted to help others. Contributing to Saba is engraved in me. Hence, my participation in the elections. My mission and motto since 2015 have been to advocate current issues and support viable long-term solutions and plans to further develop and empower Saba. As a student, I was awarded opportunities to advance myself, and I strongly believe in reinvesting one’s talents and knowledge to continue to develop and empower others. There is no manual how to be a politician but my core value is: ‘Do good and be honest.’ This is my motivation to ensure every decision I make and action I take is solely to benefit the Saba people. As government officials we have to set the right example. I do my best to ensure that my actions cause no harm to today’s community and the next generations.

Too often we fell victim to poor decision-making in the past and we had to fix it afterwards. Many issues are dear to my heart, but the main concerns for me are: establishing a justifiable minimum wage, youth/education and medical care. The failure to establish a justifiable minimum wage is the foundation of many subsequent issues that force persons to live in unacceptable conditions. I have been vocal at a ministerial level about this and will continue to lobby for change. The empowerment of our youth and further development of the education system is key. Where medical care is concerned, there is a consistent imbalance in the manner in which patients are receiving services when sent abroad.”

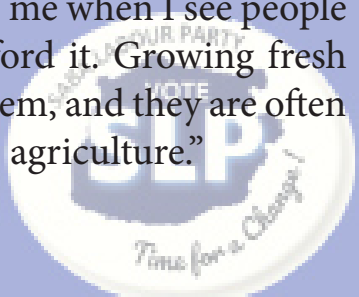


Ishmael Levenstone (SLP, number 2)



With 78, he is the oldest sitting Councilman in the Dutch Caribbean, and he decided to run one more time in the March 20 elections for a new Island Council and the Electoral College. Ishmael Matthew Amael Levenstone has been active in politics for some 50 years. He first entered the Island Council in 1975, but lost that seat in 1979. He took a break from politics from 1983 to 1987 and came back as an Island Council member with the Saba Labor Party (SLP) from 1999 to 2003, and again in 2011. Levenston was Saba's first labor union leader. "I followed my father. I looked at the things he did. He was a kind-hearted man who did a lot for Saba," Levenston said of his father the famous Mathew Levenstone, who served many years in the Island Council and Executive Council, and under whose responsibility the road from The Bottom to the airport was built. Ishmael decided to run again this year. "With God's help to keep the SLP alive" and to, as he put it, "fan the fire," referring to the saying of the old times when people still had a coal pot. "God has me here for a reason, to do a job, and apparently my job was not finished as yet. To be a politician, you have to mingle with the man in the street every day, not just until the elections and then forget about them the next day. You need to be a 24-hour politician. Politics come from the heart. Everybody can tell you that I am not in it for the money or power, but for the people." The opposition

party has an important role. "Without a strong opposition, there is no democracy. Ishmael's two focal points, and they are inter-related, are poverty and agriculture. "It hurts me when I see people at the store picking up an item and putting it back because they can't afford it. Growing fresh produce is key. Saba used to export agricultural products. Now we import them, and they are often of poor quality and expensive. I will keep hammering on the need for more agriculture."



Thaddeus Nicholson (SLP, number 3)



His official name is Augustus Nicholson (52), but he is better known as Thaddeus. Born on Saba, he studied in both St. Maarten and Aruba. First, he did the LTS technical school in Aruba and then continued at the MTS technical school in St. Maarten. After receiving his MTS electronics diploma, he came back home and worked with his father's cable TV company where his technical expertise came in very handy. "During that time at my father's company, I took a course in the cellular phone system. I graduated as a cellular system operator and billing system accountant. I managed Saba's first cellular system before it was sold to UTS at the time when telephoning was analog." Thaddeus speaks English, Dutch, Spanish and Papiamentu, he is married and has eight children, whom he added, he supports all. Why is he running in these elections? "Because I love my island and I want to see it improve in the right way as much as possible. I want to actively contribute to that. I am running to be in the Island Council so I can voice my opinions and do good things for the island as my father Max Nicholson did." Thaddeus' main motivation is to be able to negotiate to try to get the high cost of living down. "I also want to help negotiate for more autonomy for Saba in issues of granting work permits and medical referrals. I find it important to assist with Saba's infrastructure, making roads safe, and to create more places for the docking of

boats at the harbor. We need to help create more opportunities for the Saba people economically, to invest in education and in our culture and heritage."

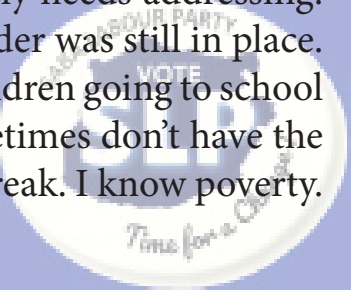


Charles Hassell (SLP, number 4)



Charles Hassell (52) was born on Saba and did the technical LTS school with carpentry as his specialty. He didn't further his studies, but went to work on Aruba for two years, transporting asphalt from the refinery to the ships. Charles returned to Saba in 1981 to work at the Public Works Department. In 2000, he moved to St. Vincent where he had his own business, transporting passengers with his bus. It was there that he met his wife. One year later, he came back to Saba and worked for HES Construction until 2007 when he reentered government service. Up to this day, he works as a security officer. The first time Charles gave politics a try was in 1990, the Antillean Parliamentary elections, and again in 1991 the Saba Island Council elections. The March 20 elections will be his sixth time as a candidate. In his opinion, having a strong opposition is necessary, so everyone's voice is heard on cardinal issues such as education, scholarships, the high cost of living and poverty. "A strong opposition helps to keep government in check." What he termed the poor performance of the Health Insurance Office ZVK is one of the main issues for Charles. "Patients face logistical problems. The service of the ZVK needs to get better." In his opinion, Dutch should be reintroduced as the first language at schools because this will help young Saba people when they decide to study in the Netherlands, and to get a job later on. "We are Dutch after all, and you have to

know Dutch for many jobs. The lack of knowledge of Dutch hampers Sabans to get jobs at the Fire Department, Customs, police and immigration." Poverty most definitely needs addressing. According to Charles, prices were better controlled when the Antillean guilder was still in place. "Guilder prices became dollar prices, causing hardship for many people. Children going to school without breakfast. I have a food store, Sandrina's in Zion's Hill. People sometimes don't have the money to pay, so I give them credit, but when they can't pay, I give them a break. I know poverty. I grew up with my grandmother who sold vegetables to survive."

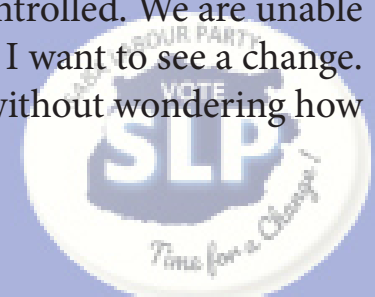


Sislene Matthew (SLP, number 5)



Born and raised on Saba, Sislene (40) is a licensed practical nurse and has four children. "I love to take on a challenge, and to help people, no matter who they are. I enjoy being around elder people because I can learn a lot from them." Sislene's reason for running as a first-time candidate has a lot to do with the challenges of being a single mother. Also, because she believes that every voice should be heard, and everyone should be given a fair chance. Her main motivations for going into politics are God and her children. "God gives me strength. My children urge me to fight and push for what I believe in: equality and justice for all, no matter who you are. They always say, mommy don't give up because you told us that the words 'give up' and 'can't' don't exist. I decided to go into politics to see if I can help make a difference on this small island, to try change certain things, to be a voice for those who are afraid to speak out, to help where needed and to be able to make certain points clear because it is a lot to swallow. We, single parents feel it the most, and we struggle from day to day to make sure that the needs of our kids are met." Housing and the cost of living are Sislene's main issues. "Housing is very expensive and lot of single parents can't afford a decent home because of our low salaries. Low income homes are also high in rent, especially for a single parent. This needs to be addressed."

The high cost of living is a major issue. "The prices in the shops are outrageous, and everyone bawls at how expensive groceries are. Some shop owners are overdoing it with their prices. The cost of living needs to be controlled. We are unable to make it on our salaries. I deal with these two main issues every day and I want to see a change. Not only for me, but for others as well, so everyone can have a decent life without wondering how to survive, especially those with children."



Dave Levenstone (UPM, blank list)



Dave K. Levenstone was born on St. Kitts to a Kittian mother and a Saban father on October 31, 1960, but because he was only registered on November 3, all his legal documents refer to this date. Educated on Saba, St. Maarten and Curaçao, Dave has been a civil servant since 1979, having worked in various departments, including the Cultural Department, the Department of Public Works. He then did the Police Academy in Curaçao. After completing the Police Academy, he moved back to Saba and worked at the Post Office until he became the first assistant to the WIPM party in the Netherlands Antilles Parliament, and later on the first executive secretary for the Saba Commissioners. He also worked as Chief Protocol Officer until he was transferred to the Department of Economic Affairs of the Public Entity Saba. Dave has served on numerous committees of the then Netherlands Antilles Government, as well as many People Government committees, and he has served on boards of several organizations. Dave initiated a new political party, the United People Movement UPM, but for technical reasons, he is running as the sole candidate on a blank slate. Why does he run in these elections? “Because I am convinced that I can make a valuable contribution to the overall development of my island. I have followed the developments over the past eight plus years since we became a Public Entity and I realized

that we have not been sending the right persons to represent us. Most of the time it functions as a sort of rubberstamp of the Executive Council. As a member of the Island Council I want to help execute the true task of this highest elected body. We need people that can stand up to the many challenges that Saba faces. I want to help making the dualistic system work. Sabans feel they are losing their island slowly. Coming from a political family background, politics has always been a calling for me.” Dave has a number of priority issues: the functioning of the Island Council, the economy in general, cultural heritage, social domain, agriculture, youth and sports, entrepreneurship, tourism, strengthening of relations within the region and within the Kingdom.

