



GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Governor Bryan Provides Project Updates and Outlines Proposed Legislation

US VIRGIN ISLANDS – In the weekly Government House briefing on Monday, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. shared his own personal experience with the ongoing electrical outages that have, for the past several weeks, plagued the Territory. Governor Bryan said that even he has lost appliances to unpredicted power surges – an unpleasant and costly reality of life with unreliable electrical power.

“I share the deep concerns that have been voiced by many regarding the issues confronting the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) and the frequent power disruptions in the St. Thomas/St. John district,” Governor Bryan said. “These power disruptions are not just inconveniences; they affect our daily lives, our businesses, and our overall well-being.”

In May, Governor Bryan declared a State of Emergency to restore energy security in the USVI. This proactive step was taken to avert widespread power disruptions across the territory and to enable the administration to take the necessary emergency actions to stabilize WAPA.

“For the past five years, although the Bryan-Roach administration supported WAPA and respected its autonomy in its effort to right the ship and stabilize the authority, WAPA failed to achieve the stability and reliability the community needs and deserves,” Governor Bryan said.

“It has become imperative then for us to step in more directly,” Governor Bryan added. “It comes a point where we have to step in and take control.”

While some have suggested that the federal government be called upon for aid, the federal government has already been working closely with the administration toward the stabilization of WAPA over the past five years. One notable example of this collaboration is the most recent obligation by FEMA for the prudent replacement of the Richmond Power Plant. Additionally, there are several other federally funded mitigation projects already underway, such as the composite pole project, the installation of underground electric lines territory-wide, and water line rehabilitation projects in St. Croix.

Progress has been made with the installation of Wartsila generators at the Randolph Harley Power Plant and there is an agreement with HUD for the funding to acquire the propane terminals from VITOL. These efforts demonstrate the continued support and collaboration between the Bryan-Roach Administration and the federal government.

Governor Bryan provided an update on preparedness efforts in advance of the official start of the Atlantic hurricane season. Through the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA), the Bryan-Roach Administration has been diligently working alongside FEMA and other federal partners. VITEMA and FEMA recently concluded a comprehensive hurricane readiness response exercise aimed at strengthening the territory's capabilities before the peak of the hurricane season.

Governor Bryan urged residents to pay close attention to weather alerts from VITEMA and the National Weather Service, stating that climate change is significantly impacting the frequency, strength, and predictability of weather events in the territory.

Legislation before the 35th Legislature

Prior to the briefing, a video of Governor Bryan taking a walking tour of Frederiksted premiered. The tour, which can be viewed on YouTube and social media outlets, addresses the pressing issue of derelict and abandoned buildings in the territory. These buildings are not just eyesores but represent missed opportunities for affordable housing and increased commerce in our towns and historic communities.

Governor Bryan introduced a bill designed to assist owners of derelict and abandoned properties with the resources they need to improve them, ultimately benefiting the entire community. The bill is just one of a host of legislative proposals from Government House currently before the 35th Legislature.

Also proposed:

1. **A bill to address mandatory minimum sentencing:** This legislation aims to reform the criminal justice system to ensure fairness and justice while maintaining public safety.
2. **A bill requesting an appropriation of \$3 million in funding:** This crucial funding will allow the territory to meet its match funding requirement for Medicaid, ensuring that residents continue to receive the healthcare services they need.
3. **A bill allowing change of gender marker on government-issued documents:** Proposed legislation would allow gender designations on official documents to be changed by filing a petition with the Superior Court.
4. **A bill to change certain procurement statutes:** Last month, the administration sent proposed amendments to the procurement statutes which would increase the Dept of Property and Procurement's ability to efficiently provide services.
5. **Bills to amend Workers' Comp and Unemployment Insurance:** Last November, the administration sent down several labor-related measures, one to transfer the administration of the Government Insurance Fund from the Commissioner of Finance to the Commissioner of Labor and streamline the administration of worker's comp, and several other important changes to the administration of Unemployment Insurance, including increasing the statute of limitations on overpayment claims to allow the Department of Labor additional time to collect from claimants.

Governor Bryan introduced Sirri Hamad, who he has appointed as Envoy to the Middle Eastern Community and declared November 29th as Virgin Islands-Palestinian Friendship Day.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory's people, infrastructure, and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government, and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov

