



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 14, 2020

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Governor Bryan Says \$10 Million in Stimulus Funds Issued This Week by V.I. Finance Department

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During his COVID-19 briefing Thursday, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said that stimulus checks began going out from the Virgin Islands Finance Department on Monday and by the end of the week, 6,271 checks totaling almost \$10 million will have been issued.

“Everyone who is entitled to a COVID stimulus check will receive a COVID stimulus check,” Governor Bryan said. “I would also like to call your attention to the fact that no state in the union must go through this process. Only the commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the territories must issue checks. The federal government issues all the checks without the states’ involvement.”

The Governor also said an assistance center will be opened to assist individuals in filling out a 1040 tax form for 2018 in order to help them receive a stimulus check quicker.

“It only requires basic information, but we realize printing resources and the fear of coming into offices may be a hindrance to people getting through this process,” Governor Bryan said. “Once again, there is plenty of money and everyone who is entitled will get a check.”

Stimulus checks

- Checks began going out on Monday, May 11.
- As of May 14, 2,595 checks totaling \$3.9 million have been sent out.

- On May 15, an additional 3,676 checks totaling about \$6 million will be sent out.
- The Lieutenant Governor's Office is asking stimulus check recipients to use a banking app or an ATM, if possible, to deposit checks.

YES credits

- YES Program credits began appearing on V.I. Water and Power Authority bills on May 7.
- To date, 6,046 residential customers received a \$250 credit and 1,654 commercial ratepayers have received a \$500 credit.
- All ratepayers will have received their YES Program credit by the end of May.

Unemployment benefits

- Applications continue to be processed, and, to date, the Labor Department has received 8,074 unemployment applications since April 7.
- 5,168 claims have been converted into new claims.
- 4,672 checks totaling more than \$3.3 million have been issued.
- Almost twice the number of claims processed in a typical year have been processed in 60 days.
- The \$600 additional sum through the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program is scheduled to be implemented next week.
- Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance funds are retroactive to April 4 and will continue weekly until July 31.
- Unemployment benefit checks are a form of taxable income, and a considerable amount of money to be paid in taxes will be required on the next income tax filing for those who don't opt to withhold taxes from the checks on the front end.

COVID-19 cases

- There has been a sixth COVID-related death in the Territory: The 45-year-old son of the husband and wife from St. Croix who were the fourth and fifth victims.
- Currently tracking 2 active cases
- 1,278 individuals tested to date
- 1,164 of those tests were negative
- 69 tests came back positive
- 61 recovered
- 45 tests are pending
- 6 fatalities to date
- No COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- One COVID-19 patient is hospitalized on a ventilator at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas. The patient was aboard a vessel in severe respiratory distress and

was allowed into the Territory for medical treatment and was immediately quarantined in accordance with strict medical protocol.

Recognition

- In recognition of National Police Week and Peace Officers Memorial Day, which is May 15, all flags are to be flown half-staff on Friday.

Special Thanks

- The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Miami, with the assistance of USVI Special Economic Envoy to Taiwan Anthony Weeks, donated 20,000 masks to Luis Hospital on St. Croix.

VITEMA

Director Daryl Jaschen gave an update on the efforts of the V.I. Territorial Emergency Management Agency efforts in fighting the spread of COVID-19 and how those might be impacted by the approaching Hurricane Season.

- VITEMA, the V.I. Department of Health and FEMA have operated as a unified command with 40 other territorial and federal agencies.
- The unified command will have a tabletop exercise on Friday about setting up an evacuation shelter and a mass care shelter amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.
- VITEMA, the V.I. Department of Health, V.I. National Guard and Juan F. Luis Hospital will inspect the recently received federal medical station and plan to have all rooms prepared, all systems tested and all support staff trained by the end of May.

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