GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 24, 2020
Press Contact
Richard Motta Jr.
340-474-2399
www.vi.gov
richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov

Governor Bryan, COVID-19 Task Force Urge Extra Caution For Thanksgiving Holiday Gatherings

Governor Grants Administrative Leave for November 27 for 'Day of Family, Prayer and Reflection' in Wake of Trials of 2020 and COVID Pandemic

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Governor Albert Bryan Jr. wished Virgin Islanders a safe and healthy Thanksgiving holiday, imploring all the Territory's residents to follow CDC guidelines for any family gatherings and to make Friday, November 27, a "Day of Family, Prayer and Reflection" to consider the tough year everyone has had with the COVID-19 pandemic and the extremely active hurricane season.

The Governor also announced that he's calling the 33rd Legislature into a Special Session on December 3 to take up a second securitization bill, that seeks to create revenue for the Territory by refinancing the government's debt and allowing the USVI to re-enter the bond market. The proceeds from the refunding of the bonds in collaboration with the Legislature will be assigned to priority areas, such as the Government Employees' Retirement System and infrastructure projects in the Territory.

Regarding the administrative leave, Governor Bryan said all non-essential government employees are granted administrative leave, and he urged private sector businesses to participate and allow their employees to have the day off as well.

"We give thanks to the almighty Creator for sparing us through another hurricane season and extend our prayers to those who were not as fortunate during what has been a record year for storm activity in the Atlantic," Governor Bryan said. "Please utilize the day to spend with family and reflect on our many blessings received. In a year that has been filled with many trials, we remain thankful."

The Governor also said he is instituting a two-week "soft shutdown" of government agencies and asking all department heads and commissioners to allow their staff to work remotely for the two weeks after Thanksgiving weekend.

"I am urging all private and public employers to follow suit. Allow workers to perform their duties remotely where possible, or to take time off, or to work staggered schedules," Governor Bryan said.

As another safety measure against a widespread outbreak of COVID-19 after the Thanksgiving holiday, Governor Bryan is instituting a moratorium on the issuance of permits for large events.

"No permits will be granted for any activities in public spaces for large events, sports tournaments or food sales until further notice," the Governor said. "Those of you who have plans to do so, please cancel them now. No exceptions. This is not a time to be out but to recognize the way that the U.S, mainland is trending if we are not diligent, another shutdown Territory-wide is imminent."

Governor Bryan also advised residents who plan to gather for Thanksgiving of the CDC guidelines to make for a safer holiday get-together:

- Move meals outdoors if possible
- If celebrating indoors, open windows and doors to keep fresh air flowing
- Limit the number of guests to 10 or less and do not attempt to have a mass gathering
- Limit the number of people going in and out of the kitchen
- Don't be embarrassed to ask people dropping by to wear their masks
- Keep 6 feet away from people you don't live with
- Encourage guests to wash their hands and use hand sanitizer

"This year's holiday will prove difficult for a lot of Virgin Islanders as we are accustomed to gather together and celebrate each other and the things we are grateful for," Governor Bryan said. "But the reality is that the COVID-19 virus is spreading at record levels all throughout the United States. Americans today have a greater risk of contracting the virus now more than any other time this year.

Here at home, we are swimming against the current trying not to follow that negative trend," Governor Bryan said. "But the number of our active cases for the last two weeks have been slowly rising upwards."

COVID-19 cases

- Currently tracking 57 active cases
- 27,823 individuals tested to date (more than 25% of the population)
- 26,277 of those tests were negative,507 tests came back positive
- 1,427 people have recovered
- 23 fatalities to date
- No COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix or at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

###