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New Petition Drive to Stop WAPA Rate Hike Underway

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Robert Moore **November 28, 2019**

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Consumer advocates have launched another territory-wide petition drive in advance of the V.I. Public Services Commission (PSC) vote on WAPA's latest bid for a utility rate increase.

The V.I. Alliance for Consumer Justice petition urges PSC board members to reject the Water and Power Authority bid for a 5.8 cent base rate hike. The commission is set to vote at the December 11th PSC hearing on St. Thomas.

"The Virgin Islands Alliance for Consumer Justice is fighting to protect the seniors, churches, hospitals, small businesses and the working class people throughout the territory," said Clarence Payne, head of the Alliance.

"Our heart breaks to think that seniors grapple each month with the dreaded decision of medicine, or food or rent ... What message is being sent not only to the seniors but to ourselves knowing that

this occurs every month.”

WAPA is seeking an increase of 5.8 cents per kilowatt-hour in the permanent base utility rate.

It hopes to couple the increase with a 3.08 cents decrease in the so-called Leased Generator surcharge paid by WAPA’s customers each month.

An additional promise of a 2.57 cents reduction in the fuel charge, known as the LEAC fee, would result in a minimal 0.15 cents per-kilowatt-hour increase in the average electric bill, according to WAPA officials.

If approved, the rate changes would give WAPA some hope of paying day-to-day operational costs and settling a \$100 million-plus debt owed to vendors, including VITOL, the Dutch energy company that supplies the propane fueling power generation in much of the territory.

The Consortium last week [reported exclusively](#) about Gov. Albert Bryan urging the PSC to support the rate hike request.

“Right now, this is the only viable plan to allow the authority to restructure some of its legacy debt,” Government House Communications Director Richard Motta told the Consortium.

“The elderly, churches, small businesses, hospitals on each island and the working class cannot sustain these outrageous electricity rates,” the petition reads. “We further demand that there be accountability for the mismanagement of funds and for WAPA to provide transparency ...”

Here is a [link](#) to the petition.