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DeGraff Chides Bryan for Sidestepping Minority in Territorial Development Discussions

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Senator Dwayne DeGraff By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

In a recent press statement, Senator Dwayne DeGraff expressed profound disappointment with Governor Albert Bryan for what DeGraff said was Mr. Bryan's failure to involve the Senate Minority in the ongoing discussions concerning future development plans for the territory.

Governor Bryan, on Thursday issued a release indicating that he had recently convened a meeting with members of the 35th Legislature's Majority Caucus to brief them on his new initiatives. However, DeGraff criticized the governor for neglecting to extend an invitation to the Minority Caucus, a move he termed as disrespectful not only to the legislative institution but also to the people of the Virgin Islands.

"It is utterly disappointing that the governor would invite only a select faction of the V.I. Legislature to deliberate on issues that will invariably affect the entirety of the territory," DeGraff stated. "It is only fair that members of the 35th Legislature's Minority Caucus are given the opportunity to contribute to these discussions if the governor's intention is to garner support across the entire legislative body for his initiatives."

While DeGraff acknowledged and applauded some of Governor Bryan's initiatives, he expressed the need for minority involvement in the discussions. Specifically, he referred to the use of funds derived from the Jeffrey Epstein Settlement, urging for more inclusive deliberations.

In this regard, DeGraff highlighted his pending legislation proposing the appropriation of \$20 million from the Epstein settlement to finance two nursing homes in the territory, one in each district. "Our territory is home to an increasing aging population. I would have preferred being part of these discussions to ensure that my proposal is considered," he said. "I am urging both my colleagues and the governor to back this legislation as it progresses. It's an instrumental step towards addressing the health and housing needs of our elderly population."