

The Virgin Islands Consortium

\$133 Million FEMA Grant Announced for Julius E. Sprauve School Rebuild

State-of-the-art facility planned in St. John, emphasizing resilience and modern standards

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Governor Albert Bryan and Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett have announced a significant federal grant of \$133 million for the reconstruction of Julius E. Sprauve School on St. John. This funding, provided by FEMA, marks yet another milestone achievement in the effort to rebuild the territory post-Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

"This historic investment from FEMA marks a transformative moment for the future of education in St. John," Mr. Bryan said. He emphasized that the funding will enable the

creation of a state-of-the-art educational facility, symbolizing a strong commitment to the future of the island's children and the resilience of the Virgin Islands.

Ms. Plaskett highlighted the timeliness of this grant, which will facilitate the construction of a much-needed K-12 school on St. John. She pointed out that the funding adheres to the prudent replacement standard, crucial for enhancing preparedness and resilience against natural disasters. "The changes in law I was able to obtain allow FEMA, for the duration of the recovery from Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Virgin Islands, to rebuild critical infrastructure like the Julius Sprauve School to incorporate resilient design and features, up to the latest industry building standards and notwithstanding pre-disaster conditions in the Virgin Islands," she stated.

It remains to be seen whether the new school will be built through the pending land swap agreement, which would see the learning facility being constructed on a parcel of land in Estate Catherineberg currently owned by the National Park Service. In exchange for the parcel, the NPS would be given Whistling Island, commonly called Whistling Cay. The agreement is [currently in limbo](#) after senators rejected an amendment by Senator Angel Bolques Jr. that sought to change critical language found in the Act. The amendment to [Act 8741](#) sought to delete language that says the Government of the Virgin Islands may exchange the land, provided that use of public access to the waterway of Whistling Kay, known as Fungi Passage, is not affected. The amendment failed with six in favor and seven against during a Senate session in November. What this could mean for the fate of the land swap is currently unclear.

Regarding the \$133 million for the new learning facility, Ms. Plaskett commended Mr. Bryan and his team for their persistence in ensuring that the funding covered all community needs and accurately reflected the damages from the storm.