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Bryan's New Plan to Expedite \$15 Billion in Recovery Funds: Billion-Dollar Bundles for Procurement

Governor Bryan calls for 'paradigm shift' in USVI disaster recovery efforts

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Governor Bryan arrives at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Building in St. Thomas to deliver his sixth State of the Territory Address on Jan. 22, 2024. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

To successfully implement and complete a mountain of disaster recovery projects, the USVI needs a “paradigm shift,” Governor Albert Bryan Jr. stated during his State of the Territory address on Monday.

Discussing specific challenges restricting disaster recovery almost 7 years after hurricanes Irma and Maria, Mr. Byran highlighted the absence of “enough contractors, enough workers, or enough

housing.” He lamented to the listening audience that “at the present pace, it will take us another 20 years to complete the recovery and that is simply not good enough.”

The need for change, he said, inspired the creation of the “Rebuild USVI” initiative. By way of explanation, Governor Bryan shared that Rebuild USVI is being developed to expedite the timeline for this massive reconstruction effort.” Reconstruction work will total \$15 billion or more, said the governor.

As the administration attempts to “expend a billion dollars a year solely in disaster recovery funds,” the governor announced the intention to “group many of the top priority recovery projects into billion-dollar bundles for procurement.”

This, Mr. Bryan believes, will resolve some of the lags created by an inadequate local workforce pool. Rebuild USVI is predicated on three major goals: attracting general contractors who can “secure the necessary performance bonds on projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars, systemically resolve the logistical challenges and supply chain issues,” and tackling “manpower and capacity issues.”

Rebuild USVI “supercharges the territory’s disaster recovery to think outside the box and dispense with the bureaucracy that is simply inadequate for our progress,” said Governor Bryan.

Notwithstanding, Senator Milton Potter, who chairs the Committee on Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure and Planning voiced some reservations.

Moments after the delivery of the State of the Territory address, Mr. Potter suggested that “the devil is always in the detail.” He pledged to keep an open mind but was curious as to what form the initiative would take. The Senate’s Disaster Recovery Committee has not yet convened for 2024 but when it does, Mr. Potter promised to invite the relevant officials to “drill down a little deeper” and provide a clearer understanding of Rebuild USVI.

In the meantime, Governor Bryan remains resolute that “this is the way we facilitate the transformation of a resilient Virgin Islands.”