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Virgin Islanders Petition for Federal Help With WAPA Amidst Ongoing Energy Crisis

Residents demand Governor Bryan to stabilize power as WAPA struggles with infrastructure failures, impacting daily life and business operations

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WAPA crews inspect Feeder 13 via manholes on St. Thomas, June 5, 2024. By. WAPA

Frustrated Virgin Islanders have launched a petition asking Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to seek immediate federal assistance in stabilizing the territory's energy infrastructure.

After weeks of power fluctuations, outages, and rotations, the V.I. Water and Power Authority continues to work to repair a damaged undersea cable linking the St. Thomas power distribution system to St. John.

Last Thursday, on St. Johnian had enough. Under the name “Bean Bruno”, the individual began an online petition on change.org urging Governor Bryan to seek immediate federal support to provide relief. “Our power grid is barely functioning. We are living in hazardous conditions and our businesses have lost revenues. The consistent lack of electricity poses a threat to our security and well-being,” the call-to-action reads. WAPA customers in the St. Thomas-St. John District have been plagued with constant power outages and rotating blackouts. Senator Samuel Carrion recently called on Mr. Bryan to [seek help from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#).

As of press time on Monday, 341 people had signed onto the petition – 159 short of its 500 signature goal. A user by the name of “Cherry Seraphim” complained that the frequent outages made conditions tough for parents of small children. “Stored breast milk goes to waste, food goes bad and appliances get destroyed in the process and we do not get reimbursed for these damaged items or produce,” she wrote.?

User “Gwen Baker”, meanwhile, called for a forensic audit into WAPA, something that is already in progress. Under Act 8731, the Office of the Inspector General was tasked with a special audit of the agency, a move that began [earlier this year](#). The audit is reportedly looking into details of the Vitol propane contract, the electronic metering system, various leases, the loss of over \$2 million to an offshore account, and the shipment of WAPA equipment to the British Virgin islands, among other questionable activities.

The current state of energy emergency will last until June 21, after which executive branch officials will have to appear before the V.I. Legislature to justify their decision should it need to be extended.

On St. Thomas, a protest over prevailing conditions is scheduled to kick off later today. Because of the cable damage, as well as weather-related issues and equipment failures, both St. Thomas and St. John have been undergoing rolling blackouts, which WAPA terms “power rotations”, for several weeks.