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WAPA State of Emergency Extended; Kimika Woods Named Acting OMB Director

Automatic 30-day extension follows unheeded request for a longer period; Kimika Woods steps in as acting OMB Director after Jenifer O'Neal's resignation

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WAPA's Richmond Water Storage Tank. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

At 12:01 a.m. Thursday, the [state of emergency](#) declared by Governor Bryan Jr. was automatically extended for another 30 days. This comes after the governor's request for a longer extension went unheeded by the Legislature.?

“The governor sent a request to the Legislature for a 90-day extension to the energy security state of emergency on Friday June 14,” said Government House Communications Director Richard

Motta. That triggered a 5-day countdown within which the Senate was to act on that request. “If they do not, then the state of emergency automatically renews for an additional 30 days.”

The renewal of the state of emergency allows Mr. Bryan to effectively bypass the need for Senate authority in order to tap into funds held by the central government to make certain financial arrangements on behalf of the Water and Power Authority. Since the initial declaration, the governor has paid WAPA’s outstanding debts to Aggreko and remitted millions to the utility that was owed by central government — the territory’s healthcare facilities, and the Waste Management Authority. A joint task force convened to dig WAPA out of its operational and financial ruts was also formalized in the wake of the emergency declaration.

Elsewhere, the administration dealt with the abrupt resignation of Office of Management and Budget Director Jenifer O’Neal by announcing Kimika Woods as acting OMB director. Ms. Woods previously served as the associate director of budget operations in OMB.

Ms. O’Neal [resigned on Monday](#) after federal investigators seized her phone and issued a subpoena, connected with a probe into allegations that former VIPD Commissioner Ray Martinez [accepted kickbacks](#) from a local company that was awarded no-bid contracts by the VIPD.