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USVI Leaders Advocate for Energy Solutions Amid Power Challenges

Federal and local leaders unite to address power outages, infrastructure challenges, and outdated equipment with comprehensive modernization plans and technical assistance

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WAPA's Richmond Powerplant on St. Croix By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, alongside the Legislature of the Virgin Islands, is intensifying efforts to secure reliable energy solutions and technical assistance for the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to a recently issued release from Ms. Plaskett's office. This initiative comes amidst ongoing power generation and distribution challenges, including a power outage rotation schedule and outdated equipment.

Earlier this month Ms. Plaskett welcomed U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm and professional staff from the U.S. Department of Energy and the White House to the Virgin Islands. During their visit, Granholm, Plaskett, and the team conducted a site tour of the Randolph Harley power plant on St. Thomas. This visit was followed by roundtable discussions with local government officials and private stakeholders, focusing on creating a more resilient and reliable energy grid to provide affordable, consistent power to the people of the Virgin Islands.

Granholm expressed her concern over the power reliability issues, labeling them “unacceptable” and emphasized the U.S. Department of Energy's willingness to offer technical assistance.

Following the roundtable discussions, Ms. Plaskett hosted a summit on St. Croix titled "A Reimagined Virgin Islands." This summit aimed to bring together local and federal partners along with the private sector to discuss impactful insights and best practices for infrastructure rebuilding and energy issues in the Virgin Islands. The attendees were actively engaged and developed next steps and plans to reconvene to mark progress.

“Seven years ago, our community’s infrastructure was devastated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, leaving our critical infrastructure decimated. Out of devastation came the opportunity to transform our territory and rebuild our critical infrastructure in a more resilient manner with profound funding from the federal government,” Ms. Plaskett said.

Throughout the roundtables with Granholm and the subsequent "A Reimagined Virgin Islands" summit, there was a consensus between federal agencies, local agencies, and the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands on the importance of modernizing the electrical grid and water system to produce reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy, according to the release.

Following these events, Senators Milton Potter, Donna Frett-Gregory, and Samuel Carrion collaborated to advance [Bill 35-0311](#). This bill mandates the V.I. Water and Power Authority to submit a proposed modernization plan to the Legislature within 270 days. The plan must outline steps and a timeline for implementing upgrades to the electrical grid with the assistance of several relevant federal agencies. The bill passed unanimously (14-0, with one member absent) and now awaits consideration by Governor Bryan.

Ms. Plaskett expressed her honor in working as a convener and commended the Legislature of the Virgin Islands for their prompt legislative response and collaboration with her office during Secretary Granholm’s visit.