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Senator Gittens Demands Action from WAPA Over Unreliable Service and Billing Discrepancies

Gittens urges WAPA to address chronic issues of service reliability and billing errors, citing violation of consumer rights

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The V.I. Water and Power Authority's Richmond Plant on St. Croix. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Senate Majority Leader Kenneth Gittens has called on the V.I. Water and Power Authority to immediately address persistent issues that have left residents struggling with unreliable services and significant billing discrepancies.

In a letter to WAPA Chief Executive Officer Karl Knight, Mr. Gittens expressed serious concerns over the utility's practices, which he says have exacerbated the financial strain on consumers,

according to a release from the senator's office.

"Over the past few months, numerous residents have experienced significant discrepancies in their utility bills, which have caused considerable stress and financial strain," Mr. Gittens wrote. He formally requested that WAPA cease its practice of estimating utility bills and imposing back bills on customers, practices he asserts are in clear violation of local laws governing billing and customer rights.

Mr. Gittens criticized WAPA for estimating bills without adequate justification or proper notification to consumers, saying that this method not only undermines billing accuracy but also places an unfair burden on customers. "Back billing for services previously rendered, but not accurately billed, undermines consumer trust and violates the principles of fairness and transparency that should guide utility operations," he said.

According to Mr. Gittens, his office has received numerous complaints from customers who, despite multiple attempts to resolve their issues with WAPA's Customer Service Department, continue to face unresolved billing problems. These complaints come at a time when WAPA's reliability in providing consistent water and power services has been increasingly questioned.

"It is unacceptable for customers to bear the financial consequences of unreliable service," Mr. Gittens stated. He warned that if these practices continue, he would consider pursuing legal action to protect the rights of affected customers. He urged WAPA to rectify the issues immediately and adopt more transparent and accurate billing practices in compliance with the law.

Gittens outlined several specific requests in his communication to WAPA, including:

1. A thorough review and audit of recent billing statements to identify and correct any errors dating back to April 2024;
2. Clear and transparent communication regarding the cause of these discrepancies; and
3. Assurances that appropriate measures will be taken to prevent future billing problems.

In addition to his direct appeal to WAPA, Sen. Gittens encouraged affected customers to document their billing issues, retain copies of their bills, and file formal complaints with the V.I. Public Service Commission (PSC). "It is imperative that the PSC is made aware of these injustices to hold WAPA accountable and ensure regulatory oversight," he concluded.