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Bryan Reflects on Ongoing Federal Probes: "A Real Black Eye for the Territory"

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. discusses the mixed emotions surrounding recent federal investigations that have implicated senior public officials, emphasizing the importance of transparency while lamenting the loss of key team members

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. during his interview with Consortium founder and publisher Ernice Gilbert on Aug. 28, 2024. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. expressed mixed feelings about the federal investigations which have recently come to light, in which senior public sector workers in the Virgin Islands were either implicated in crimes or identified as potential holders of evidence of wrongdoing.

In June, V.I. Department of Education Director of Maintenance Davidson Charlemagne and former Housing Finance Authority Chief Operating Officer Darin Richardson were arrested, along with Mr. Charlemagne's wife, for their alleged roles in a [\\$4 million fraud](#) on Housing and Urban Development. Days later, former VIPD Commissioner Ray Martinez resigned after being [named a target](#) in an investigation into possible improper financial transactions in connection with contracts awarded to a local company. Former Office of Management and Budget Director Jenifer O'Neal also resigned after her phone was seized in that same investigation, while Sports Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White Jr. is still on the job after his [phone was seized](#) as part of a different investigation.

"Sometimes investigations are good. They prove that you're not guilty," Governor Bryan told Consortium founder and publisher Ernice Gilbert on Wednesday, while also acknowledging that the news is "a real black eye for the territory."?

"I miss my commissioners," he continued, specifically praising the work of Ms. O'Neal, who the governor called "the backbone of my financial team", and Mr. Martinez. However, their departures were necessary, the governor said, to fulfill his administration's goal of "trust through transparency."

While the ultimate outcome of the investigations are unknown, Governor Bryan acknowledged that the mere fact of the existence of such "just makes all of us look bad." He said he was acutely aware after his initial election that there were billions of dollars in recovery funds at his administration's disposal. "I don't mean to sound racist, but a black man with \$8 billion is going to get a lot of attention," Mr. Bryan said. From his first year in office, the governor says the government has been under scrutiny from federal auditors and inspectors general, "and we've been very transparent about what we do."

While the loss of the services of the former officials was hurtful, Governor Bryan says their departure was necessary to ensure the vital work of his administration could continue without undue challenge. "There's too much at stake for us than to risk the exposure of us not having the confidence of the federal government," he declared.

Confronted with the idea that any convictions resulting from these arrests and investigations could paint his stewardship of the government in a negative light, Governor Bryan shrugged off the concerns. "I don't worry about a black eye," he said, highlighting some of the accomplishments of the administration thus far, and some of the things he is still looking to achieve. "I worry about losing money and losing trust in the federal government and not being able to get some of these things done."