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Governor Bryan Blames Legislative Preemption for Delay in Paying Millions Owed to Local Businesses

As financial challenges mount across the Virgin Islands, Governor Bryan reveals that a pending bill in the Legislature is blocking his administration's efforts to secure funds needed to pay off overdue debts to local businesses

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Governor Albert Bryan, Jr.

Governor Albert Bryan said on Wednesday that he has long wanted to pay what he estimates to be millions of dollars owed to Virgin Islands businesses by the government of the Virgin Islands but has been unable to do so because a senator has preempted him by holding authorship of the same bill. However, the senator has yet to introduce the measure.

In legislative terms, preemption refers to the situation where one lawmaker holds authorship of a bill that addresses a particular matter, effectively blocking any other lawmaker—in this case, Governor Bryan—from bringing forth the same or similar legislation.

The bill, according to Mr. Bryan, seeks a line of credit that he would use to pay local vendors and meet other obligations, an outcome that would immediately jolt the local economy. "The Legislature needs to give me a line of credit for \$50 million so we could pay some vendors," Governor Bryan said during his [wide-ranging interview](#) with the Consortium's Ernice Gilbert. When asked which senator preempted him, the governor declined to name the individual, saying, "I'm not going to call any names."

The economic pinch being felt across the territory is a result of multiple factors, including inflation and the government's chronic failure to pay local vendors, some of whom have been owed for years.

Even so, during the interview, Mr. Bryan reiterated his stance that the government does not have a money problem—a statement that appears contradictory, as he also mentioned that the government has to decide which bills to pay at any given time due to limited funds.

For instance, when challenged about the overgrown vegetation during what is expected to be a busy hurricane season, Mr. Bryan admitted that funds are limited and conceded that the territory is [vulnerable this year](#).

Exacerbating the financial crunch is the constant flow of funding to bail out the V.I. Water and Power Authority (WAPA). When asked about the slow pace of tax refunds, which were consistently delivered during his first term, Mr. Bryan blamed the need to reroute funding to WAPA to [acquire Vitol's infrastructure](#) at the two power plants. The Bryan administration secured a line of credit to cover \$45 million of the \$145 million acquisition, while the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provided [the initial \\$100 million](#) and later [reimbursed the \\$45 million](#) to the local government.

"What do you really think? Do you think that I don't want to pave the roads? Do you think I would really like to give my money, your money, the taxpayers' money to WAPA? Don't you think I would much rather prefer paving all the roads? A hundred million dollars; do you know how many miles of road that is?" he continued.

The chronic financial shortfalls facing the USVI are being felt across the board. Overgrown vegetation is visible from east to west of the islands, pothole-riddled roads, and underfunded government departments and agencies are some of the issues impacting life in the USVI. During [a hearing on Friday](#), Senator Samuel Carrion noted that the Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged, under the purview of the V.I. Department of Human Services, was still awaiting funding allotments for the months of July and August, even as the start of the 2025 budget cycle approaches.