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\$137.5M Epstein Settlement to Build St. Croix Behavioral Health Facility, St. Thomas Sports Complex, and Audit Epstein's EDA Benefits

Funds also directed toward cultural center on St. John, Dept. of Justice building on St. Croix, public housing maintenance and the EDA Catalyst Fund aimed at supporting business growth

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Over the past week, lawmakers have introduced and passed a flurry of bills aimed at shaping the next fiscal year, which begins October 1. Apart from the monies appropriated for the day-to-day functioning of various government departments and agencies, members of the 35th Legislature have now distributed funds from the Jeffery Epstein-related [JPMorgan settlement](#) and the [Leon Black settlement](#), which altogether total approximately \$137.5 million.

The allocations will be spent on “various projects and initiatives to enhance community services, mental health resources, [and] infrastructure and economic development in the Virgin Islands,” according to Senator Donna Frett-Gregory. Some of the initiatives that will be funded from this money include the establishment of the Southern Trust Company Settlement Fund, and the Survivors and Mental Health Healing Trust Fund, under Bill 35-0380.?

The measure also appropriates \$21.5 million to the Department of Public Works for the completion of the Estate Nazareth Sports Complex, just over \$2 million for school maintenance, \$10 million to the Virgin Islands Port Authority to build the St. John Cultural Center, \$4.2 million to Sea View Nursing Home, and \$1.8 million to the Department of Property and Procurement for a long-term lease with the Nana Baby Children’s home on St. Thomas. The facility will also receive \$200,000 to outfit the home.

?The Department of Health will receive an \$18 million appropriation from the Survivors and Mental Health Healing trust fund to complete a behavioral health facility on St. Croix, while \$3.5 million will go toward finishing renovations on the east wing of the Eldra Schulerbrandt Mental Health Facility. The St. Thomas East End Medical Center receives \$1 million, with the same sum also going to the Frederiksted Health Center.?

The Department of Justice will receive \$25 million to construct their St. Croix offices and \$5 million for crime prevention and prosecution, while \$125,000 will go towards police training.?

Meanwhile, the V.I. Housing Authority will receive \$3.5 million to renovate, rehabilitate, and construct recreational facilities in public housing communities on St. Thomas and St. Croix. The Agro Food and Innovation Center on St. Croix will receive \$400,000, while the Agro Food Technology Center, housed in the Marcelli Institute on St. Thomas, will receive \$675,000, Senator Frett-Gregory indicated.?

The EDA has been allocated \$10 million to establish the Virgin Islands Catalyst Revolving Fund, and a further \$2.5 million for low-interest loans to local homeowners for the repair, renovations and rehabilitation of their residences.

A general purpose appropriation of \$25 million was also made, to be invested in a high-yield investment account for at least three years. The funds will be used “for the purposes of the people of the Virgin Islands,” Senator Frett-Gregory said.

Another Epstein-related measure, Bill 35-0371 sponsored by Senator Franklin Johnson, orders the V.I. Inspector General to audit the Economic Development Authority. The investigation, according to the legislation, will focus on why Jeffrey Epstein and his affiliated companies continued to receive economic benefits after his 2008 felony conviction on charges of procuring a minor for prostitution. The audit will also seek to learn whether EDA conducted a probe of its own following Mr. Epstein’s conviction, and will determine what changes, if any, the agency made when it comes to granting tax concessions to company principals who are convicted felons.

The bill appropriates \$75,000 for the conduct of the audit, and gives the Inspector General the power to appoint additional personnel, including a special investigator, to provide assistance. If signed into law by Governor Bryan, the completed audit report must be submitted to the executive and legislative branches within a year.?