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Protesters Demand Action on Retroactive Pay Debt in Front of Government House

Frustrated demonstrators criticize the administration's failure to address the long-standing debt, with neither the governor nor the communications director engaging the crowd.

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Protesters stood outside Gov't House on St. Croix calling for action on promised retroactive wage payments,

An early morning protest outside Government House shone a spotlight once again on the issue of outstanding payments to former government workers due retroactive pay.

Beginning around 5:30 a.m Tuesday, Virgin Islanders converged outside Government House on St. Croix, demanding the money that has been owed to them for decades. Estimated at [over \\$300](#)

[million in 2015](#) by the Office of Collective Bargaining, the government has been paying down the sum in tranches.

By 2022, the debt was down to just over \$173 million, and Governor Albert Bryan Jr. made a pledge to [pay \\$25 million each year](#) until the debt was cleared, which at that rate would take about seven years. To support that promise, lawmakers appropriated [\\$40 million from the FY2022 budget](#) to pay outstanding retroactive payments.

In August 2023, Governor Bryan once again proposed a [\\$25 million allocation](#) for the payment of retroactive wages, submitting a supplemental budget bill to the 35th Legislature for that purpose. An [additional \\$25 million](#) was reportedly appropriated during the regular budgeting process for FY2024. However, lawmakers discovered in early 2024 that only \$2.5 million had actually been spent on the purpose for which it was allocated.

With the government caught in a chronic cash crunch, the Office of Management and Budget [admitted during a January senate hearing](#) that most of the \$25 million that had been appropriated the previous year had instead been used to cover payroll and other pressing expenses. Since then, Consortium journalists understand that there have been no further requests or appropriations for retroactive wages, throwing Governor Bryan's promise of two years ago into question.

Tuesday morning's protesters expressed frustration over the long wait for their owed payments and voiced deep disappointment with the administration's silence on when payments would resume. Retired track coach Eurman Fahie, a prominent community figure, stated that Governor Bryan, who they believed was inside Government House during the protest, did not come out to hear their concerns, which further escalated their anger. Fahie also noted that Bryan Administration Communications Director Richard Motta, despite seeing the protesters, did not address them. "This is the first time that neither Governor Bryan nor Motta spoke to us," Fahie told the Consortium.