

BVI Premier “Willing to Make Some Concessions” Amid Dispute Over Charter Boat Fees

Premier Natalio Wheatley is reconsidering proposed fee hikes for non-BVI-based charter boats after talks with USVI Governor Albert Bryan Jr. The increases, which could raise costs by over 60 times, remain on hold as both sides seek a balanced agreement.

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Yacht Haven Grande in St. Thomas, USVI.

BVI Premier Dr. Natalio Wheatley is “willing to make some concessions” as he seeks to defuse tensions with the USVI over fees for non-BVI based charter boat operators.

The BVI proposed steep increases in annual fees for both day sail and overnight charter operators. If implemented, companies could pay over 60 times more than current rates. This would [devastate](#)

[the charter industry](#) in the USVI, operators say, putting many companies out of business.

The move initially prompted threats of reprisal from Governor Albert Bryan Jr., but following a meeting between the two leaders, [the proposed bill was placed on hold](#) until a more agreeable arrangement could be hammered out.

In an interview last week with BVI media outlet JTV, Mr. Wheatley said that the government was considering “what relief we can give on the licenses, particularly for our day trippers,” noting that day charter companies were likely to be “smaller operations.” Apart from that, “There may be one or two other concessions that we're willing to make in the spirit of our friendship.”

According to Wheatley, the dialogue between himself and his American counterpart had been helpful. “He understood our position a lot better, and we understood his position.”

However, he said that the fee increase proposal was a bid to ensure the development of the BVI's marine tourism industry remains sustainable. “The tourism product we have here is not based on mass volume,” Dr. Wheatley explained. “We have a small territory, and we have to make sure we keep our environment pristine.” Higher prices will have a limiting effect on tourism numbers, which the BVI Premier thinks will be advantageous to his territory.

Discussions between the two leaders on this contentious issue are expected to continue, following a review of the relevant economic data.