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## Governor Bryan to Attend Seatrade Cruise Global to Advance Marine Sector Strategy

**Governor Albert Bryan Jr. will travel to Miami from April 5–10 to promote the USVI's Blue Economy strategy, seek increased cruise traffic, and advocate for maritime policy that considers the unique needs of U.S. territories.**

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**Side by side: Icon of the Seas and Celebrity Apex at the Austin Monsanto Marine Terminal on Jan. 31, 2024. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM**

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. will travel to Miami, Florida from April 5 through April 10 to attend the 2025 Seatrade Cruise Global Conference, an annual summit that brings together leading figures from the international cruise and maritime industries.

According to Government House, the governor's attendance is part of his administration's broader push to expand the U.S. Virgin Islands' maritime footprint and drive long-term economic growth through its Blue Economy strategy.

This year's Seatrade Cruise Global Conference comes at a pivotal time for the Virgin Islands, which has seen measurable gains in marine-related industries following the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the release. Government House said the territory has experienced increased cruise ship traffic, expanded charter operations, and growth in maritime tourism. Governor Bryan's administration attributes these advances to strategic investments and targeted efforts aimed at making the USVI more competitive and appealing within the global marine sector.

"The Bryan-Roach Administration has prioritized the Blue Economy as a vital driver of growth, jobs, and innovation," a statement from Government House read. "This growth reflects strategic investments and targeted engagement to position the U.S. Virgin Islands as a competitive and attractive destination within the global cruise and marine space."

Governor Bryan is expected to meet with key industry partners to build on conversations from last year's conference, which helped lay the groundwork for significant policy changes, including the passage of legislation allowing cruise ships to operate onboard casinos while docked in Virgin Islands ports. That policy change, supported by the governor and welcomed by industry leaders, is seen as a practical step toward encouraging longer port stays and increased ship calls.

"This was about creating smart, fair policies that align with industry expectations and support our economy," said Governor Bryan. "We've seen momentum build across our ports, and we're heading back to Seatrade to build on that progress and expand on the conversation to attract more calls, longer stays, and ultimately greater economic benefit for Virgin Islanders and to Virgin Islands businesses."

While advancing new cruise partnerships remains a top priority, the governor will also use the platform to express concern over a pending federal proposal to impose new port fees on Chinese-built vessels. Though intended to support U.S. shipbuilding, such a policy could have unintended consequences for the U.S. Virgin Islands, where marine shipping operations often rely on foreign-built vessels.

"Federal policy should reflect the unique circumstances of U.S. territories," said Governor Bryan. "We're working constructively with our partners in Washington to make sure the voice of the Virgin Islands is heard and that the growth we've fought for in our marine sector isn't disrupted by unintended consequences."

Governor Bryan said his administration remains engaged in ongoing discussions with officials from the White House, members of Congress, and the territory's federal advocates to ensure that any changes to national maritime policy include considerations for the economic and operational needs of the USVI and other insular territories.

Though cruise tourism is a cornerstone of the Virgin Islands economy, the Blue Economy strategy promoted by Governor Bryan is much broader in scope. It includes efforts to expand marine infrastructure, foster maritime services, generate employment opportunities, and build a more resilient and dynamic economy for St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John.

During Governor Bryan's absence from the territory, Lieutenant Governor Tregenza A. Roach, Esq. will serve as Acting Governor.

