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“I Cannot Rescind Laws”: Bryan Rebukes Legislature Over Salary Repeal Efforts, Lampoons Hearing as Political Theater

Governor Bryan defended the Compensation Commission’s salary recommendations, rejected responsibility for their enactment, and blasted the Senate's repeal hearing as a politicized distraction lacking legal foundation or procedural integrity.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. By. GOV'T HOUSE.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has issued a pointed statement following Monday’s legislative hearing and a press release from Senator Milton Potter regarding the controversial raises awarded to elected officials. The governor strongly criticized what he described as a politically motivated

effort to undo the work of the Virgin Islands Public Officials Compensation Commission, calling the proceedings “a total waste of the community’s time and an unnecessary distraction.”

At the heart of the dispute is the report issued by the Compensation Commission, which was created by the Legislature to conduct an independent review of salaries for elected and high-ranking government officials. The governor noted that the 31st and 33rd Legislatures had “commendably initiated” the comprehensive study, expending time and resources to ensure its findings were robust and data-driven. The purpose, he stressed, was to remove political bias from compensation decisions.

Despite the report being in the Legislature’s possession for several months, the governor said lawmakers have “failed to evaluate the findings painstakingly produced by the Commission.” Instead, he accused members of the 36th Legislature of taking a “reactionary and punitive stance” toward the very process they had created, without even conducting a public review of the report’s content.

“I urge the Legislature to utilize the resources provided to it and finally review the Commission’s findings,” Bryan stated. “Seeking to eliminate the work of the Commission through legislation targeted at executive salaries undermines the thoughtful work of the Commission, politicizes the process, and contravenes the purpose of the salary study.”

The governor also rejected the suggestion that he had any direct role in raising his own salary. “I did not ask for a raise, did not craft the legislation, and was not the approving authority for the Commission’s recommendations,” he said. “That was the Legislature, including many of the senators now objecting to its results.”

Further, Governor Bryan emphasized that under law, he does not have the authority to rescind an enacted statute, nor to adjust salaries determined by legislation. “Let’s be clear — I cannot rescind laws. For the Legislature or the Lt. Governor to suggest otherwise and lay this issue at my feet is insincere and unjust,” he said. “I may not always agree with every law, but I am duty-bound to implement them.”

The governor underscored that the Constitution forbids the Legislature from reducing a governor’s salary during his term, a provision meant to preserve the independence of the executive branch. “Giving the Legislature the authority to reduce the Governor’s salary during his term disrupts the balance of power,” he argued. “Any legislature could reduce a governor’s salary when they don’t agree, for political retribution.”

Notably, no representative from the executive branch participated in Monday’s hearing. The governor explained this decision by saying, “We declined to participate in a proceeding designed to mislead the public and politicize an issue already governed by statute.”

If the Legislature genuinely wants to engage in broader compensation or retirement reform discussions, the governor said he is open to that — but only if it is comprehensive. “Any such review must also examine the statutory benefits that allow senators to earn additional income while serving, collect multiple government annuities, and receive an annuity while drawing a government paycheck — a privilege denied to most government employees, including the Governor,” Bryan stated.

He reminded the public that, by law, the governor cannot hold any other position or collect a government annuity while in office. “When the Compensation Commission process was established, it was applauded for removing politics from pay decisions. If an independent body

cannot be trusted to do that, then what's the alternative?"

Bryan warned that rescinding public official pay raises without offering a replacement structure would be "premature and irresponsible," and risked returning the territory "back to the days of Act 6905," referring to earlier controversies surrounding political pay decisions.

He concluded his statement by urging lawmakers to refocus their efforts. "We must turn our attention to policies and initiatives that improve the lives of Virgin Islanders — not waste time on political grandstanding over matters already settled by law.

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