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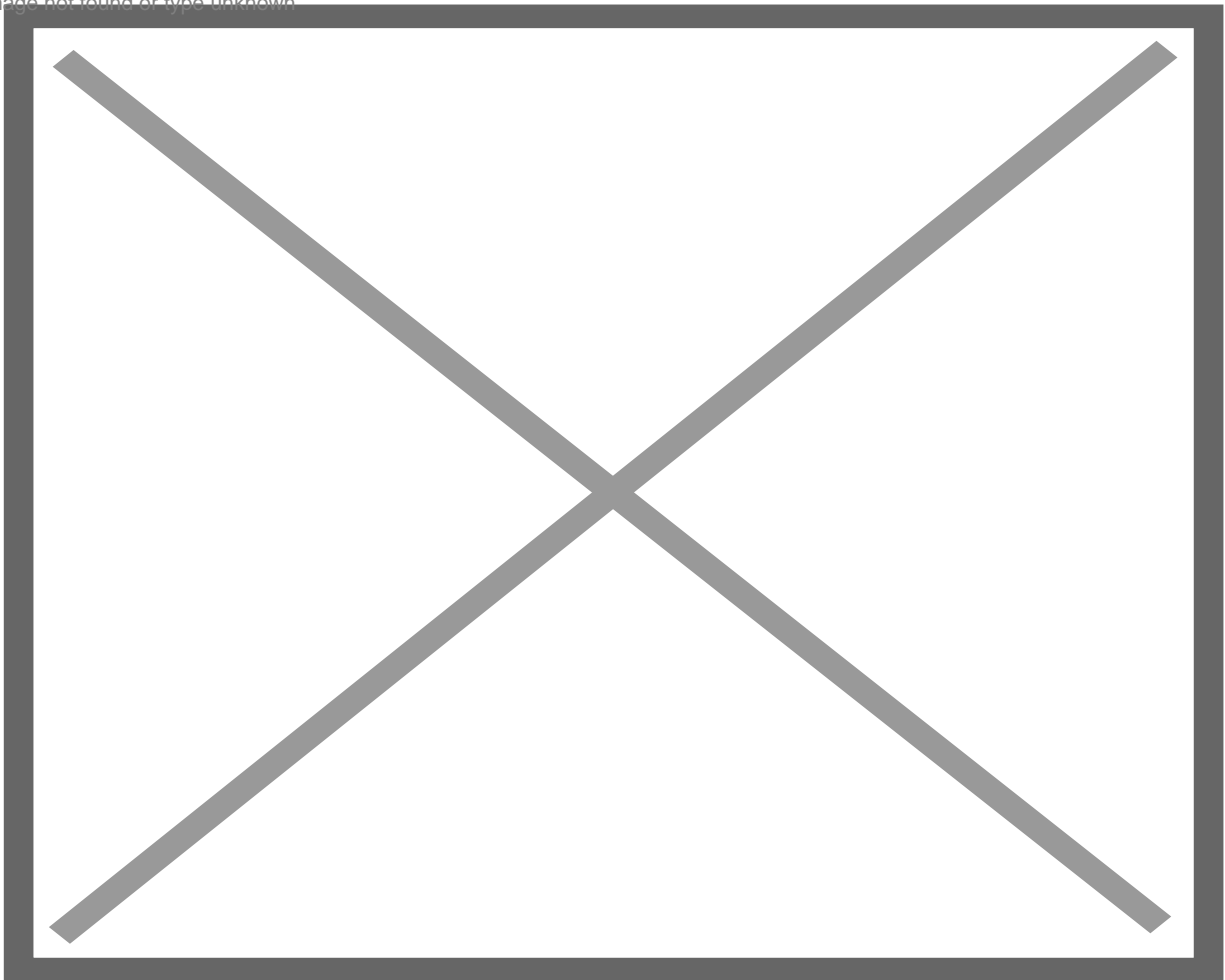
Bryan Braces for Legal Fight Over Salary Hikes, Says USVI Governor Role Among Nation's Toughest

In a heated interview, Governor Bryan defended the controversial pay increases, claiming the Virgin Islands governorship carries dual responsibilities unlike other states and insisting the process was legal despite growing public and legislative pushback.

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Governor Bryan, left, and Ernice Gilbert during an intense interview Monday night at Government House in St. Thomas. By. MEDIA ONE.

In a tense 90-minute interview with the Consortium, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. defended the salary increases for himself and senior officials, calling them lawful and justified. With lawmakers voting to rescind the raises, Bryan signaled a court fight ahead.

The issue became a central component of public discourse when residents became belatedly aware of recommendations from a compensation commission, months after its report was issued.

A press release from Government House at the beginning of the year alerted the public that the increases would go into effect after the window for legislative action to halt the pay boost had already passed. According to Governor Bryan, the belated notice came only after [deafening silence from legislators](#) on the issue. “When I didn't see anything was happening, nobody was making it, and we were about to put these salaries into play, I went and said ‘Hey listen, this thing passed,’” he told Consortium publisher Ernice Gilbert. Gilbert pressed Governor Bryan on how the salary increases were implemented, arguing that both the executive and legislative branches failed to inform the public within the required 90-day window, which would allow for public review. He contended that the secretive nature of the process undermined transparency and fueled public distrust. In response, Mr. Bryan defended the process, stating that the community would have disapproved of the raises regardless, and added that there is never a right time to make such a decision.

Governor Bryan made several arguments as to why his office deserved the pay increase. “The delegate to Congress makes more than the governor. Port Authority makes more than the governor. Waste Management makes more than the governor. The two hospitals and WAPA make almost three times as much as the governor,” he said. In 2024, Governor Bryan said when he scrutinized payroll for central government, “of all the money that people make, the governor wasn't in the top 10...it was 144th highest paid in the territory. So when you talk about giving a raise to a position that hasn't been in there for 20 years, I thought it was a very moderate raise.” When Gilbert highlighted that the governor of Puerto Rico earns \$70,000, Governor Bryan called the amount “shameful” and continued to defend the salary increases.

After revisiting his record of achievement as chief executive, the governor also argued that the role of Virgin Islands governor is unlike that of his Stateside counterparts. “The governor of the Virgin Islands is one of the only places, probably beside Guam, that plays the role of mayor and governor,” he argued, defending the new compensation structure that positions the USVI governorship as among the [highest-paid in the country](#). “Their job is not as complex,” he said of other governors. “When you're the governor of the Virgin Islands, you deal with everything.”

With the legislature failing to take action to block the raises in the stipulated 90-day window after the report of the salaries commission was released, Governor Bryan says there's nothing he can really do to reverse the pay bump. The increase in executive branch salaries is now enshrined in law, he argued. A recent effort by legislators to [undo the increases](#) would not work either, the governor argued. Gilbert challenged the governor, noting that he had previously justified the salary increases by citing a law enacted by the Legislature. Now, however, the governor was asserting that the Senate could not rescind that same law. Despite the contradiction, Governor Bryan remained unmoved. “I'm not sure that the legislature can rescind my salary...so I guess it's going to court,” he said.