

## Bryan Responds to Stadium Hearing Controversy, Cites Prior Coordination and Personal Leave

**Calling claims of legislative disregard “simply untrue,” Bryan said his administration communicated Gabriel’s unavailability well in advance and warned that his absence left the hearing without key information on the stadium’s stalled progress.**

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**Construction of the Paul E. Joseph Stadium, which originally broke ground during the final days of the John P. de Jongh administration. By. V.I. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.**

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. on Thursday issued a public statement in response to criticisms aired during a Senate Committee hearing concerning the absence of Public Works Commissioner Derek

Gabriel.

Lawmakers issued a subpoena on Thursday for Mr. Gabriel and others to appear at another hearing scheduled for July. Angel Bolques Jr., chair of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports and Parks, stated, “For several months my office has worked on coordinating this hearing. Formal Invitations were sent or first issued on April 17, 2025.” According to Bolques, the hearing's original date had been adjusted multiple times “to accommodate schedules and ensure broader participation.”

On Thursday, Governor Bryan stated that the commissioner's absence from the hearing was not an act of disregard, but the result of pre-approved personal leave and prior coordination efforts with the Legislature.

“The Bryan-Roach Administration has always taken seriously its responsibility to engage with the Legislature and the public, particularly on matters of critical community interest,” he said. “Any implication that Commissioner Gabriel intentionally disregarded the Senate's authority is simply untrue.”

According to Government House, discussions between the administration and Committee Chair Senator Angel Bolques Jr. were ongoing in the weeks leading up to the hearing, with the aim of finding a mutually agreeable date for Commissioner Gabriel’s appearance. It was during those discussions, the administration said, that it clearly communicated Gabriel’s unavailability due to scheduled personal leave. Despite this, the hearing moved forward without adjusting for the Commissioner’s absence.

“There was never any intent to avoid the hearing,” Governor Bryan said. “In fact, we were actively working with the Committee Chair to ensure the Commissioner could appear at a time that would allow for a meaningful and productive exchange. It is unfortunate that these facts were not acknowledged during the hearing.”

The hearing in question was focused on the status of the Paul E. Joseph Stadium project—a subject of long-standing public concern due to repeated delays and rising costs. The governor noted that Commissioner Gabriel is the primary official equipped to provide a comprehensive update on the matter, and that his presence would have allowed for a more informed and productive dialogue.

Governor Bryan acknowledged public frustration with the project’s prolonged timeline and pointed to significant obstacles inherited from the prior administration.

“The longstanding issues, including a full reorientation of the stadium and the costly addition of deep foundation piling, which alone added more than \$14 million to the project, were decisions made before we took office,” he explained.

The governor also noted that it was under his administration that key progress was made: major permitting issues were resolved, FEMA granted conditional approval in 2021, and construction was resumed.

“The progress made on the Paul E. Joseph Stadium to date has occurred under this administration, and we remain committed to completing it,” he stated.

Looking ahead, Governor Bryan called for continued collaboration between the executive and legislative branches to deliver infrastructure projects that meet the public’s expectations.

“Accountability is important, but so is accuracy. The people of the Virgin Islands expect and deserve both,” he concluded. “We welcome continued dialogue with the Legislature and look forward to Commissioner Gabriel's testimony at the rescheduled hearing.”

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