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Bryan Vetoes Minimum Wage Increase and Salary Reversal Bills, Signs Laws Advancing Public Safety, Health, and Development

Bryan vetoed the bill that sought to rescind salary hikes for himself, Lt. Gov. Roach, and cabinet officials, and also vetoed a minimum wage hike for government workers. If lawmakers override the reversal veto, Bryan has vowed to take the matter to court.

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Ernice Gilbert **June 18, 2025**

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. By. GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has vetoed two high-profile measures passed by the 36th Legislature during its June 4 session—one that would have raised the minimum salary for full-time government employees, and another aimed at reversing salary increases for the governor,

lieutenant governor, and other cabinet-level officials. He also signed into law a series of bills addressing a broad range of policy areas including public safety, health transparency, veteran support, fiscal enforcement, and land development.

Governor Bryan rejected Bill No. 36-0053, which sought to [raise the minimum annual salary](#) for full-time government employees from \$27,040 to \$35,000. While reiterating his support for fair compensation, the governor — as he indicated during a [widely watch interview](#) with the Consortium's Ernice Gilbert last week — that the legislation lacked a sustainable funding mechanism and posed significant financial risks.

“We agree that workers in the Virgin Islands should be paid more,” Bryan said. “And just last year, I expressed my support for raising the minimum wage. But a nearly \$40 million increase in annual payroll expenses—without a plan to pay for it—is not something we can responsibly implement.”

The administration on Tuesday [released an initial fiscal impact analysis](#)—prepared by the Department of Personnel, Office of Management and Budget, Department of Finance, and the Bureau of Economic Research— which warned that the wage hike would raise operational costs dramatically and potentially add up to \$200 million in territorial debt over five years.

The governor also raised concerns about inflation, noting that such a large wage increase without revenue offsets could weaken the purchasing power of workers, undermining the very intent of the legislation. He pointed to recent [labor unrest within the V.I. Police Department](#) in the St. Thomas–St. John district as a real-time example of how abrupt wage-related decisions can affect morale and service delivery.

“This is already impacting morale, recruitment, and delivery of services in real time,” the governor said. “We need to protect both our workers and the people who rely on them.”

In addition to the wage bill, Governor Bryan also vetoed Bill No. 36-0085, which [aimed to rescind previously enacted salary increases](#) for Bryan, Lieutenant Governor Roach, and cabinet-level appointees. Governor Bryan reiterated today that retroactively reversing legally granted compensation raises constitutional concerns and violates core employment principles—an argument he previously made during a Consortium interview. Yet, the raises in question were enacted by the same body—the V.I. Legislature—that now seeks to undo them. This raises a fundamental question: if the Legislature’s action to grant the raises was lawful, why does the Governor consider their effort to reverse them unlawful?

In total, twelve central-government public official positions were recommended for salary increases in the Virgin Islands Public Officials' Compensation Commission study. These include top posts such as the governor (+21.9%), lieutenant governor (+25.7%), and attorney general (+13.8%). Other positions with recommended adjustments include the commissioners of Labor (+8.2%), Licensing & Consumer Affairs (+7.0%), Planning & Natural Resources (+11.0%), and Human Services (+2.2%). Also listed were the executive directors of the Career & Technical Education Board (+9.1%), Public Employees Relations Board (+6.3%), and Taxicab Commission (+15.3%), as well as the Virgin Islands Inspector General (+3.4%) and Supervisor of Elections (+13.8%). All other executive branch positions were recommended to remain at existing salary levels with no increase.

Mr. Bryan's salary rose from \$150,000 to \$192,000, while Mr. Roach now earns \$168,000—[placing them 10th and 5th nationwide](#), respectively, among their counterparts.

“We cannot govern retroactively,” the governor said. “Once salaries are lawfully awarded and disbursed, attempting to claw them back is not just unfair—it’s unlawful.”

The Senate is expected to easily override this veto, with the governor [vowing to take the battle to court](#). However, it remains to be seen how the legislative body will react to the minimum wage increase for government employees in light of the analysis published by the administration.

Bills signed into law

Despite the vetoes, Governor Bryan signed into law a wide slate of bills that he described as advancing “meaningful progress for the people of the Virgin Islands.” Key legislation signed into law includes:

- Bill No. 36-0005: Establishes stricter bail conditions in domestic violence cases. While supporting the intent, the governor recommended legislative review of one provision with potential constitutional implications.
- Bill No. 36-0021: Requires healthcare providers to disclose the risks of opioid use, enhancing patient awareness and decision-making.
- Bill No. 36-0036: Increases penalties for traffic violations and authorizes a dedicated vehicle impound lot for the Virgin Islands Police Department.
- Bill No. 36-0063: Mandates gross receipts tax compliance for all contractors, regardless of physical location. It also amends existing appropriations to fund the Veterans Emergency and Mainland Transportation Account and supports the 50th Anniversary of the Virgin Islands National Guard.
- Bills Nos. 36-0033, 36-0034, 36-0094, 36-0095, and 36-0082: Approve rezonings and easements in Smith Bay, Bakkerø, Rosendahl, and Estate LaGrange to promote responsible land use and development.

Confirmed Appointments

- Jessica Gallivan – Judge, Superior Court of the Virgin Islands
- Carolyn P. Hermon-Perrell, Esq. – Trustee, University of the Virgin Islands
- Winston M.A. Williams – Member, Board of Contractors, Trades and Crafts

- Kirk Callwood Sr. – Trustee, Banking Board

Governor Bryan expressed optimism about continued collaboration with lawmakers. “I look forward to collaborating with the Legislature on meaningful legislation that addresses the real needs of our people and strengthens our territory for generations to come,” he said.

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