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## Bryan Blasts Veto Override of Minimum Salary Bill, Warns of Fiscal Fallout

**Governor Bryan condemns the Legislature's override of his veto on the \$35K minimum salary bill, warning it threatens public services and fiscal stability, calling it reckless and politically driven: "What sweeten' goat mouth will sour they bam bam."**

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In a sharply worded statement on Friday, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. condemned the 36th Legislature's override of his veto on Bill No. 36-0053, calling it a reckless decision that risks undoing years of financial progress. The bill, which raises the minimum salary for government and semi-autonomous agency employees from \$27,000 to \$35,000 annually, was passed without what the governor describes as critical planning and financial accountability.

“This is a troubling moment for our territory,” said Governor Bryan, voicing what he described as profound disappointment in the Legislature’s action. “In overriding these vetoes, the Legislature has abandoned fiscal responsibility in favor of short-term political convenience. These decisions were made without analysis, without stakeholder consultation, and with no regard for the long-term financial consequences they impose on our government and the people of the Virgin Islands.”

At the center of Bryan’s objection is what he characterized as a lack of basic due diligence. He noted that the measure was advanced without any financial analysis, a count of how many employees would be affected, or a strategy to pay for the raises. “There is no financial analysis, no implementation plan, and no consultation with the agencies expected to comply with this law,” he stated.

The governor pointed out that Bill No. 36-0053 imposes mandates on agencies beyond the Legislature’s fiscal jurisdiction—including the V.I. Water and Power Authority and the territory’s two public hospitals—raising further concern about the bill’s sustainability.

Bryan warned that the override could lead to difficult decisions by the executive branch, potentially endangering core public services such as healthcare, utilities, and public safety. “This kind of policymaking,” he said, “may require the executive branch to make difficult decisions that threaten essential public services.”

Despite his criticism of the process, Governor Bryan noted his commitment to fair compensation for public workers. “I am wholly committed to comprehensive and responsible compensation reform,” he said. “Every worker deserves fair pay, and those efforts must be undertaken with careful planning, clear data, and a sustainable funding strategy. That is the only way to ensure these reforms strengthen our government and do not jeopardize its ability to serve the people.”

He also warned that the territory is showing signs of slipping back into an era of financially unsound decision-making—an era marked by retroactive wage debts, payroll reductions, and looming mass layoffs. “For six and a half years, my administration has worked tirelessly to reverse those mistakes,” Bryan said. “We collaborated with the Legislature to stabilize government finances, address outstanding debts, and restore public trust. This override represents a return to short-sighted and reckless decision-making. It is official the inmates are running the asylum.”

Bryan acknowledged that his veto was not a popular political move but said it was the right one. “This decision may not appeal to public sentiment, but it was made with the long-term welfare of this territory in mind,” he explained. “Governance is not about following opinion polls. It is about doing what is right, even when it is difficult. Once again, political expediency and grandstanding will lead us down a path of financial instability. What sweeten’ goat mouth will sour they bam bam.”

Calling for renewed seriousness in lawmaking, Bryan urged the Legislature to recommit to informed and transparent governance. “The people of the Virgin Islands deserve a government that acts with integrity and foresight,” he said. “They deserve more than reactive legislation and fiscal recklessness. The consequences of these laws now rest with all of us, and unfortunately not just with those who enacted them. I hope we are prepared to confront the results.”