

Governor's Salary Rollback Awaits Finance Calculation as FY2026 Budget Details Travel, Portraits, and Territorial Health Study

Following Governor Bryan's salary reversal, the Office of the Governor awaits a Finance ruling on deduction amounts; the \$14.3M FY2026 budget outlines salaries, \$600K in travel and utilities, and funding for portraits, health studies, and events.

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Now that Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. has “reversed” his salary increase, the Office of the Governor is awaiting a response from the Department of Finance regarding a “calculation of those deductions” to “then effectuate the deduction on every payment.” That update was shared by Kevin Rodriguez, the governor’s deputy chief of staff during Friday’s budget hearing.

Testifying before the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance, Mr. Rodriguez informed lawmakers that the Office's total budget request for FY2026 is \$14,387,494. That figure includes \$12,087,494 and \$300,000 from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Funds. Salaries, including that of the governor, total \$6,602,292. Mr. Rodriguez did not specify whether the initially proposed salary increase for the governor was included in that figure. The law dictates that budgets be submitted by May 30th. Governor Bryan signaled his intention [not to pursue legal action](#) over the rollback of his salary in late June.

Nonetheless, the Office's associated fringe benefits are budgeted at \$2,759,643. There are 80 filled positions and 16 vacancies at the Office of the Governor. The vacancies are all funded at 50%, according to Mr. Rodriguez's testimony. Other services and charges have been budgeted at \$2,179,459, which includes \$231,700 for office rentals locally and in Washington D.C. The sum also includes \$369,500 for "inter and off Island travel expenses for the governor, his security detail and support staff."

Supplies are budgeted at \$436,100. The Office of the Governor anticipates spending \$514,000 on utilities and \$321,000 on capital outlay. The latter includes the purchase of two vehicles among generator repairs and minor renovation. A further \$1,275,000 from the total general fund budget is allocated for "miscellaneous annual activities and events." That includes friendship day observances with Puerto Rico and the British Virgin Islands.

As observed by Senator Carla Joseph, actual territorial spending for VI/PR Friendship Day was \$65,000 but the FY2026 request is \$115,000. "It has become very popular," explained Mr. Rodriguez. He cited costs associated with travel for performers, but Senator Joseph wondered if there was a "cost-share" with the Association. "I believe they do fundraising, but, you know, it's very difficult to fundraise these days," he replied. Meanwhile, \$75,000 is earmarked for VI/BVI Friendship Day.

Also included in the budget are funds to commission official portraits of Governors John de Jongh and Kenneth Mapp. For committee chair Senator Novelle Francis, the portraits are "long overdue" but he wondered whether "the funding sufficient to support both of these portraits." According to Mr. Rodriguez, "we have not yet negotiated that cost for Governor Mapp." He anticipates that the cost will "probably be a little higher." Nonetheless, Mr. Rodriguez promised lawmakers that the Office "could work within our means to try to make sure that we have sufficient money to cover that portrait."

The Office of the Governor's budget includes an allocation for the Bureau of Economic Research of \$1,003,092. This year, the BER intends to "upgrade the comprehensive economic development strategy" and "facilitate stock development in economics and forecasting tools." That's according to Haldane Davies, BER's director. The Bureau will also conduct a study on the GVI's territorial health insurance to assess the "feasibility of having territorial health insurance in the United States Virgin Islands." The study will account for individuals in both the public and private sector, said Mr. Davies.

Additionally, the Office of Gun Violence Prevention will receive \$868,206, while the Office of Health Information Technology is budgeted at \$400,000. These allocations are a combination of general funds, TARF dollars, and the Office's miscellaneous budget.