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Governor Bryan Signs FY 2026 Budget, Renews Health Coverage, and Issues Vetoes

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. signed the FY 2026 budget to keep core services funded, renewed health coverage for government workers and retirees, ratified a coastal permit, and issued vetoes to safeguard checks and balances and protect the General Fund.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has signed the Fiscal Year 2026 budget package, renewed health coverage agreements for government workers and retirees, ratified a coastal zone permit, and vetoed two bills while issuing a line-item veto on another. The actions follow the Legislature's September 17 regular session.

“Budgets are promises, not wish lists,” Governor Bryan said. “I signed what keeps classrooms open, clinics running and communities safe. I vetoed what weakens checks and balances or risks the General Fund. That is smart, responsible stewardship.”

The governor’s signature on the FY 2026 appropriations ensures government operations will be funded from October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026. The budget provides support for education, healthcare, public safety, sanitation, roadwork, licensing and consumer protection, elections administration, and other core functions. Schools will receive funding for special education evaluations and for maintenance and repairs through the School Construction, Maintenance and Capital Fund. The Department of Public Works, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, and the Waste Management Authority will continue operating with both budget support and capital improvement funds for St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John.

The budget also appropriates money to the Department of Health, Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services, hospitals and health facilities, and the Office of the Inspector General. The University of the Virgin Islands, the Public Employees Relations Board, the Board of Elections, and other agencies also receive operating support. The Legislature itself was appropriated \$25.5 million.

Bryan also signed legislation transferring \$6.07 million from the GVI/JPMC Charitable Fund into the General Fund, pointing out that Act No. 8922 prohibits disbursing the money to animal welfare nonprofits without further legislative amendment.

Alongside the budget measures, the governor renewed the government’s group medical and dental agreements with Cigna, as well as voluntary coverage for critical illness, accidental injury and hospital care. An amendment to the medical insurance agreement with UnitedHealthcare was also approved. Bryan said these actions prevent any interruption in medical, dental and voluntary benefits while the administration continues to pursue longer-term cost controls.

In addition, the governor ratified a major Coastal Zone Management permit for Lime Out 2, LLC. The permit allows small business activity on the water under regulated conditions designed to protect coastal resources, while also supporting entrepreneurship and tourism.

Bryan exercised his veto authority on two bills. The first, Bill No. 36-0101, would have permitted the Judiciary to fill judicial vacancies on its own, with terms renewable indefinitely without gubernatorial appointment or legislative consent. Bryan rejected the measure, saying it undermined checks and balances, risked indefinite service without public accountability, and could encourage executive inaction at the end of a judge’s term.

The second veto, Bill No. 36-0112, sought to raise civil filing fees and divert that revenue into a new Judicial Branch Capital Improvement Fund while increasing post-judgment interest and allowing nine percent pre-judgment interest in certain cases. Bryan said the changes would destabilize the General Fund by diverting money without replacement and would increase litigation costs for families and small businesses.

The governor also issued a line-item veto to remove certain appropriations in the General Appropriations Act related to animal care and population control. Bryan’s office said those appropriations conflicted with Act No. 8922. All other provisions of the act remain funded.

In his statement, Bryan acknowledged the Legislature’s overrides of his prior vetoes on Jah’niqua’s Law and the automatic expungement bill for acquittals. He also recognized confirmation of several nominees: Roy Moorehead to the Board of Parole for the St. Thomas–St. John District, L. Damian M. Cartwright to the Board of Land Use Appeals for the St. Croix

District, Xavier A. Acevedo to the WAPA Governing Board for the St. Croix District, and Dr. Safiya George to the Government Hospital and Health Facility Board of Directors.

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