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WAPA Says It Will Not Disconnect Customers For Duration of Governor Bryan's Coronavirus State of Emergency Declaration

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The governing board and executive director of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority on Saturday said the utility will not disconnect delinquent electrical and potable water service accounts for the duration of the coronavirus state of emergency.

The WAPA release follows Senator Donna Frett-Gregory's [decision to remove a bill](#) from an emergency session on Friday that would bar WAPA from disconnecting customers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ms. Frett-Gregory said the bill needed additional work, and that the Legislature has been short staffed because of the coronavirus.

"I do not want to be one that will be looked at as irresponsible once this bill is passed," Ms. Frett-Gregory said. "We have to give consideration to the fact that WAPA has a number of bonds. They have suppliers, etc, and we don't want to send the wrong message to these people."

Mrs. Frett-Gregory said she spoke to WAPA board chairman, Anthony Thomas, and he relayed that the board understands the current circumstances Virgin Islanders are facing, and that "there should be no concern in regards to that (power disconnection) during this time," Ms. Frett-Gregory said.

According to a WAPA release, in a joint statement Saturday, Board Chairman, Mr. Thomas, who is also commissioner of the Department of Property & Procurement, and Executive Director Lawrence J. Kupfer said WAPA fully understands the concern in the community about the uncertainties surrounding the coronavirus and its effect on all our lives. "While customers have received a sixty-day bill this month as the authority catches up on its billing, WAPA will not compound these uncertain and challenging times with the fear of disconnection of customers, who are simply unable to pay due to disruptions caused by the pandemic," said the joint statement.

Although WAPA will not disconnect for nonpayment during this emergency period, customers who can pay their bills are encouraged to do so. WAPA relies on revenues from the sales of electricity and water to pay for fuel and other fixed costs to maintain constant electric and water service to residents of the territory.

WAPA said it issued sixty-day bills this month to allow the authority to collect for service that has already been provided but not yet billed. "While customers have received a bill each month, the number of days, from the day their meter was read to the day the bill was issued, was unavoidably increased each month since May 2019. This problem stems from our hurricane ravaged automated metering system having not been fully restored to pre-hurricane functionality," WAPA said.

"We again reiterate that WAPA will not disconnect electric or potable water service for any customer because of their inability to pay as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The non-disconnect policy, which actually took effect the week of March 16, will remain in place until further notice," the statement said.

"[In regards to the] coronavirus, WAPA has taken steps to ensure continued service to our customers while ensuring the health of our employees. Our management team continues to monitor the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and react swiftly as the situation evolves. We urge all customers visiting our offices to follow the guidelines that have been established to protect both our employees and the public," the joint statement said.