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Pressure Mounts For Bryan to Implement More Stringent Orders as Coronavirus Cases Climb to 30 in the USVI, With 24 Cases Pending

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Governor Albert Bryan

"I mean short of martial law there's nothing that we could do. What would you suggest, arresting people when they come in with a fever? And if we had that where would we detain them? I think people need to use their common sense when dealing with the virus."

Those were the words of Governor Albert Bryan when asked last week by the Consortium whether his administration could do more to ascertain that people coming into the territory self-quarantine to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Currently, the administration's only request is that people stay home when they arrive here, without any penalty for disregard of this

request.

But local sentiment for what many see as lenient orders by Mr. Bryan, and soft enforcement of those orders, have led to calls for the governor to implement stricter rules with punishment for those who go against them.

This comes amid growing fear that the numbers are rising too rapidly for a territory with roughly 110,000 people. The USVI has a far worse infection rate than neighboring Puerto Rico. With a population of 3.1 million as of 2018, 0.004 percent of the Puerto Rican population has been infected, compared to the USVI's 0.027 percent. Puerto Rico, as of Monday morning, had 127 confirmed cases of Covid-19. (The percentage of the amount of confirmed cases was reached by dividing the amount of confirmed cases into the VI population according to the 2010 census -- the same population number used by the Dept. of Health -- and multiplying by 100.)

Puerto Rico's better performance, however, is not happenstance. In mid-March, Gov. Wanda Vázquez implemented a curfew, declared a state of emergency, and moved quickly to ban large gatherings. At the time the island commonwealth had four confirmed cases. On Friday, Ms. Vázquez extended the curfew to at least April 12. The extended curfew requires non-essential workers to be at their homes by 7:00 p.m. — two hours earlier than the original order.

Locally, lawmakers are beginning to join the call for stricter measures. "All arriving passengers to the Virgin Islands need to be mandated to self-quarantine for 14 days," [said](#) Senator Kurt Vialet. In a [separate post](#), he added, "We can't allow workers from hotspots to come to the Virgin Islands and work without being quarantined. Contractors should be required to setup a quarantine area and be monitored daily for compliance. We must protect ourselves."

The 33rd Legislature [has also called on the governor](#) to implement more stringent rules, including a curfew, among other measures.

Such measures are seeing implementation on the U.S. mainland. In Florida, for example, Gov. Ron DeSantis instructed all people entering the state from the New York tri-state area to self-quarantine for 14 days. A violation could lead to a 60-day jail sentence and fines of up to \$500.

And countries around the world — including neighboring Caribbean islands — have moved to put lockdown measures in place. Tortola, the territory's stone's throw neighbor, has implemented a curfew and other stringent measures. And the BVI government is enforcing the curfew as well, with law enforcement personnel [arresting a pastor](#) on Sunday for deciding to move forward with church service from his ministry's building, against curfew orders.

In the USVI, many residents continue to ignore Mr. Bryan's plea to practice social distancing. On Sunday, throngs of residents were seen congregating at the Cane Bay beach, as [seen in this video](#). Others were seen at the Altona Lagoon in Christiansted.

Said Senator Janelle Sarauw, "...for those of you who do not have to be on the streets, please stay in. I would be torn to shreds if there was an outbreak in concentrated areas like our housing communities and other dense areas. Let us do what we can. Clear the beaches. This is not spring break. Refrain from the big beach parties and the close congregating on them."

Mr. Bryan, so far, has resisted a curfew and, as deduced from his response to the Consortium last week, shun putting in place stringent orders that would exact punishment on people coming into the territory who disregard calls for quarantine. He will hold a press briefing today at 1:30 p.m. following the Day of Prayer and Fasting event to be held at Gov't House on St. Croix.

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