

Bryan Credits Republican Support for Permanent Rum Cover-Over Rate, Blasts Plaskett: “Delegate Has Zero Power... We Got It Done”

Governor Bryan said his administration secured the permanent \$13.25 rum cover-over rate after lobbying Republican Senator Mike Crapo and Puerto Rico’s governor. He accused Delegate Plaskett of taking undue credit despite her failed legislative attempts.

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From left to right, Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, and Governor Albert Bryan Jr.

ST. CROIX — In a candid interview on WTJX Radio’s “Analyze This” with host Neville James on Friday, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. detailed how his administration successfully secured a permanent increase in the federal rum cover-over rate to \$13.25 per proof gallon, crediting the

achievement to Republican allies in the U.S. Senate and dismissing claims by Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett that she was responsible for the victory.

The new rate—up from the long-standing \$10.50 per proof gallon—represents an additional \$60 million in annual revenue for the Virgin Islands, a historic financial gain that will strengthen key public services such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and the Government Employees' Retirement System

Governor Bryan explained that his administration secured the measure's inclusion in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) by directly lobbying Senator Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee.

"It's very complicated because you can only get this—it's a tax extender—and you can only attach it to a tax bill," Bryan said. "Every time a tax bill comes around, we try to get it on."

Bryan recounted that all prior attempts during both Democratic and Republican administrations failed. "We tried during the Biden era. We had the last two years of Trump, and then four with Biden, and then now with Trump again, and we have been unsuccessful in getting it on," he said.

The governor said his office took a new approach this year, working directly with Senate Republicans. "We went to see Senator Crapo. We actually had a breakfast for him that was well attended. Puerto Rico, everybody participated," Bryan recalled. "And he told us, 'If there is a way, I will get it on there.' And he did. He got it on in the Senate."

Bryan said that even Plaskett's office doubted the effort would succeed. "Everybody told us they don't think it would make it through the House. But it did. It stayed in there," he said.

The Virgin Islands' lobbying effort, led by Bryan and members of his Washington, D.C. team, succeeded after years of failed attempts by previous administrations and congressional allies.

Delegate Plaskett had previously worked on multiple unsuccessful efforts to secure either temporary or permanent increases to the rum cover-over rate. In 2021, when Democrats controlled both chambers and the presidency, she introduced a bill with Puerto Rico's Delegate Jenniffer González-Colón to make the rate permanent—it failed.

In 2023, she joined Senators Bill Cassidy (R-Louisiana) and Bob Menendez (D-New Jersey) in another bipartisan effort, also unsuccessful. Earlier this year, in February 2025, she co-sponsored legislation with Representative Ron Estes (R-Kansas) to temporarily extend the \$13.25 rate through 2032, but that, too, stalled.

Ultimately, the Bryan administration's direct lobbying of Senator Crapo and cooperation with Governor González-Colón of Puerto Rico led to the measure's inclusion in the Senate version of H.R. 1, later passed as part of the OBBBA.

Governor Bryan sharply criticized Delegate Plaskett for what he called "misleading information" after a [social media ad](#) sponsored by the Virgin Islanders for Plaskett Association Corporation claimed she "secured a permanent increase in the rum cover-over rate."

"I was called by a reporter to ask me if that's true—that they secured the rum cover-over—and I was like, it's just not true," Bryan said. "They made efforts and stuff; I can't say they didn't work hard. But the reality is, this is something that was done by our lobbyists, our team that we put together, and, you know, Jenniffer González, and the strength of Mike Crapo, and him, his ability

to get it on there and keep it on there.”

He added that his administration is “trying to get the legislature to give Mike Crapo the Medal of Honor for the Virgin Islands.”

Bryan said Crapo’s support was purely altruistic: “You gotta think about it. There is nothing in it for him for this, because that didn’t help his election at all. And he got it done. And it’s a Republican who—we’ve been at odds with the Democratic Party—and I...” he said before breaking off, emphasizing the significance of bipartisan success.

The governor was blunt about the limitations of the delegate’s office.

“When you really realize it right, the Delegate to Congress has zero power,” Bryan said. “I’m not trying to diss anybody or anything, but they don’t have any power. Zero voting power. Zero power in committee.”

Bryan said the Organic Act grants no authority beyond the position’s existence. “All it says is, ‘The Virgin Islands shall have a Delegate to Congress.’ That’s it.”

He added that his administration and Plaskett’s office maintained basic coordination but emphasized that his bipartisan approach—not party loyalty—produced results. “Our track has always been two sides of the aisle. We have friends,” Bryan said. “I go to Republican people now, they still tell me about that—two sides of the aisle—because we don’t have a vote.”

The governor credited his Washington lobbying team, including Teri Helenes, Kevin Callwood, and the lobbying firms Squire Patton Boggs and Winston & Strawn, for maintaining relationships with lawmakers and advancing the rum measure.

“I would challenge anybody—we have gotten more stuff done on the Hill in this administration,” Bryan said. “We have a serious Washington team.”

He also praised Jenniffer González-Colón, noting her cooperation was essential: “If Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands have the same issue, we get behind Puerto Rico, because they are a lot larger. They’ve got delegates, congressmen, and women who come from districts that represent Puerto Rican demographics,” he said.

In a broader critique, Bryan accused Plaskett of prioritizing visibility over results.

“The delegate has a high national profile. Whatever you practice at, you become good at—she’s good at profile. I’m good at getting things done,” he said. “And the problem in the Virgin Islands is that everybody is good at profiling and not everybody good at getting things done.”

Bryan added that he intends to correct public misperceptions as election season heats up. “Everybody’s getting ready to run for what they want to run for,” he said. “But I think I’m going to have to constantly correct the record as we move forward in terms of what the Bryan administration has accomplished and what other people are going to want to claim to be their wins along this last eight-year journey.”

The permanent increase in the rum cover-over rate marks a decades-long goal achieved for the Virgin Islands. Bryan called it one of his administration’s most significant financial victories and credited Republican support and strategic bipartisan outreach for breaking the gridlock that stymied efforts under both parties.

“We’re trying to honor Senator Crapo for actually getting this done,” Bryan said. “He solely got it on the bill to be considered, and then made sure it stayed on there.”

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