

Bryan Says GVI Can Sustain SNAP Benefits Into Early 2026 if Shutdown Persists

Governor Bryan says the GVI has enough reserves to fund food assistance through the New Year if Washington's shutdown persists. Local funds will cover half of November's SNAP benefits, with checks mailed to households once legislation passes.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said Monday that the Virgin Islands government has enough in reserve to keep food assistance flowing through the end of the year and into early 2026 if the federal shutdown continues. The territory, he said, will use its local rainy day fund to cover benefits until Washington's budget impasse ends.

“We have enough money to make the payment on November 1. We have enough money to make the payment on November 15, and if necessary, we have enough money to make that payment on December 1,” Mr. Bryan said during a Government House briefing on Monday. “That’s the priority.” He added that, if the shutdown drags on, the government is “prepared to cover those SNAP benefits through the New Year,” though doing so would require shifting spending priorities.

The territory began emergency measures [earlier this month](#) to ensure no household loses access to basic nutrition aid. Half of November’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits will be issued using local funds. Checks will be mailed directly to each household because, Mr. Bryan said, “reprogramming the system will take way too long, and our families cannot eat red tape.”

Legislation to authorize the use of local funds will be taken up by the 36th Legislature this week. Senate President Milton Potter said at the press briefing that lawmakers acted immediately once the likelihood of a federal disruption became clear. “When my colleagues in the 36th Legislature and I learned of the probable November SNAP interruption, I immediately submitted legislation to access the Budget Stabilization Fund...to be used as a lifeline to provide support for the most vulnerable among us,” he said. A Committee of the Whole meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 29, followed by a legislative session on Thursday, October 30, to approve the measure.

Governor Bryan praised the Legislature’s cooperation, describing the effort as the kind of partnership “Virgin Islanders deserve.” Both he and Mr. Potter confirmed that the local reserves—established several years ago to stabilize finances during emergencies—can sustain benefits through December and into early 2026 if needed.

The rainy day fund, Bryan noted, began under his administration with annual \$5 million allocations. “Our former Chief of Staff, Karl Knight, said we’re going to start this rainy day fund. We’re going to put \$5 million in it every year, in case something happened...It’s like your FEMA kit,” the governor said. “Well, we don’t have to rob from anyone, because this is money that we’ve set aside.”

The measure will ensure every SNAP household in the Virgin Islands receives at least half of its normal monthly allotment while the federal government remains shuttered. “We are taking all the advanced steps so that once the Legislature acts and I sign the measure, the V.I. Department of Human Services and the V.I. Department of Finance can go ahead and issue those checks,” Bryan said.

Human Services Commissioner Averil George is coordinating with Finance and the Office of Management and Budget to expedite disbursement. The governor said messaging will also be broadcast in patois and Spanish to ensure the widest possible reach. “If you know SNAP recipients that are worrying about it, that’s what you should do,” he told residents.

Sen. Potter underscored the human toll behind the decision. “The ongoing federal shutdown threatens to interrupt SNAP benefits for the month of November, a lifeline for countless Virgin Islanders who depend on this support to put food on the table,” he said. “Hunger cannot wait, and neither should we.”

Beyond government action, Mr. Bryan highlighted community generosity. He thanked a pair of St. Thomas restaurant owners for providing “three meals a day for any food stamp recipient for free.” The governor also reminded residents that federal workers who have gone unpaid during the shutdown can apply for unemployment benefits if furloughed.

While both leaders expressed hope that Congress will resolve the budget impasse soon, Bryan said his administration will continue preparing for the worst. “It’s just a matter of shifting priorities in terms of what we get done and what we think needs to be addressed,” he said. “That’s what leadership is about — making those hard decisions.”

Mr. Bryan also warned of broader impacts as the shutdown continues to stall federal decisions affecting recovery programs. “It should disturb everybody to think that we don’t have people doing these very important jobs for our federal government,” he said.

For now, SNAP recipients can expect checks to arrive by mail once the Legislature finalizes the bill and the governor signs it. “This is the kind of partnership Virgin Islanders deserve,” Bryan said, “and our families cannot eat red tape.

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