

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Vialet Urges Grocers to Freeze Food Prices as Federal Shutdown Halts SNAP Benefits

With thousands of households affected by the SNAP pause, Vialet called on grocers and distributors to avoid price hikes, urged DLCA to curb gouging, and appealed to the community to unite in food drives and compassion as families face mounting strain.

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Senator Kurt Vialet is calling on local grocers, distributors, and wholesalers to hold the line on food prices as the U.S. Virgin Islands faces twin challenges — the ongoing federal government shutdown and a pause in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits that thousands of households rely on.

“With so many Virgin Islanders already struggling to stretch every dollar, now is not the time for unnecessary markups or price increases,” Violet said. “We must work together to ensure that our most vulnerable residents, especially seniors, families, and children, can continue to access affordable, nutritious food.”

Violet said the V.I. Department of Human Services has revealed that SNAP benefits for November have been paused due to the federal funding lapse, affecting an estimated 24,000 households in the territory. The Food Research & Action Center has warned that a prolonged shutdown could cause further delays or interruptions to benefits in other U.S. states and territories.

While the Government of the Virgin Islands has pledged that local reserves could sustain SNAP benefits through early 2026 if needed, Violet cautioned that such measures are temporary. “This situation highlights just how fragile our food security can be,” he said, noting that the shutdown’s ripple effects could significantly strain household budgets across the islands.

The senator urged the V.I. Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs to closely monitor food prices and act swiftly against price gouging or exploitative practices. “This is a moment for accountability and compassion,” Violet said. “Businesses must recognize the responsibility they have to the people they serve.”

Calling for collective community action, the senator appealed to businesses, religious organizations, and residents alike. “If there are any supermarkets, stores, restaurants, churches, organizations with food pantries, or individuals willing to support food drives, now is the time to step forward,” he urged.

Mr. Violet said his office is ready to help connect resources and coordinate food distribution for families in need. He also encouraged residents to share information about available food banks, distribution events, and community feeding programs that can provide relief during this period.

“I understand the pressures businesses face, from shipping costs to supply chain issues, but compassion must come before profit,” the senator stated. “This is not just about economics; it’s about humanity. Let’s come together as one Virgin Islands family and make sure every person has a meal on their table.”