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GVI Employees Worked Until 2:30 a.m. to Send SNAP Checks Out by Saturday; USVI One of Only 6 Jurisdictions to Issue Payments During Shutdown

As millions of Americans await delayed federal aid, the Bryan administration used local funds to send partial November SNAP benefits to more than 10,600 USVI households, with government workers laboring overnight to ensure families could buy food on time.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. By. GOV'T HOUSE.

While millions of Americans face uncertainty over when their November Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits will arrive, Virgin Islanders have already begun receiving relief thanks to the quick action of the Bryan administration and the Legislature.

On Saturday, local officials issued checks to more than 10,600 SNAP households, representing nearly 21,000 residents. The payments, which covered half of each household's monthly benefit, were funded entirely with local dollars after the federal government ordered a temporary halt to disbursements during the ongoing shutdown.

The emergency action made the Virgin Islands one of only six jurisdictions nationwide to step in with local funding to support residents while federal benefits remain frozen. Governor Albert Bryan Jr. praised government employees who worked through the weekend to ensure families received assistance before the start of the month.

“This weekend, we had people up until 2:30 in the morning trying to get these checks out so our friends, our neighbors and our families would not go without the much-needed support,” said Governor Bryan. “To the dedicated employees of the Department of Human Services and certainly to the Department of Finance – thank you.”

The intervention came as federal officials faced a Monday deadline to inform a U.S. District Court judge of their plans to resume November benefits. Earlier court rulings had ordered the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to use \$6 billion in contingency funds, along with other resources, to fund the program after a 34-day shutdown disrupted national operations.

However, by Monday afternoon, federal officials declined to issue full November payments, instead choosing to calculate reduced amounts by a Wednesday deadline set by a Rhode Island judge. The USDA said the delays were due to the complex process of determining new payment levels. It remains unclear how large the benefit reductions will be.

The decision means most U.S. households will see smaller or delayed benefits, even as states warn that loading the funds onto electronic cards could take one to two weeks.

Governor Bryan had described the potential restoration of full federal benefits as “an early Christmas” for Virgin Islanders but acknowledged that the territory acted preemptively to ensure residents could shop for groceries while awaiting further guidance from Washington.

While the Virgin Islands' local checks provide temporary relief, the federal government's inaction leaves recipients across the mainland in limbo. The USDA's contingency funds total about \$5 billion, far short of the \$8 billion needed to fund SNAP nationwide for a single month.

For now, Virgin Islanders have what many across the country do not: the ability to begin their November shopping without waiting for Washington to act — a reflection of swift, coordinated action between the Bryan administration's Department of Human Services, the Department of Finance, and the 36th Legislature during the nation's second-longest shutdown in history.