

DLCA Turns to Justice Department After St. Thomas Gas Stations Ignore Fuel Pricing Subpoena

After only two of 29 St. Thomas gas stations responded to a subpoena for fuel pricing data, the VIDOJ has stepped in to enforce compliance. DLCA confirmed that all St. Croix gas stations adhered, while St. John and St. Thomas largely ignored the order.

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ST. THOMAS — Only two of 29 gas stations on St. Thomas have complied with a subpoena from the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA) requesting detailed information on fuel pricing and operations — prompting the Department of Justice (DOJ) to step in and enforce the order.

The revelation came during a Monday hearing of the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture, where DLCA Commissioner Nathalie Hodge updated lawmakers on the department's ongoing efforts to ensure pricing transparency in the Virgin Islands.

Hodge reaffirmed the agency's commitment to "data-driven oversight and consumer transparency," explaining that DLCA had "formally requested that all gas retailers in the territory produce verified records of their operational and pricing costs."

The subpoenas required gas station operators to submit bills of lading and contracts related to the importation, retail, and transportation of regular, premium, and diesel gasoline dating back to May 1, 2022. The information, Ms. Hodge said, is essential to DLCA's ongoing fuel price study.

While the commissioner initially reported that "the majority of gas retailers have submitted the required documentation," DLCA's legal counsel Geraldine Vaval later clarified that most of those submissions came from St. Croix.

"All the gas stations on St. Croix responded to the subpoena," Ms. Vaval said. The same, however, could not be said for the other districts. "The gas station on St. John did not respond," she added.

According to Ms. Vaval, the lack of cooperation on St. Thomas is significant enough that the Department of Justice has now become involved. "We're working with [the Department of] Justice because there's been so many who didn't respond," she said, adding that DOJ had asked DLCA to "prioritize which ones we want to go after first."

The noncompliance drew sharp criticism from Senator Marvin Blyden, who described the situation as "disrespect."

"It's unacceptable what's going on in this territory," the St. Thomas senator said, lamenting that fuel prices on the island have remained static. "The price don't change in this district, it do not change," he said, his frustration evident.

Senator Blyden also called on gas station owners to act responsibly. "It's a big problem, and you supposed to be a good consumer in terms of working with the public," he said. "We need to find out what the issue is and deal with it once and for all, because it's not right."

Lawmakers agreed that resolving the issue will require stronger enforcement by the DLCA and greater compliance from gas stations. In the meantime, Senator Blyden urged the department to act decisively. "We're not taking that disrespect either," he warned. "That's why we forwarded names already to the Department of Justice," Commissioner Hodge confirmed.

Senator Angel Bolques Jr., who sought clarity on the subpoenas, also expressed interest in seeing the fuel price study completed. Lawmakers stressed that accurate data is critical to identifying disparities in pricing across the islands.

However, with little to no participation from St. Thomas gas stations, the credibility of the study's findings could be compromised.