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USVI Secures \$9.5 Million for Community Projects in Funding Deal That Reopens Government as Plaskett Blasts Short-Term Approach

The bill reopening the federal government delivers over \$9.5M to the USVI, while Delegate Stacey Plaskett criticizes the measure as a short-term fix that lets ACA subsidies expire, setting up renewed congressional clashes over healthcare and spending.

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The Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. By. GETTY IMAGES.

The U.S. Virgin Islands is set to receive more than \$9.5 million in targeted community project funding after President Donald Trump signed legislation late Wednesday reopening the federal government following a 43-day shutdown. The eight allocations, folded into the broader bipartisan

deal, are aimed at shoring up food security, workforce development, and health and wellness services in the territory while federal operations resume and lawmakers pivot to the next round of budget fights.

Under the package, the Virgin Islands Good Food Coalition will receive \$1.698 million to build a food and technology hub, while the Nature Association is allocated \$1.332 million to revitalize the Frederiksted Fish Market. The Virgin Islands Architecture Center is slated for \$1.015 million to rehabilitate the Christiansted Old Barracks. Additional awards include \$1 million for We Grow Food Inc. to install desalination systems and \$1 million for the University of the Virgin Islands to acquire telehealth equipment. The St. Clair Institute will receive \$857,000 for mental health facility renovations, the Department of Agriculture \$825,000 for abattoir upgrades, and the Bush Tea and Therapy Foundation \$788,000 to expand its wellness center. These funds are part of full-year appropriations for select agencies and are intended to strengthen local resilience amid ongoing recovery challenges.

The bill's path through Congress underscored sharp partisan divisions. In the House, the measure passed on a 220–212 vote, with all 219 Republicans voting in favor and only six Democrats breaking with their caucus to support it, while 206 Democrats opposed the legislation. V.I. Delegate Stacey Plaskett, a Democrat, criticized the resolution in a statement, arguing that Republicans prioritized partisanship with a short-term fix that lacked long-term stability. She contended that Democrats held firm for 43 days to shield healthcare, opposing a bill that lets Affordable Care Act tax credits expire and accusing Republicans of relentless ACA targeting, historic Medicaid cuts, and threats to Medicare that she said affect Virgin Islanders. However, the funding package itself imposes no direct cuts to Medicaid or Medicare; references to such reductions stem from separate GOP budget proposals advanced earlier in the year.

The shutdown, however, continued as Democrats insisted on attaching an extension of enhanced Affordable Care Act premium subsidies to what Republicans framed as a clean continuing resolution, a demand GOP lawmakers rejected as unrelated to immediate funding needs. Those subsidies, expanded under prior laws and set to lapse at year's end, were not extended in this bill, a choice that may contribute to higher premiums for some marketplace enrollees even as officials argue that allowing them to expire at this stage helps maintain fiscal discipline while broader negotiations continue. The compromise keeps most federal operations funded through January 30, 2026, alongside a pledged Senate vote on healthcare by mid-December.

Plaskett also argued that the measure underfunds key programs and fosters uncertainty for businesses and agencies reliant on federal aid. At the same time, the legislation provides full-year funding for sectors such as agriculture, military construction, and the legislative branch. She further highlighted what she described as the Trump administration's assault on Congress's power of the purse through alleged illegal freezes on more than \$410 billion in appropriations, a claim backed by Democratic analyses but contested in the courts, where some funding withholdings have been upheld as within executive discretion. The current bill does not address those actions, focusing instead on reopening the government and restoring lapsed operations.

For federal workers, Trump's signature triggers back pay for the shutdown period and a recall of furloughed employees, with agencies such as the Federal Aviation Administration expected to ramp back up to normal operations. That shift is designed to ease air travel constraints and lift flight reductions at major airports, while services ranging from national parks to food assistance programs restart, easing strains on families across the country, including in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

With funding secured only until late January, however, Congress now faces renewed negotiations over comprehensive appropriations, healthcare subsidies, and broader spending priorities, amid calls from both parties to move beyond repeated brinkmanship toward more predictable governance.

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