The Virgin Islands Consortium

$8 Million Sits Idle, $4.2 Million Faces Sept. 2026 Deadline While Homebuyers Await Relief: VIHFA Rebuked in Senate

Senators learned VIHFA has spent only $4.3M of $8.5M in HAF funds, must use the $4.2M by Sept. 2026, holds about $8M in HOME funds at risk of 5-year deobligation after $320K already lost, and admitted no plan was in place for $4M in local homebuyer funds.

Government / **Published On February 12, 2026 05:41 AM /**

Nelcia Charlemagne February 12, 2026

VIHFA Executive Director Eugene Jones testifies before the Senate Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications during a hearing where lawmakers questioned unspent housing funds and program deadlines. **By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.**

The V.I. Housing Finance Authority came under fire from the Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications on Thursday, as lawmakers learned of millions in unspent federal and local funding.

VIHFA was one of several government agencies invited to comment on efforts to eradicate homelessness in the Virgin Islands. The authority's testimony focused on its efforts to combat housing instability, including the availability of a significant amount of federal funding to achieve that goal.

Of the $8.5 million allocated through the Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF), VIHFA has only expended $4.3 million and has up to September 2026 to spend the remaining $4.2 million. Senator Ray Fonseca requested a spending plan.

Eugene Jones, the authority's executive director, promised to "submit one" and assured the committee's chair, Senator Marvin Blyden, that a plan does indeed exist. "I just have to send it to you, and it has a budget for the $4.2 million that's left," he said. Though Sen. Blyden requested that the plan be submitted before the meeting ended, there was no mention that it had been received.

Mr. Blyden was also deeply troubled by the VIFHA's failure to spend HOME funding. Another federal grant, the program is designed to "expand the supply of decent, affordable housing for very low and low income families," per Mr. Jones's testimony. He informed lawmakers that since 1995, the HOME program has "assisted more than 535 families to attain home ownership."

The committee, however, was interested in more recent figures. In the past three years, the program has benefited only 5 people, according to Janine Hector, director of federal programs. She explained that "the subsidies have been increasing over the years, so that also limits the numbers."

The slow rate of spending has caused a "headache" for Sen. Blyden, the lawmaker articulated.

Senator Kurt Vialet was not happy either. When he asked whether the HOME funds "expire and go back to Washington," Mr. Jones replied with "no comment." Mr. Vialet immediately restated his question, to which Mr. Jones answered "no."

The funds, however, risk deobligation after five years, as confirmed by Mr. Jones and Ms. Hector. At the end of the last fiscal year, "about $320,000" was deobligated, Ms. Hector told Senator Vialet.

VIFHA receives roughly $745,000 per year for the HOME Program. The current fund balance is approximately $8 million, according to Ms. Hector.

"10 years of money sitting in an account that could be utilized to help homeowners, and you sitting with an attitude," Senator Vialet said to Mr. Jones. Minutes earlier, the lawmaker was involved in a testy exchange with the authority's executive director over the failure to spend yet another batch of money.

In 2021, Mr. Vialet introduced legislation that provided $4 million in local funds for a first-time home buyer program. When Sen. Blyden sought a status update, Mr. Jones shared that “none of that money has been spent yet.”

He informed the committee of plans to “reallocate that because of the stringent requirements to reach out to those individuals.”

However, according to both Senators Blyden and Vialet, the requirements should have always been accessible. “The reason why we actually brought the legislation [was] based on the stringent rules with the federal funds,” Sen. Blyden noted.

Sen. Vialet did not accept Mr. Jones’s response either. “You can't reallocate the money…Only the legislature could do that,” he advised. “If there's some plan that the Housing Finance Authority has, you need to make sure that we know what the plan is,” he said. Mr. Jones confirmed that there was no plan in place.

“The Housing Finance Authority had the authorization to develop the requirements. So if you develop requirements that nobody can meet, that's on the Housing Finance Authority,” Sen. Vialet stated.

Mr. Vialet chose not to let Mr. Jones provide a further explanation on the record, which led the two men to repeatedly speak over each other.

“You can't be upset for Senators being frustrated after passing $6 million years ago. The money is not spent,” Sen. Vialet said, rebuking Mr. Jones for allegedly facing the Legislature with a “smug” look.

Urging practicality, Senator Blyden recommended stronger advertising of the available opportunity, particularly the HOME funds. “We need to connect the dots. There's a disconnect somewhere,” he remarked.