

The Virgin Islands Consortium

DLCA Launches Affordability Initiative With New Price Transparency Tools for Virgin Islands Consumers

DLCA has launched its 2026 “Affordability First” initiative with a new pricing report, market basket tool and “Wall of Transparency,” as March data showed sharp fuel increases and continued grocery price pressure across the Virgin Islands.

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The V.I. Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs has launched a new 2026 “Affordability First” initiative built around pricing transparency, market comparisons, and a newly released Comprehensive Pricing & Inflation Report, as the agency pushes cost-of-living relief and gives consumers more tools to track rising prices across the Virgin Islands.

Announced last week, DLCA says the initiative is designed to empower consumers through transparency, promote competition, and provide immediate tools to help residents navigate rising market costs. The effort is supported by territorial fuel survey data, supermarket analyses, and broader economic insights, and includes a new “Wall of Transparency” framework intended to place real-time pricing information directly into the hands of Virgin Islands consumers, according to the department.

“Our goal is simple,” said Commissioner Nathalie Hodge. “We are putting the data directly into the hands of the consumer. When you know where the best prices are, you have the power to make informed decisions and drive competition across the market. This initiative is about transparency, accountability, and ensuring that Virgin Islands families can stretch their dollars further.”

As part of the rollout, DLCA highlighted fuel and grocery pricing trends identified in its March 2026 findings. The department said fuel prices remained relatively stable from December through February, but increased sharply in March because of rising wholesale import costs. Between February 3 and March 23, diesel rose by more than 61.1 percent, or \$1.62 per gallon, while gasoline increased by more than 45 percent. DLCA also said significant price differences continue across the islands, with St. Croix consistently offering the lowest prices and St. Thomas the highest. According to the department, diesel shows the widest gap — about \$1.80 per gallon — creating meaningful savings opportunities for consumers who shop strategically.

DLCA’s supermarket analysis found that grocery prices continue to reflect the territory’s reliance on imported goods, with fuel, freight, and supply chain variability driving fluctuations. Between December 2025 and March 2026, several produce items posted significant increases, including orange bell peppers at 55.6 percent, green peppers at 49.0 percent, green bell peppers at 38.9 percent, and lettuce at 28.5 percent. At the same time, DLCA said staple items such as bananas, corned beef, canned tuna, and yellow onions remained stable with no change, while rice increased by 1.8 percent.

The initiative also introduces a Market Basket Comparison Tool, which DLCA said will identify the retailers offering the most competitive pricing on 15 essential goods. The department said the 2026 “Affordability First” initiative continues the administration’s commitment to transparency, economic fairness, and consumer protection by equipping residents with information to navigate changing market conditions with confidence.

Consumers are being encouraged to shop wisely and compare prices to make the best economic choices. For questions, DLCA said residents can contact the Consumer Affairs Division at 340-713-3522 on St. Croix, 340-714-3522 on St. Thomas, or 340-727-3303 on St. John.