

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bryan Allows Beach Restaurants to Reopen, Though They Can't Sell Alcohol; Stimulus Checks Expected by Mid-May

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Rhythms at Rainbow on St. Croix By. Patrik Bennett

Governor Albert Bryan, who on Friday ordered the territory's beaches open beginning today, has announced that beach restaurants will be allowed to open as well, though they won't be cleared to sell alcohol. Cramer Park Beach will remain closed until Wednesday, the governor said, revealing that the beach had been vandalized and needed time to be cleaned.

Mr. Bryan's announcement comes as he shared with the territory what the administration believes has been its strong response to the Covid-19 pandemic. He said contrary to the belief by some that the territory has fared relatively well because of luck, it has been dedicated professionals from his administration leading the Department of Health that has led to the current standing.

"We're going to allow the beach restaurants to open for take-out orders. We don't want people congregating in the bar area. We don't want people sitting underneath the cabanas and eating; please go back to the beach and eat in your own appropriate space," Mr. Bryan said during his Monday coronavirus press briefing.

He announced further beach rules, stating, "No picnics, no parties, or deejays or large speakers, no get-togethers, no camping. No kickbacks as you young people like to call it, no bonfires — and no celebrating for 4/20," referring to the date marijuana smokers celebrate the drug.

Relative to federal stimulus checks, Mr. Bryan said the checks should start arriving in mailboxes territory-wide by mid-May. He said Puerto Ricans were set to start receiving theirs at the end of April. In the USVI, names of people who will receive the first batch of stimulus checks have already been compiled. "We want to make sure that once the federal government gives the OK and sends that money down, we cut checks immediately and get them in your hands," said the territory's leader. For more information on stimulus payments, read [this](#) Consortium article.

The governor encouraged those who haven't filed their 2018 taxes to do so immediately. If persons haven't filed because they did not have income in 2018, the governor said residents should still file and insert zero income in the requisite brackets. Those receiving Social Security should also file and put the amount received for the year. "Not so you can pay taxes, but we can have a record of your name, if you have any children under 17 so we can determine how much to cut your check for and where to send it," Mr. Bryan said.

The governor said the reopening of beaches is meant to serve as a test to see how Virgin Islanders respond.

"As we slowly open up our economy we are going to have to rely on you to get it done properly. We have taken one of those steps today by opening the beaches. Next week is the end of the first phase of our 30-day stay-at-home order. We understand that there are many of you that need to get back to your living and your normal business, your job, but we have a new normal to contemplate. This week will be a test with how we behave and how serious we're taking this pandemic," Mr. Bryan said.

He added, "We are by no means out of the woods yet. It is clear from the experience of our brothers and sisters in the BVI, that you cannot hide out from this pandemic. At some point you have to open up. It will sit and wait for you." The governor was referring to the Government of the British Virgin Islands, which has taken stringent measures to protect its people from the pandemic. A 24-hr curfew was [recently extended](#) after a first Covid-19 death was confirmed. Even so, the British territory has seen no more than 5 confirmed cases, three of whom have recovered, according to the government.

When pressed on his decision to reopen the beaches, the governor said the territory would not see a peak in coronavirus cases for at least three weeks. It remains to be seen, however, whether he would move to close the beaches again when the territory was arriving at its projected peak.

As for testing, the administration announced a rise in the number of results as the territory's hospitals and private practices start performing tests. According to the latest numbers provided during the press briefing, 625 tests have been performed, 53 of which have returned positive for Covid-19, 554 negative, 18 pending and 48 recovered. Three people have died from the coronavirus in the U.S. Virgin Islands.