

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Government Employees Insurance Remains Intact

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V.I. Gov. Employees Health Insurance



On Tuesday night, with just hours remaining before the V.I. Government's health insurance contract with CIGNA came to an end, senators of the 30th Legislature were able to find \$6.24 million in extra funding to prevent the premiums of over 7,000 government employees from rising, while averting a major default that would leave those same employees without healthcare coverage.

"I am asking staff to take these straight to Government House for the governor's signature, so we can be sure insurance does not lapse," Senate President Shawn-Michael Malone said after the late-night vote, speaking of the health and dental insurance contracts the senate was able to keep alive with no additional cost to government employees by allocating funds from a \$19 million retroactive funds claim the [federal](#)

[government paid to the Virgin Islands](#), after an exhaustive audit that was authorized in 2011.

The last-minute deal came after Governor de Jongh [refused to sign a contract](#) sent to him by the Health Insurance Board of Trustees, who would not cut health benefits to satisfy the Governor's allocated \$150.9 million to health insurance in the 2015 budget. The Board's decision added \$6.24 million in premium payments to the Government's contract with CIGNA, and it was left up to the 30th Legislature to find the money or more than 7,000 government employees would have gone without health insurance coverage on Wed., Oct. 1.

This brings the government health insurance budget to \$159 million, second in cost only to the Department of Education budget.

Although Gov. de Jongh had [different plans](#) for the \$19 million in retroactive funds made available after the federal audit, those plans were altered by an amendment to bill 30-0501 from Sen. Clifford Graham, cutting the amount of line items it included and rerouting funds to the more pressing need of health care.

Late Tuesday, via press release, Government House confirmed Gov. de Jongh had "signed the health insurance contracts to provide medical and dental health insurance coverage to government workers, retirees and their dependents beginning on Wednesday, October 1."