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Plaskett Says Bryan Administration Has Not Provided Needed Documentation to U.S. Treasury for Release of Stimulus Checks

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Over 88.1 million stimulus checks had gone out to Americans on the U.S. mainland [as of Monday](#), with millions more going out daily as the U.S. Treasury works to fulfill the obligation of the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act that provides roughly \$560 billion in stimulus payments of \$1,200 to individuals, and \$500 to children under 17.

Yet while mainland Americans have been receiving their stimulus money to help mitigate the fallout from the coronavirus that has left over 26 million Americans unemployed, Virgin Islanders have not received their checks, and, according to Governor Albert Bryan, will probably not see payments until June.

For many Virgin Islanders, [including the thousands who have filed for unemployment](#), the money is needed now. Mr. Bryan has removed all blame for the delay from his administration and has thrown the responsibility on Washington. He also placed part of the onus on Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, calling on the Congresswoman during his Monday press briefing to push the U.S. Treasury to release the funding.

"We're calling on the delegate to help us get these funds, to get them to us faster, because we are not second class citizens here in the Virgin Islands, and we are quite tired of being treated as such by Washington," Mr. Bryan said.

But during an interview with the Consortium Monday evening, Ms. Plaskett said her office had done its part, and she expressed perplexity as to why she was being called out when, she said, it was the Bryan administration that had been lagging behind in providing critical documentation to the U.S. Treasury.

The stimulus checks program has a reimbursable clause. Because of this, the Government of the Virgin Islands must first make the stimulus payments to its residents and receive immediate reimbursement from the U.S. Treasury. The same was done in 2008 when the territory received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding, Ms. Plaskett said.

"In this instance we have gotten assurances from the U.S. Treasury that when they know the amount that we have that needs to be expended, that they're going to make every effort to almost simultaneously give us the money," Ms. Plaskett said. "But I had a discussion Thursday evening with Treasury and IRS with the other members of the territories, to find out what the process was going to be and the timing for getting us that funding, and we were told on that call that they were waiting for the territory's Internal Revenue Bureau to send them a file of what were the expenditures and who was it going to," said the delegate to Congress.

Ms. Plaskett said this information is critical because Treasury needs to know filers who receive Social Security so that those persons could receive payments as well.

"We have been waiting to hear back from IRB as to whether or not they in fact put their plan together as we did in 2018 as to how much money we were going to be spending. I have not heard back from IRB but I'm hoping to do that," Congresswoman Plaskett said.

She said the governor's statement was further confusing because, "I do recall when we understood that the stimulus checks were going to be done, that the governor approached the Legislature to seek a line of credit to be able to make these expenditures. I know that he initially asked for \$60 million, and in the end requested \$120 million for the line of credit to be able to put out the money first and then have it reimbursed. And so I need to ask, I don't know what happened with that line of credit."

The Congresswoman said she had learned that as of the beginning of April, the VI Internal Revenue Bureau (IRB), also called Bureau of Internal Revenue, had not finished the insertion of 2018 income tax returns into their system. "Potentially, maybe it's been done, but as of Thursday, IRS had told me that they had not received a plan from the Virgin Islands," Ms. Plaskett said. She said the other territories were also lagging behind in providing the IRS with important information.

After the call with Treasury and IRS, Ms. Plaskett said her legislative team sent an email to ask IRB about the status of its plan, what IRB planned on asking for, and how it was going to be done.

"We have not heard from them as yet," she said. "So I'm not sure what the governor means by that because my job was to ensure Treasury would reimburse us for the full amount, they have agreed to that. In addition they've agreed that they will get us the money as soon as the plan has been put in place and has been sent and approved to them, and they have not received the plan as of the end of last week when I spoke with IRS and Treasury."

Ms. Plaskett further stated that the U.S. Treasury needs to know the total amount of funds that will be expended by the territory. "That's what Treasury is looking for. My assumption is because the request for line of credit went to \$120 million, that that may potentially be the amount — calculating in not just \$1,200, but also \$500 per child under 17. But it's interesting because the other delegates specifically asked what is the amount that's needed, and Treasury's response was we don't know because we haven't gotten the plan or the amounts from each one of the territories as yet," Congresswoman Plaskett said.

Clarification: April 28, 2020

A previous version of this story said Mr. Bryan placed part of blame for the delay on Congress. Instead, Mr. Bryan placed the responsibility on Treasury, and he said he was tired of seeing the territory's residents treated as second-class citizens by Washington — which, of course, includes Congress. As such, the story has been updated.

Additionally, a text error was fixed that said the ARRA funding was secured in 2018, when it was actually 2008.