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Bryan Administration Convinces U.S. Treasury to Pay Upfront \$84.7 Million in Stimulus Checks to Virgin Islanders

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Governor Albert Bryan

Though Virgin Islands residents may have to wait as late as June to start receiving the stimulus checks provided through the CARES Act, Governor Albert Bryan on Tuesday evening told the Consortium that his administration was successful in securing upfront payment of \$84.7 million from the U.S. Treasury to provide to Virgin Islanders.

During a previous press briefing, Mr. Bryan had spoken about the difficulty the local government would have in footing the stimulus monies upfront, noting the government's precarious financial condition. At the time, he said he would ask Treasury to provide the funds upfront.

Normally, the CARES Act stimulus program calls on local governments to make payments to their residents upfront and get reimbursed by Treasury thereafter. The VI government, according to the governor, has been spared the burden.

This means the \$120 million in revenue anticipation notes the government was seeking will be used in other much-need areas. The governor said the bank had already approved \$60 million, and the administration was reviewing the term sheet.

B.I.R. Provides Update on Stimulus Payments Status

In a release issued this afternoon, the V.I. Bureau of Internal Revenue sought to make clear its current standing relative to the stimulus payments with the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Treasury, following a Consortium article that [included comments from Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett](#). The Congresswoman was responding to comments Mr. Bryan made when he called on Ms. Plaskett 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 during his [Monday coronavirus press briefing](#).

The Congresswoman's response was swift. She said her office had done its part and that Treasury was awaiting documents from the B.I.R. as a prerequisite to release the funds.

B.I.R. said that on April 2 it submitted its draft plan to the IRS, and that the plan was being reviewed by IRS staff. "Once approved, the draft will be sent to the Treasury for final processing," B.I.R. said.

The review process is what's taking long. "They're paying the money. The problem is they just can't make up their minds on the rules," Mr. Bryan said.

The governor said the rules being contemplated that is slowing the release of the stimulus payments include who pays Social Security recipients, who's accountable for the funds, what reports and controls will be in place, and who pays veterans on disability.

The CARES Act Economic Impact Payments will provide \$1,200 to most Americans and \$500 for children under 17. As of Monday, 88.1 million checks had gone out to Americans on the mainland.

B.I.R. said it submitted its recommendation on Sunday that the cost of the Economic Impact Payments to the territory's eligible residents is \$84.7 million. "Within 24 hours of receiving the estimate, the Bureau accepted the Treasury's recommended estimated cost. [The] Treasury Department will advance the funds in order to pay the stimulus checks," B.I.R. said.

B.I.R. urged taxpayers who have not filed their 2018 returns to do so as soon as possible to receive stimulus payments.

As for the Congresswoman, who had expressed confusion as to why she was being called out and pointed to actions her office had taken to ascertain that the territory would not only receive funds, but be reimbursed, Mr. Bryan again stressed that he meant no harm.

"I can't judge her perception, all I could do is say all we were saying is we need the Delegate's help on this. She is in Washington, she is our person in Washington. When we go to Washington we call her, we sit with her, we tell her who we're going to meet, what we're going to do, and

when we need things done, we have lobbyists but we make sure her office is aware of the priority issues that we're doing. So I don't understand why it would be upsetting," the governor said.

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