

# Territory Will Need to Borrow 'Significant Sum' to Meet Unemployment Payments, Governor Bryan Says

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The territory's Unemployment Insurance Fund is woefully lacking and is not able to meet the overwhelming demand of laid-off Virgin Islanders seeking unemployment benefits.

That's according to Governor Albert Bryan, who told the Consortium Tuesday that the territory will need to borrow to make up the difference. "There's not enough money in there; the Virgin Islands is going to have to go back and borrow," said Mr. Bryan. "I expect it to be a significant sum," he further stated, adding that he could not say exactly how much because he expects that most of the 7,000 people who as of Monday had filed unemployment claims, "are going to be called back to work before the four months are over."

The 7,000 individuals represent roughly 20 percent of the territory's workforce, Mr Bryan said.

The need to borrow funds in order to pay unemployed Virgin Islanders comes on the heels of the territory's recent approval by the Senate to borrow up to \$120 million through revenue anticipation notes, which will be used in part for government operations, including payroll. [Last week](#), Mr. Bryan told the Consortium that \$60 million had been approved, and that his administration was reviewing the term sheet.

Seeking to strike an optimistic tone, the governor cited Joseph Boschulte, the Dept. of Tourism commissioner, who he said is projecting pent-up demand for travel to the islands once the virus's spread subsides. "We might get a lot of early travelers and I think we're going to get a big season next year just because people want to get away," the governor said.

The territory since April 29 has held steady at 66 confirmed coronavirus cases even as the number of tests climbed during that period from 732 to 1093, according to Dept. of Health data. The results represent a good trend for the territory, though Mr. Bryan has urged caution, stating that there will be periods where the numbers hold steady as well as times when surges occur. And with Mr. Bryan's "Safer at Home" plan, which as of Monday cleared the way for non-essential businesses to reopen — albeit with the mandatory use of face masks for both patrons and employees — the number of confirmed cases could see an uptick.

Even so, the governor has concluded that the virus will remain a problem until a vaccine has been developed, and has urged residents to get used to a new normal.

As of Wednesday, confirmed coronavirus cases stood at 66, with 1093 individuals tested. Of the 66 confirmed cases, 54 have recovered, four have died, 990 have returned negative, and there were 37 cases pending, according to the Dept. of Health.