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# Bryan Administration Gives Conflicting Information on Stimulus Checks, Bryan Blames The Consortium

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## Governor Bryan and B.I.R. Director Joel Lee

V.I. Bureau of Internal Revenue Director, Joel Lee, says \$5 million in stimulus payments to Virgin Islanders will be released every week and that the bulk of the money will be issued in four months. Governor Albert Bryan says between \$8 million to \$10 million will be released each week, which cuts the window of issuance by half. Mr. Lee says the stimulus dollars will start going out next month, Mr. Bryan says checks were being cut today.

The territory's leader during his coronavirus press briefing on Monday, sought to cast blame on the Consortium for the conflicting information coming from his administration. He said Mr. Lee, who was speaking during the administration's "Press Box" event on Thursday, said that checks

would be issued this week. But when asked by the Consortium whether Mr. Lee had misspoke when he said on the same "Press Box" live stream that the checks would be released next month, Mr. Bryan said he had not looked at the video — the same video he referenced to call out this publication.

"I haven't listened to the video that you're referencing but I know I said last week that I would cut the checks this week and checks are being printed right now," said the governor.

Even so, the governor emphasized: "I encourage everyone to pay attention to the information that we are issuing. Information that you hear here is accurate information in terms of the checks going out."

When Mr. Lee said the checks would start going out next month, he was responding to a pointed question from the administration's communications director. Yet when Mr. Lee said clearly that the funds would start going out next month, if what Mr. Lee said was wrong, he was not corrected, nor did he correct himself.

Mr. Bryan was asked by the Consortium why Mr. Lee said \$5 million would be issued weekly while he, the governor, was saying \$8 million to \$10 million weekly. The governor said he believed Mr. Lee meant to say that the territory has until December to issue the payments, and that residents who hadn't filed their 2018 taxes; or those who are on Social Security or "on some type of public assistance" has enough time to do so.

However, that was not what Mr. Lee said. The B.I.R. director said, "Give us four months for us to get the bulk of it out and then, you know, if you want to reach out, reach out."

He also said, "We have been working with the banks because remember, banks are involved in this process. We very well can have thousands of people show up in front of the banks. They have their own virus protocols that they're working with, so what we're going to do we're going to break it up in pieces and I think, based on some discussions, we're targeting around \$5 million a week."

Mr. Lee even discouraged residents from calling to ask specifically about timeline of check issuance.

When pressed further on Mr. Lee's comments, Mr. Bryan said, "Our B.I.R. director is very conservative... I always have to push them in terms of what we're going to get out. He did say that," the governor said, referring to Mr. Lee's \$5 million weekly target.

The [widely-read Consortium article](#) saw residents calling this publication, radio talk shows and posting comments online. Mr. Bryan said he called the Dept. of Finance and B.I.R. officials into a meeting this morning to discuss releasing the funds on a speedier timeline. "We had a conversation with [Dept. of Finance] and him [Joel Lee] this morning, and they keep saying we just don't want the banks to be crowded, but we cranked that up, and we'll monitor the banks, and if it could take more we'll send off \$15 [million], \$20 million a week."