

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Gittens Calls on Bryan Administration To Process Stimulus Checks Immediately

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Senator Kenneth Gittens on Monday called the Bryan administration's plan to distribute Coronavirus stimulus checks on a staggered schedule "a disservice to the people of the Virgin Islands."

According to Mr. Gittens's office, the St. Croix senator remains concerned about both the timeline for distributing these payments and the methodology employed.

"Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES Act), this money was appropriated by the United States Congress back in March to provide emergency financial assistance to citizens during this difficult period, and reports that it will take from

at least two to four more months to complete distribution here in the Virgin Islands are simply outrageous,” Senator Gittens said. “We have thousands of Virgin Islanders suffering economically now as a result of the near total collapse of the tourism industry and forced business closures. Thousands of Virgin Islanders have applied for unemployment and many are still awaiting assistance. How can we possibly justify not immediately providing these checks to the people? Virgin Islanders need this money for food, housing and other basic needs. We need this money to be circulating in our local economy now!” Mr. Gittens said.

He also expressed concerns about a plan to process the checks on a schedule consistent with the date when an individual’s tax returns were filed.

“This is ridiculous as these are not tax refunds,” Mr. Gittens said. “There is no correlation between when you filed your taxes and how soon you deserve your stimulus check. It is simply being processed by IRB as they have the necessary income information to know who qualifies for these checks. If IRB must set priorities, then they should provide the checks to those of lower income first or those working in impacted industries. However, no one should have to wait four months and, no one should have to receive a paper check, when direct deposits could be used to protect our seniors, who should not have to leave their homes to process a stimulus check in this COVID-19 environment. This is definitely a true disservice to the people of the Virgin Islands.”

The senator said he would be following up with the Bureau of Internal Revenue and other officials prior to Wednesday’s planned Committee of the Whole hearing to discuss how stimulus fund distribution can be altered to better serve the community.

“We need a concrete plan for getting all of this stimulus money out over the next couple of weeks as the current timeline for processing these checks is simply unacceptable,” he concluded.