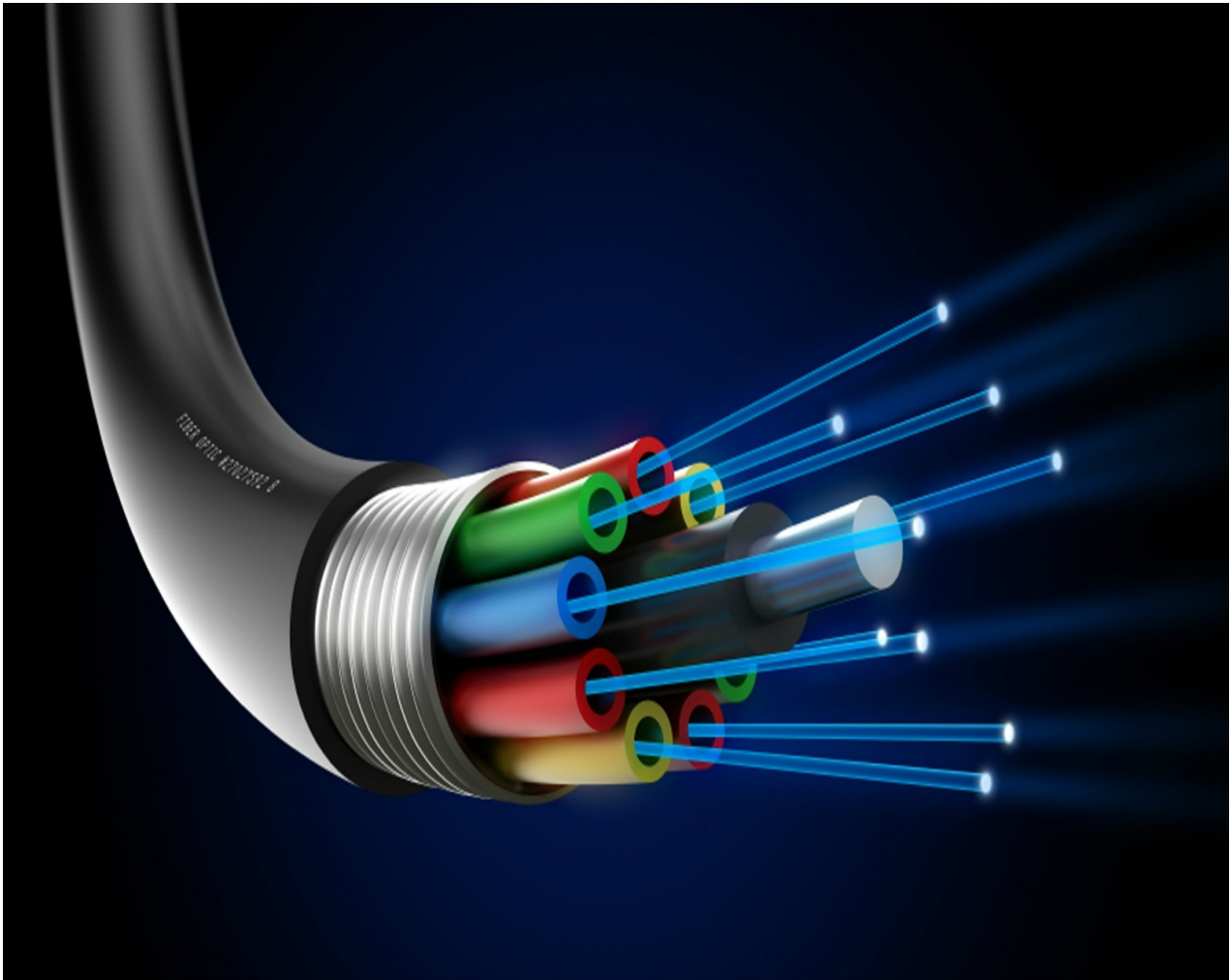


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sen. Francis Calls On Gov. Mapp To Consult Legislature Before Merging viNGN And BIT

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ST. CROIX -- Freshman Senator Novelle Francis, Jr. is calling on Governor Kenneth Mapp to first consult with the 31st Legislature before making sweeping changes to the government's technology agencies.

In a press release issued on Wednesday, Francis said [recent reports](#) that Governor Kenneth Mapp intends to sign an executive order on Friday that would place the Bureau of Information Technology of the Central Government (BIT), under the control of the Virgin Islands Next Generation Network (viNGN), could have potential "economic, technological and other impacts on the territory," and that "while there may be advantages to merging BIT and viNGN, these actions should be undertaken with



ding and authorization of the Legislature.”

Sen. Novelle Francis, Jr.

At a viNGN board meeting held on Monday, Mapp said, "I'm going to be signing an executive order which will effectively place the Bureau of Information Technology of the Central Government under the control of viNGN."

viNGN boasts the territory's fastest broadband internet through fiber optic technology, and sells bandwidth on a wholesale level to local vendors. The entity is also charged with making available reliable high-speed internet to residents through public computing centers.

The governor, wanting to create a structure that makes communication between government agencies seamless, said the purpose of the consolidation is to work through "governmental connectivity, and the systems we need in place to begin the process of rolling out public service across the digital divide."

Mapp said one of the first priorities he would like to see viNGN/BIT undertake, is the public safety/first responder interconnectivity, because the "whole first responding community is in complete disarray when it comes to being able to communicate, to use any level or type of technology at work, in their vehicles and 911 system reporting," the governor said. And while he acknowledged that the undertaking will be great, first responder interconnectivity remains a top priority for Mapp, because it directly affects the safety of the territory's communities.

Even so, Francis hopes the governor brings the matter before the 31st Legislature because of the sheer impact it could have. The senator, who was the second highest vote-getter of the 2014 General Elections, and chairs the Committee on Homeland Security, Public Safety and Justice, said he was particularly interested in how the merger would benefit the first responder community, and as a result, public safety, "which are critical issues that my colleagues and the community have a right to hear."