

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Territory Receives \$2.1 Million From Insular Affairs For School Repairs

Education / **Published On August 07, 2015 09:16 AM /**

Staff **August 07, 2015**



Virgin Islands Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett announced via press release late Thursday that Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina has released \$2.1 million in grant funding under the Office of Insular Affairs' (OIA) Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Program to repair public school buildings in the territory.

"I am pleased to announce today that the Department of Interior and Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina has released more than \$2 million in grant funding to the Department of Education for maintenance to the territory's school," the freshman congresswoman said. "As we all know, the schools in our territory are in dire need of repair and most of them, quite frankly, need to be rebuilt. I have talked about the fact that

we have not had a new school built in the territory in over two decades. Today's announcement is a step forward and I want to commend the Department of Interior and Asst. Secretary Kia'aina for their unwavering support to the Virgin Islands."

The grant funding is part of OIA's Insular Assessment of Buildings and Classrooms (ABCs) Initiative. The funds will be used to install or replace fire alarm systems, upgrade fire protection and plumbing infrastructure, conduct Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) repairs in schools as well as conduct structural repairs at other public school facilities.

Plaskett also said that while today's announcement is very good news for the territory, there is still work ahead for the years to come.

"We have also pushed for an increase in funding in the coming calendar years. While the Department of Interior is supporting us in those efforts, House Republicans have not supported the proposed spending under OIA's Territorial Assistance Program. Therefore, we will continue to push for those additional funds because our territory needs them."

The U.S. Department of the Interior's five-year strategic plan includes a goal to improve quality of life in the insular areas, with a focus on education. Through the ABCs Initiative, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided Interior with a unified system for documenting and monitoring the structural conditions and operating systems of all schools in the territories, while providing indications of the adequacy and effectiveness of the resources devoted to facilities maintenance. As part of this initiative, all school sites and buildings, structural elements, and the health, safety, and welfare of inhabitants were assessed during the inspections.

*Feature Image: St. Croix Educational Complex students.*