

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Potter Seeks Immediate Senate Action On Bill Appropriating Funds For Government Pay Raises

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ST. THOMAS -- Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter, in his capacity of acting governor while Governor [Kenneth Mapp is in Washington](#), has sent a measure to the 31st Legislature that he says requires swift action to ensure that the [recently announced](#) pay increases for multiple government department and agencies go into effect.

The [bill](#) seeks to amend Act no. 7758 -- [the fiscal year 2015-16 budget](#) -- to make additional appropriations of \$5,585,081 for the Department of Education; \$2,469,363 for the Bureau of Corrections; \$2,238,353 for the Bureau of Internal Revenue; \$575,077 for the Division of Personnel; \$1,131,353 for the Office of the Lieutenant Governor; \$1,241,032 for the Virgin Islands Fire Service; \$2,176,283 for the Virgin Islands Police

Department; \$275,860 for the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs; and \$3,526,739 for the Department of Human Services. When aggregated, the total amount equates to \$19,219,141.

The measure also funds shortfalls in the D.O.E. and includes appropriations of \$2.8 million for the [beleaguered school lunch program](#); \$1.6 million for substitute teachers; \$600,000 for a K-3 literacy and mathematics intervention program, and \$125,000 to fund the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (J.R.O.T.C.) at the St. Croix Educational Complex.

Aside from the D.O.E. extra funding and pay increase appropriations, the bill also asks for \$550,000 from the general fund for the Taxi Cab Commission, to cover operation costs for the commission's implementation of mandatory continuing education for taxi and tour operators as a condition for license renewal.

"It is the administration's desire to have these increases implemented by the last pay date in March so that we can continue to bring much-needed relief to government employees, many of whom have not seen increases in many years," Mr. Potter wrote in his [transmittal letter](#) to Senate President Neville James. "We will continue to work to address step increases for other departments, and once we have completed that process, additional requests for appropriations to meet those obligations will be forwarded to the legislature for its consideration and action."

"Accordingly," the lieutenant governor added, "I respectfully request that the legislature take immediate action on this bill and give it favorable consideration so that the territory can continue to honor its obligations to the employees of this government, who have been ignored for far too long."