

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Calls On Senate To Reimburse U.S. D.O.J. For Funds Misspent Under de Jongh Administration

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp has requested that the 31st Legislature appropriate funds to reimburse the federal government for unauthorized spending under the previous administration, Government House said via press release on Thursday.

A federal audit conducted in 2012 revealed that some of the grant funding for the Virgin Islands Law Enforcement Planning Commission (L.E.P.C.) was used to cover local costs from 2006-2010 that were not covered under the terms of the award, according to the release.

As a result of this misspending, new grants to the territory have been suspended costing the territory millions in funding for much-needed early intervention and crime prevention programs.

The governor has asked that the 31st Legislature appropriate \$500,000 in order to reimburse the U.S. Justice Department so that the Virgin Islands can once again be in good standing.

“The Federal Government has issued a deadline to the local L.E.P.C. of May 27, 2016 to reimburse the U.S. Department of Justice or suffer the permanent loss of grant funds,” Governor Mapp wrote in his letter to Senate President Neville James. “Once the reimbursements are made, the U.S. D.O.J. will release grant funds now suspended to the Territory and give the local L.E.P.C. access to new grant monies. Additionally, the payment of the reimbursement would also remove the ‘High Risk Designation’ currently in place for the L.E.P.C. in the territory.”

And by paying back the misspent funds, more than \$7.6 million in new grant funding can be released. Mr. Mapp notes that failure to resolve this matter could result in the permanent loss of U.S. Justice Department funded programs.

The territory's leader pointed out the L.E.P.C.'s "very important role" in supporting law enforcement initiatives in the territory, including the “Weed and Seed” program. L.E.P.C. also provides financial assistance to various community organizations and crime prevention efforts, as well as resources for training local law enforcement personnel.

“Therefore, I am asking the Legislature to authorize the payment of \$523,579.00, which then gives the territory access to \$7.6 million,” Mr. Mapp said.

Feature Image: Governor John de Jongh.