

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Calls Press Conference To Discuss Fiscal Policy Through September

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Ernice Gilbert **March 21, 2017**



ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp has called a press conference for Wednesday to be held on this island at 10:00 a.m., where he will discuss his administration's fiscal policy through September, a press release Government House issued Monday has made known.

At a promotional ceremony held for V.I.P.D. officers, [where 45 were promoted to different ranks](#), Mr. Mapp touched on the upcoming press conference, reassuring the community that the government was not on the brink of collapse.

"Those in the community or those I like to sometimes refer to as some of our detractors, unlike some popular beliefs, the Virgin Islands government is not on the brink of collapse," Mr. Mapp said, adding that he would share more details at the upcoming press conference.

The announcement follows a rebuke of his administration from Senate President Myron Jackson, who said last week that the administration had failed to meet crucial financial obligations to some of the territory's most important services — Government Employees' Retirement System (GERS), hospitals, Fire Service, garbage haulers, the Dept. of Human Services, and the Water & Power Authority.

In a press release issued late Thursday, Mr. Jackson expressed concern for what he said appeared to be a "government experiencing a financial crisis of great proportions."

"This current wave of failure to meet vital financial obligations is unacceptable," Mr. Jackson said. "Considering that this administration experienced [a windfall of \\$220 million from the Arclight deal in 2016](#), why are we at this juncture in our fiscal landscape? As a senator in the 31st Legislature, I supported measures that provided millions of dollars to keep this government solvent. I cast those votes with the confidence that the trend of unwarranted spending and waste would stop, because it was clear that we could not afford to continue doing business as usual. Serious belt tightening measures will have to be implemented in order to stave off a full financial collapse."

Mr. Jackson said that the territory unfortunately continues on a slippery slope in regards to its economic health. Its residents, he added, continue to experience increased levels of financial hardship: food, gasoline and electricity have become more expensive in recent days. And while most people in the territory live on modest incomes, they are continually forced to pay for more with dwindling cash reserves, Mr. Jackson said.

"Our people cannot continue to pay more for less. It's not feasible, and the very notion that this is permissible unnerves me. Has a study been done to compare food prices and gas prices throughout the territory? Are health inspectors visiting grocery stores? Residents continue to contact my office emphasizing that food is stale, the facilities are nasty, and the prices astronomical. There are currently two health inspectors and we allotted additional funding to address this deficiency," Mr. Jackson said.

"This Government must also stop accepting the tired excuse that shipping and gasoline drives up the cost of food, and it must choose to protect its people by performing routine investigations and analysis. We continue to fail our citizens in this regard and it has to stop. I voted against giving a \$300,000 increase to the top government officials for a reason. We were told that these raises were justified because these people were the best and brightest. Through their collective talents and energies, better days would soon arrive. Where are the better days? Why is it taking so long to implement austerity measures? We don't have the luxury of patience, it's time for action. We can be critical, but it is also a time to build. Let's put our differences aside and come to the table with our measures," he added.