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Bryan Shuts Down Bars, Extends List of Hot Spot States; Beaches to Close at 4pm on Weekends; Limetree Bay Commits to Test All Workers

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Ernice Gilbert **July 09, 2020**

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Governor Albert Bryan today took some steps to walk back his administration's reopening plan for the USVI, announcing during his Thursday coronavirus press briefing that effective immediately all bars in the territory are ordered closed, including bars located at restaurants, though restaurants are allowed to continue operating. Restaurants are allowed to continue selling beverages as well, however there will be no counter service; only seated guests. Mr. Bryan also announced the closure of beaches at 4:00 p.m. on the weekends and during holidays until further notice.

All retail facilities in the U.S. Virgin Islands are barred from selling alcohol after 11:00 p.m., Mr. Bryan said.

The territory's leader announced seven additional states to his original hot spot list. The new list now includes states with a 10 percent positivity rate or higher. These states are:

- Arizona 26.81% positivity rate
- Mississippi 23.78% positivity rate
- Florida 19.06% positivity rate
- South Carolina 17.18% positivity rate
- Texas 15.59% positivity rate
- Alabama 14.72% positivity rate
- Georgia 13.52% positivity rate
- Nevada 13.15% positivity rate
- Idaho 11.94% positivity rate
- Kansas 10.38% positivity rate

For passengers coming from these states, Mr. Bryan said a coronavirus test showing a negative result must be provided to local officials. The test must be conducted within five days, an expansion of the last order which called for tests to be conducted within 72 hours before the traveler's arrival to the territory.

These tests will be required for travelers age 15 or older. "We will be relying on the data compiled and aggregated by Johns Hopkins University, which is updated daily," the governor said, adding that the number of states may increase depending on data provided by the respected university.

The new protocols, which were set to take effect on July 12, will now activate on July 15, according to the governor.

Mr. Bryan ordered the closure of gaming centers and casinos as well. "When we're making these decisions, we're not making them arbitrarily," he said. He stressed that mass gatherings should not be happening. "I am discouraging you from mass gatherings at your homes, with family members and friends. Please, the virus is alive and it's in our community, let's stop the spread," the governor added.

Along with protocols [announced Monday](#) for Limetree Bay, which Mr. Bryan said represented an ongoing problem, the governor said the facility has agreed to test all workers — including its direct employees and contractor workers. According to a person with firsthand knowledge of the protocols, if a Limetree Bay employee is returning to work and has traveled off-island, this person along with family members living in the same home, will need to be tested. If the employee's family members residing in the same home refuses to take the test, the employee will not be allowed to work at the facility until 14 days after their return to the island. The universal testing at the Limetree Bay will be on a rotating basis every 14 days until further notice.

The governor said the territory was conducting up to 200 tests daily, and later said about 8,000 tests were available territory-wide as of Thursday. He said the latest wave of infections were mostly affecting between 30-49 year-olds. Asked by the Consortium the age range of the two individuals hospitalized at the Juan F. Luis Hospital, with one patient on a ventilator as the governor had made known, Mr. Bryan refused to divulge the age range, citing HIPAA laws.

As of Thursday, the V.I. Dept. of Health was tracking 57 Covid-19 cases, with 96 tests pending. Updated results are expected tonight.

Back to Safer at Home?

"If we don't see it decreasing by next week," the administration would move to shutdown hotel reservations and revert back to the "Safer at Home" phase, Mr. Bryan said.

The governor, stressing the need to social distance and shun gatherings, said employers whose employees could work from home should do so. "Stagger your office," he said. "If folks don't need to come into the office, tell them to work from home," he said.