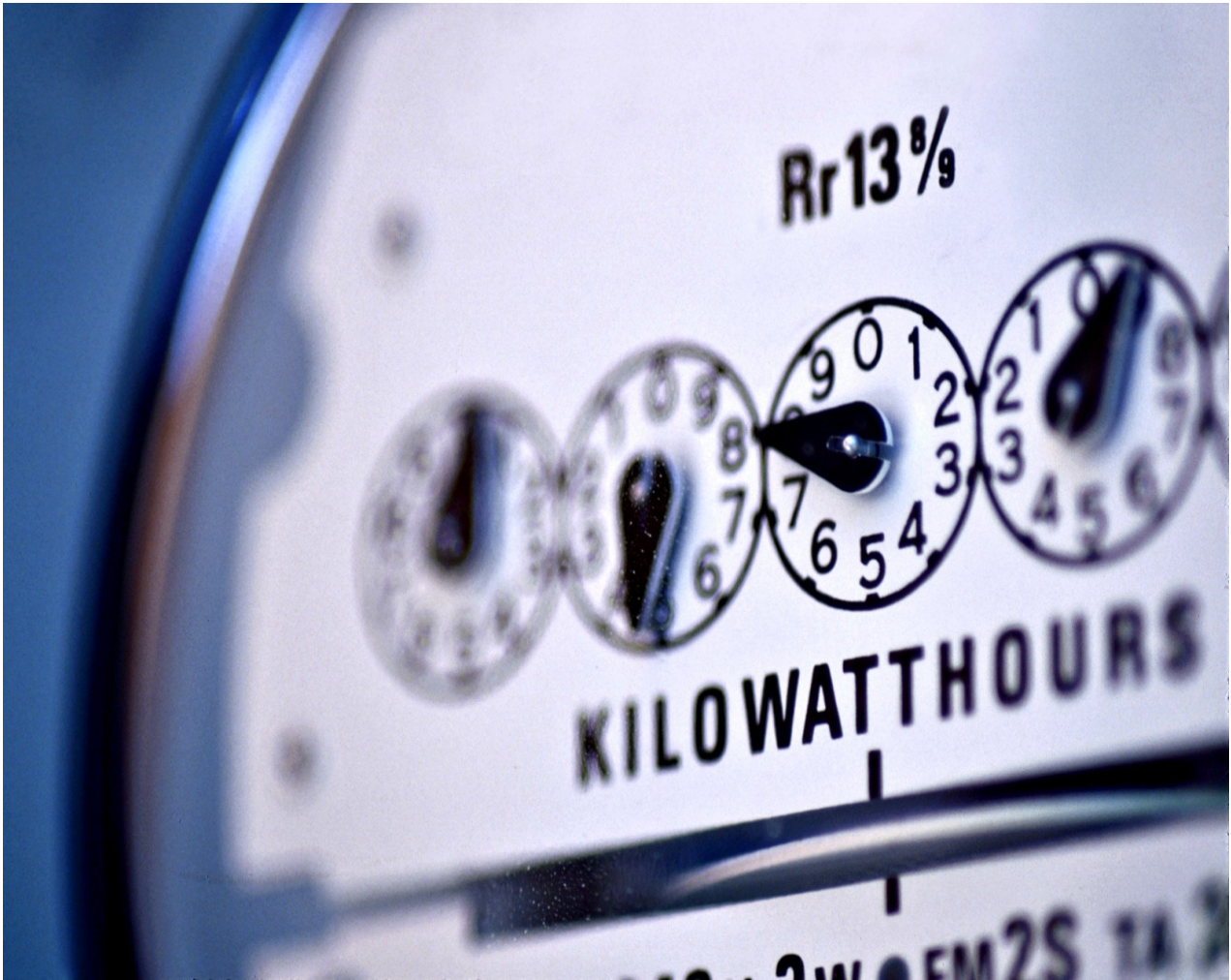


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Says VI Won't Go Into Darkness, Chastises Hansen For 'No' Vote On Sin Tax Measure

VIC News / Published On May 09, 2017 10:40 PM /

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp moved to reassure Virgin Islanders at a press conference at Government House here on Monday, that although the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority had confirmed that [it had indeed switched back to using oil](#) to power the territory after its long-planned move to start using propane, the territory would not fall into darkness as a result -- even as W.A.P.A. as of Monday owed over \$24 million to VITOL, its propane supplier, and [was sued by its former oil supplier](#), Trafigura Trading, LLC, the firm that supplied W.A.P.A. with No. 2 based oil since winning a bid in 2012, for another \$24 million.

"That issue is under full control and there's no threat to the Virgin Islands going into darkness," Mr. Mapp said. "The Water and Power Authority will continue to provide unfettered electricity to the extent that the generators function, and we all know that we have to change that whole system up."

Mr. Mapp then took aim at Senator Alicia Hansen, whose letter to the governor expressing concern over the situation at WAPA [was forwarded to The Consortium](#) by Mrs. Hansen's office, bringing to the fore the serious matters at the semiautonomous.

Mr. Mapp mentioned the working capital bill that was sent by his administration to the 31st Legislature, that included about \$18 million for the territory's hospitals to pay their WAPA bills. But the bond market, for months, has not been willing to lend money to the territory over concerns that the government would not be able to keep its covenants. In the midst of multiple rating downgrades, the Mapp administration introduced the Revenue Enhancement and Economic Recovery Act of 2017 -- widely known as the sin tax measure, holding multiple hearings with the aim of convincing lawmakers and Virgin Islanders that the measure would lift the government out of financial gloom.

The measure passed -- without the help of [Minority Caucus](#) senators, whose members include Mrs. Hansen, and in a direct jab at the veteran lawmaker, the governor thanked members of the Legislature who voted for measure, stating that their support of the bill is essentially, among other positives, keeping the power on in the territory.

"Because of their vote, we can solve this problem and assist the Water and Power Authority," Mr. Mapp said, referring to Democrats, bar Janette Millin Young, [who voted to pass the measure](#). "Because they voted yes, no government worker is struggling in terms of working 80 hours per pay period. Because they voted yes, no school in this territory is being closed. Because they voted yes, we're not only able to keep the lights on, keep the payroll intact, but are now releasing income tax refunds."

"So... if we did what Senator Hansen asked us to do, [which is] do nothing, vote for no new revenues, vote for not stabilizing this government and the realities of the conditions of this government that has been going on for the last ten years, the lights would go off. Government workers would have lost eight hours in their biweekly checks and schools would have closed for one day or two days a month -- and there would have been no income tax refunds," the governor contended.

Mr. Mapp stressed that the territory is still facing a difficult economic climate, stating that the USVI remains at a crossroads, and its leaders must decide "whether we're going to do very well and make the decisions that we need to make so that the quality of all our lives are made better, or we're going to sit on a side, point fingers, blame, and shout crisis, crisis, and then offer no recommendations and do nothing."

Mr. Mapp said the public would learn in the coming weeks with more specificity, that because a majority of senators voted in favor of the Act, "you have set these Virgin Islands on a path to get these kinds of issues behind us and to get us to a better day in terms of what we have to do."

For her part, Mrs. Hansen told The Consortium late Monday that she stands by her "No" vote. "I have no regrets not supporting the governor's persistence to increase taxes and

build the economy on the backs of the same people that are suffering -- the business community -- and I have no regrets," she said. The veteran lawmaker said she would push for the repeal of certain parts of the measure, including seeking exemptions of property tax increases on the disabled, the elderly and veterans. Mr. Mapp has refuted Mrs. Hansen's claim that the law burdens the aforementioned groups.

Mrs. Hansen said she does not believe revenues should be increased through additional taxes, but rather new ideas to grow the economy. And the lawmaker said she would continue to be a dissenting voice in government, suggesting that the governor had gotten his way for too long. "I don't get intimidated by anyone, including him," she said, referring to Mr. Mapp. Mrs. Hansen said she's presented "numerous alternative measures" to the governor, but "nothing has happened."

Mr. Mapp has [called the Senate into Special Session](#) on Wednesday to address multiple matters, among them funding the Juan F. Luis Hospital; language in the Horse Racing law that would ban doping, and funding for the Paul E. Joseph Stadium.