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Senate to Allow Automatic Renewal of State of Emergency Declaration, Sen. Francis Says

Government / **Published On July 11, 2020 07:54 AM /**

Staff Consortium **July 11, 2020**

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Senate President Novelle E. Francis announced Friday that the 33rd Legislature has opted to allow the automatic extension of the State of Emergency, which was requested by Governor Albert Bryan on July 5. The Legislature last acted to extend the state of emergency at a May 6 Legislative Session.

Mr. Francis said the Legislature's decision to allow the automatic extension is predicated by the statutory timeline and the Legislature's fiscal constraints.

"The timeline to act on the matter within five days was challenging, considering the Legislature had just convened on June 29 for legislative session. It's not practical or prudent at this time to convene a session to approve something that is obviously needed." Mr. Francis stated. "My

colleagues and I are very aware of the circumstances surrounding the state of emergency, having previously received extensive testimony from the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency, the Virgin Islands Department of Health, and the administration's financial team about COVID-19 and the stressors created by the pandemic. For these reasons, we are in agreement with the automatic extension.”

The Senate president said he and his colleagues are considering moving legislation to modify the statute, which requires extensions of the state of the emergency to be ratified by the Legislature.