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Lieutenant Governor Roach Seeks Abandonment of Contact Tracing Negotiations and Calls on V.I. Agencies to Collaborate

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Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach has notified Governor Albert Bryan that he does not believe that only a private vendor can provide COVID-19 contact tracing services to the Department of Health (DOH), according to a release from Mr. Roach's office issued Tuesday. The lieutenant governor has requested that all contract negotiations cease and that the DOH, Bureau of Information Technology, and the University of the Virgin Islands lead in formulating the desired contact tracing approach.

Mr. Roach issued his correspondence following the governor's public remarks that because he perceived a conflict of interest in executing such a contract, he would recuse himself, and would leave it to the lieutenant governor's discretion.

The lieutenant governor's stance is the latest development in [a scandal](#) that has rocked the Bryan administration, after it was revealed that a \$1 million no-bid Dept. of Health job for coronavirus contact tracing was awarded to Ávera, a company with no experience or background in the field, whose owners include Mr. Bryan's daughter, Aliyah Bryan. The job was awarded within 72 hours.

Mr. Bryan was asked by the Consortium during his Monday press briefing what would happen if a contract with Ávera as the awardee appeared on his desk, Mr. Bryan said he would recuse himself from the matter and leave it up to Mr. Roach to decide the outcome. The Consortium asked Mr. Roach for his thoughts on the matter, but a response was not furnished at time of writing. (It was not clear whether Mr. Roach still used the phone number the Consortium has on file.)

In his correspondence to Governor Bryan, Lieutenant Governor Roach stated “I will not execute a contract with a private vendor in that regard, unless I am convinced that resources already at our command, including valuable work already done by the Department of Health, cannot adequately address this need.”

“The very definition of information technology by which our Bureau should be guided encompasses the area of software development used to manage the exact type of data that I believe contact tracing requires. In addition, our University with its varied research arms should already be poised to advise and direct this effort,” Mr. Roach said.

He added, “If we have at our disposal a million dollars to use for these purposes, these monies should be directed to assist and support our already existing government departments and our University which is already struggling with financial concerns resulting from the global pandemic.”

Mr. Roach concluded his correspondence to Mr. Bryan by stating, “I write this with the firm belief that the Bureau and the University must by their nature possess the skills and talents which are necessary to guide and work with the Department of Health in this critical moment. If working together they (DOH, BIT, UVI) cannot do this, and cannot do so urgently, then we are literally up the proverbial creek without a paddle.”