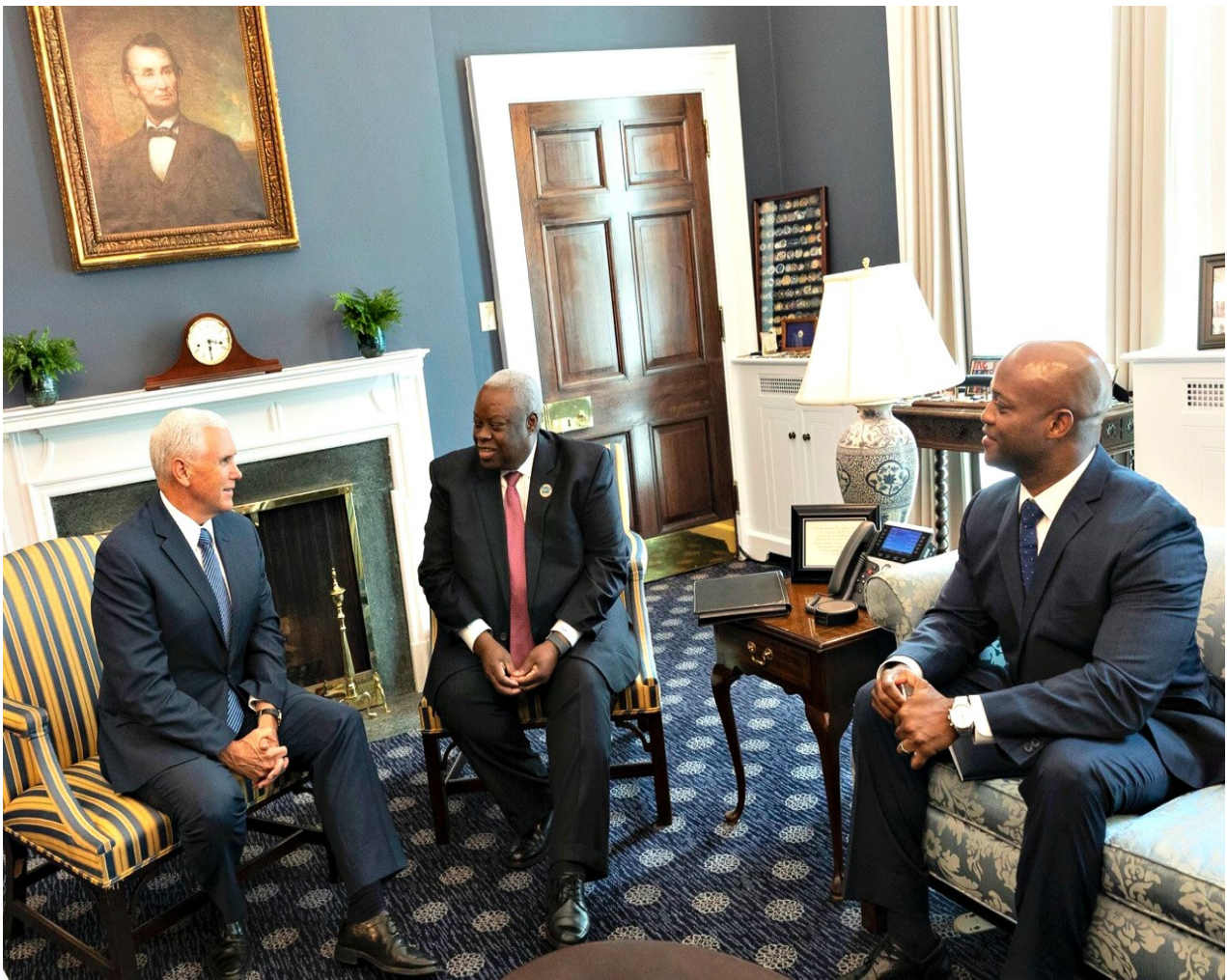


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Meets With Vice President Pence, Requests Swift Release Of Approved Federal Funding

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Governor Kenneth Mapp met with Vice President Mike Pence at the White House Monday to discuss the status of the territory's and preparations being made for the current hurricane season, Government House made known in a release issued late Monday.

Governor Mapp thanked the Vice President and the Trump administration for what the release described as the administration's "tremendous" support in assisting the U.S Virgin Islands recover from the devastation of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The governor also requested White House support in addressing the bureaucratic hurdles the territory has faced in order to accelerate the recovery process.

Mr. Mapp was accompanied to the White House meeting by Commissioner of Finance Valdamier O. Collens, who also serves as the governor's authorized representative in all Federal Emergency Management Agency matters, according to Government House.

The territory's leader discussed with the Vice President ways in which the administration could facilitate a faster and stronger recovery in the territory. He raised the need to waive certain rules on the FEMA Sheltering and Temporary Emergency Power (STEP) program and allow FEMA to fund permanent roofing on approximately 4,000 storm damaged homes in the territory.

With significant damages to schools and other traditional hurricane shelters, as well as thousands of homes in need of repair, Mr. Mapp urged the vice president to allow the use of FEMA funding to replace blue tarps and install permanent roofs to building code standards over the next few months. The permanent roof program is estimated to cost tens of thousands of dollars per home, with the total project cost estimated to exceed \$250 million, according to the release.

"Permanent roofs are clearly the best solution," Mr. Mapp said. "We simply do not have time to rebuild our public shelters. If the alternatives are using cruise ships and airplanes for mass evacuations every time a storm approaches or leaving Virgin Islanders exposed to extreme danger, constructing new roofs built to withstand the harsh winds and excessive rain is really the only solution."

Mr. Mapp and Mr. Pence also discussed the allocation of \$2 billion that Congress set aside for the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act for the rebuilding of the power systems in these areas.

"HUD's usual formulas for splitting the funds are not appropriate," the governor said. "Congress specifically recognized the Virgin Islands in the Budget Act, calling upon us for this special funding, so we believe that our share should be substantial."

In addition, the governor and Mr. Collens raised concerns over some of the unnecessary obstacles that the Treasury Department has imposed on the administration of the Community Disaster Loan (CDL) program, which provides federal funds to cover disaster-related revenue losses and projected cash outlays not previously budgeted. While the Treasury has approved over \$200 million in CDL loans thus far, the territory still awaits official guidance from FEMA surrounding the types of expenditures that are considered "projected cash outlays not previously budgeted," for which additional CDLs could be issued.

The governor highlighted Phase III of the Limetree Bay operation, with respect to providing Liquefied Natural Gas to the eastern Caribbean. Mr. Pence recognized the importance of the project to national security and committed to arranging a follow-up meeting between the governor and the Secretary of Energy Rick Perry to facilitate the project, the release said.

Early Monday, Mr. Mapp sent a letter to Mr. Trump requesting his support for expedited federal permitting review for the dredging of Charlotte Amalie Harbor on St. Thomas and Schooner Bay on St. Croix. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson has already approved \$23 million in CDBG-disaster recovery funds for the two dredging

projects and approval of another \$7 million is expected later this month.

The Government House release did not mention whether Mr. Pence was receptive to the requests, and if he committed to taking action to help speed up the process of releasing funds. Mr. Mapp has discussed at press conferences a number of the issues included in the release, including the permanent roofs matter.

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