

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Governor Mapp Approves Fiscal Year 2019 Budget

VIC News / **Published On October 08, 2018 09:50 AM /**

Staff **October 08, 2018**



Governor Mapp has approved the \$1.32 billion Fiscal Year 2019 budget for the Government of the Virgin Islands, Government House made known via release Sunday.

The budget was submitted to the 32nd Legislature on May 30, 2018 and senators acted to approve it on September 19th.

Mr. Mapp [notified Senate President Myron Jackson](#) on Friday evening that he had signed off on the budget bills. Government operations will be funded by \$1.0725 billion in local, transfer and other funds and \$238.66 million from federal sources. The FY2019 budget includes \$150 million for debt service payments and \$38 million for income tax refunds.

According Government House, while the budget outlines the severe impact to the territory's economy in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the billions in federal dollars the Virgin Islands has received will provide for economic growth. A projected \$164.5 million in new revenue is the result of rebuilding activities, expanded refinery operations and other revenue sources, Government House said. The budget includes millions of dollars for capital projects and lists numerous infrastructure initiatives planned for this fiscal year.

Mr. Mapp said he intends to use growing revenues to improve government services and continue increases for employee salaries throughout the Government to attract and retain capable staff in critical areas. These vacancies must be filled swiftly to implement the federally funded projects as part of the reconstruction of the Virgin Islands. Revenue lost by the tourism industry through the temporary closure of the Territory's major hotels will be partially offset by the revenues derived from the reconstruction boom.

The budget also proposes the merge of the operations of the Roy Lester Schneider Medical Center and the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center under one board. The budget calls for several initiatives addressing the needs of senior citizens such as the renovation of the Herbert Grigg Home on St. Croix and the purchase of Seaview Nursing Home on St. Thomas. Governor Mapp announced this week that both Herbert Grigg and Seaview will be redesigned and hardened to serve as hurricane shelters for seniors.

Mr. Mapp thanked senators for their work in reviewing and approving the budget. He also thanked his financial team, to include Office of Management & Budget Director Julio Rhymer and Finance Commissioner Valdamier Collens.

Mr. Collens said the territory's economy continues to improve along with revenue collections.

"As a result of economic activity in the USVI during the past six months we are expecting the largest Gross Receipts Tax collection in years at \$191.3 million, \$452.9 million in income taxes and \$63 million in real property taxes," Mr. Collens said.