

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senator Francis Hoping To Hear Efforts On Crime, Clear Picture Of Territory's Finances And Campaign Promises Brought To Life During Bryan's First State Of The Territory Address

Government / **Published On January 27, 2019 10:36 AM /**

Staff **January 27, 2019**



Senator Novelle Francis, a three-term lawmaker with a background in law enforcement, said in a release issued to The Consortium on Saturday that he's hoping to hear Governor Albert Bryan address the surging crime situation in the USVI along with other pertinent issues -- including the state of the territory's finances and a plan to begin fulfilling campaign promises made by the current administration -- during his first State of the Territory Address (SoTA), which is set for Monday night in St. Thomas.

"We have seen a steady increase of crime in the past few months and particularly with five homicides tallied in just four weeks for this new year. As a career law enforcement officer, I know the importance of having effective crime-fighting initiatives in place," Mr. Francis said. "I expect to hear Governor Bryan introduce new initiatives or atleast talk about how we will see the enforcement of already legislated mandates."

He added, "At this point in the territory's history, we are at a crossroad with a number of long-standing issues that we are ramping up to address that will ensure a change for the better," Mr. Francis said. "We are also facing times where mishandling of issues by the federal government are creating rippling negative effects on our community."

The release, which was written on Friday, said Mr. Francis also expected the governor to address the partial shutdown of the federal government and how it has affected federal employees in the territory. The shutdown, however, [ended late Friday](#), albeit for just 21 days -- giving President Trump and his Republican base, along with Democrats enough time to forge a solution for border security.

The senator is also hoping to hear some specifics on a new plan for the Department of Education, which would include updates on construction progress for schools that are still displaced since the 2017 hurricanes, according to the release. "I trust that the governor will quell some of the anxiety in the community relative to a continued deteriorating education system. We have new individuals with fresh minds and new ideas in key roles in the department. I expect that they have hit the ground running and ready to chart a new course for our students, teachers and our future," Mr. Francis said.

The St. Croix lawmaker added that he's hopeful Mr. Bryan's talk on Monday will paint a clear picture of the territory's true condition, while giving comprehensive insight on a direction into the future. "Our territory continues in a state of recovery and through the governor's address I hope to hear about our financial standing, plans to utilize existing federal funds and plans to bring more funds to the territory," he said.

On campaign promises the Bryan administration made last year, Mr. Francis encouraged residents to pay close attention for the "Change Course Now" plans, among them pitches to save the Government Employees' Retirement System, introduction of new rum companies to the territory, tackling the territory's ballooning debt load, taking steps to attract new industries to the USVI, overhauling the health care system, and implementations that would help young Virgin Islanders grow their businesses, among other campaigns promises.