

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Stakeholders Will Get Chance To Testify On Proposed Use Of \$39.5 Million Medicaid Reimbursement During June 5 Session

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Stakeholders -- including the five medical facilities in the territory reimbursed with \$39.5 million in Medicaid funds by the federal government -- will get a chance to testify on the government's proposed use of the funds before any final decision can be made.

That's according to Senate President Novelle Francis, who also revealed during an interview with The Consortium on Wednesday, that WAPA would be among the stakeholders invited to testify during the Senate session on June 5, since the authority is owed millions of dollars from the Juan F. Luis Hospital and the Schneider Regional

Medical Center, and is set to receive a great portion of the reimbursement.

The planned use of the funds, originally crafted by former Committee on Finance Chair Senator Donna Frett-Gregory and the Bryan administration, [was met with resistance](#) from employees of the Juan F. Luis Hospital, who opposed the decision to spend monies sent to the medical facilities in areas they contend were not directly connected to healthcare.

The bill, which failed after a special-order attempt during a May 14 Senate session, was voted down and is being amended before the June 5 reintroduction. Among the new additions to the bill will be a \$1.1 million allocation for JFL employee raises. Governor Albert Bryan told The Consortium last week that he was against using the funds for JFL employee raises, and he maintained his insistence that the senators who attended a JFL meeting two weeks ago -- Mr. Francis, Mr. Vialet, Senators Alicia Barnes, Allison DeGazon and Javan James -- were pandering. Mr. Francis took offense to Mr. Bryan's statement, and said as long as he continues to serve as a senator, he would meet with his constituents to hear their concerns in an effort to address them.

"I intend to convene a session, a Committee of the Whole on June 5 and at that time I want to hear from the stakeholders and we're hoping to be able to vet [the \$39.5 million] again in the Committee of the Whole and make some decisions," Mr. Francis said.

He added, "We don't want to leave WAPA out of the discussion [because] they are an important part of the equation. They're owed money and we certainly don't want to see rate increases to our community. So we want to minimize and stave off any of that going towards our ratepayers and address that issue that's confronting WAPA in terms of making sure that VITOL and those other vendors are paid in a timely fashion."