

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bryan Out Of Territory To Meet With Cigna Officials In West Palm Beach, Florida

VIC News / **Published On July 15, 2019 02:25 PM /**

Staff **July 15, 2019**



Governor Albert Bryan is out of the territory, Government House said in a release this morning. The release did not say when Mr. Bryan left, however, it revealed that the governor traveled to West Palm Beach Florida to meet with Cigna officials.

Relative to what will be discussed in the meeting, again, Government House did not say, but during a recent Committee on Finance hearing on St. Croix, Department of Personnel (D.O.P.) officials gave testimony concerning the government's Group Health Insurance plan that is set to increase by 17 to 19 percent, resulting in a whopping \$30 million increase that will cost the G.V.I. and its employees dearly.

Kurell Hodge, strategy and organizational development officer for D.O.P., testified that the wellness program is one of many determining factors that the health insurance carriers utilizes to determine what the insurance premium cost should be. Even though a robust wellness program is in place, D.O.P. still has to remain cognizant of the fact that the number of claims filed has a significant impact on the cost of the final health insurance premiums, she explained.

Just last year, The [Consortium reported that](#) a new deal with Cigna, the G.V.I.'s health insurance carrier, lowered the individual and family insurance, albeit slightly. Senator Kurt Violet said then, "Today I am elated to announce that effective October 1, 2018 the cost of individual and family insurance will decrease. Hats off to the board for a great job and thank you Cigna for addressing our concerns relative to cost. These new rates will result in a cost savings for the G.V.I. and employees."

The G.E.S.C. overall savings for 2018 were approximately \$8.6 million, or a reduction of 5.5 percent to the local government and its employees. Employees were to see a decrease of \$3 million and the government's portion of the savings would be approximately \$5.6 million.

However, Cigna is singing a different tune this year. Mr. Violet asked the director if the preliminary information does in fact point to a proposed increase. Ms. Clendinen said that there was indeed a proposed increase and at last discussion it was at 17 or 19 percent and that the department is still trying to negotiate a manageable amount.

"If we are not able to accomplish something different, that will significantly change the budget," Mr. Violet said. "That is an additional \$30 million that is not funded right now. We have paid \$154 million for health insurance this year. Go back to the table and let them know that there is no way the G.V.I. will assume that type of increase to the employees of the Virgin Islands government."

Governor Bryan returns Tuesday.