

The Virgin Islands Consortium

B.O.C. Director Salary Increased By \$15,000, Even As Bryan Has Vowed Not To Increase Salaries Of Cabinet Members

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Governor Albert Bryan vowed not to increase the salary of his cabinet members. He made this vow before and after being elected.

"I definitely told everybody during the campaign and I'll maintain that I'm not moving the cabinet salaries. Part of being a manager is being able to get the job done on budget," Mr. Bryan, at the time governor-elect, told The Consortium during [a VIPC interview in December](#) in the first ten minutes of the 1-hour program.

He added, "In all good conscience, we can't start like that. We have to make sure that people are coming in at the salaries that are existing or lower... Don't forget, Governor Mapp just gave out a lot of raises and a lot of increases, so my people are looking for economic activity revenues to make sure that we're going in and we're going to have a smooth transition and payroll is met easily biweekly."

Mr. Bryan in May [slammed St. Croix senators](#) who allocated \$1.1 million from a \$39.5 million Medicaid reimbursement, to fund Juan F. Luis Hospital employee raises. "The recent moves of the new majority in promising raises to employers by directing a one-time cash infusion to a recurring annual expenditure is a flashback to exactly the kind of political pandering that has created our abysmal financial situation," Mr. Bryan chided. "Raises must be sustained every two weeks; they are a recurring cost. A one-time infusion of Medicaid reimbursement funds will not address this problem. As stated in my State of the Territory Address months ago, JFL Hospital alone has outstanding debts of \$54 million to vendors, \$13 million of which is payable to WAPA."

During the campaign trail, both Mr. Bryan and his running mate, Tregenza Roach, opposed raises to cabinet members. And Mr. Roach, using his megaphone as a senator, blasted the Mapp administration for employee raises Mr. Roach deemed politically motivated and unsustainable.

But during recent budget hearings, senators have been noticing that cabinet heads have been receiving salary increases -- not because they were announced by the administration or made known in testimony during the hearings, but in looking carefully at post audit report documents they are privy to.

"I'm looking at the director position and I'm looking at the post audit report from last year, and saw that the director made \$100,000 last year and you're [Bureau of Corrections director] presently making \$115,000. So they increased the position by \$15,000?" Mr. Violet asked. B.O.C. officials confirmed the increase.

Senator Janelle Sarauw took some time to comment on the increases.

"Under Governor Mapp when commissioners and agency heads were given raises, the lieutenant governor now, vehemently opposed it. And we begin this term and commissioners/agency heads were given raises. So when we campaign we have to stop the hypocrisy at times," Ms. Sarauw said. "That was a contentious topic, the whole salary raises. And today we sit here and no mention of it was made; we just had to make a reference between this budget and the last budget to realize that you were given a salary increase. We like to say things that feel good to be elected."

Former Governor Kenneth Mapp was rebuked when he issued raises to cabinet members, with the matter turning into [a full blown controversy](#) in 2015. In responding to the criticisms, Mr. Mapp attempted to explain his position using former Finance Commissioner Valdamier Collens, who had received a \$28,000 increase, as an example.

"When you look at the background of the commissioner of finance and his experience and his achievements, and what he was being paid before he came to the commissioner's job at finance in the public sector, he, even at \$125,000, took a salary reduction," Mr. Mapp said. "But his skill, ability and input on how we're going to right this

ship of the Government of the Virgin Islands from a financial perspective, he is going to be able to help us achieve that success.”

The former governor added: “And so yes, you can get a builder and a contractor to come in and build for you at a particular cost, but that don’t necessarily mean you’re going to get the best product. And sometimes in the context of your own families and in running your businesses, you pay people sometimes more than you would pay somebody else because you know at the end of the day you’re going to get it right, and you’re going to get it done the way it ought to be done and you’re not going to have to go back to redo it.”

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