

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senator DeGazon Calls For Restructuring Of WAPA After Latest Power Outages

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After the latest territory-wide power outages this Sunday, Senator Allison DeGazon -- sharing the frustrations of the community -- is calling for a corporate restructuring of the Water and Power Authority and hopes her colleagues move to make it happen, Ms. DeGazon's office has announced.

Monday morning, Ms. DeGazon said Virgin Islanders were suffering from the high cost of unreliable energy provided by WAPA -- a cost that the entity is looking to increase by three cents.

"I will not support another dollar going to WAPA from special funds," the senator said.

On Sunday, residents on St. Croix experienced an electrical service interruption at 10:56 p.m. shortly after in the early hours of Monday morning, there was a power outage in St. Thomas.



Senator Allison DeGazon

Emails from WAPA's alert system showed a power outage almost every day in July whether scheduled or as a loss of generating capacity at the plants.

Yet, WAPA on Sunday issued a statement citing reasons for another rate increase such as: closing the budget gap from the 2017 hurricane season, and to cover operational costs and pay salaries.

WAPA officials said as it seeks an increase in the base rate, it is also asking the Public Service Commission to grant a decrease in the fuel surcharge (LEAC) by 3 cents.

“This decrease will offset the base rate increase and hold steady rates at the current 43 cents per kilowatt hour for residential customers through the end of this year,” the statement read.

Residents who have grown tired of the constant hikes with the same low-quality service, have scheduled a protest on Wednesday in St. Thomas at the PSC office in Barbel Plaza.

The event, starting at 10 a.m., is planned and sponsored by the “Virgin Islands Alliance For Consumer Justice.”

For several weeks, residents were also circulating a petition calling for the PSC to deny the rate hike WAPA requested earlier this year.

According to data from Electric Choice, a database that provides the average electricity rates for the United States, at 43 cents per kilowatt hour, U.S. Virgin Islands WAPA customers pay the most for electricity in all of the United States, with the lowest being 9.79 cents per kilowatt hour in Washington, and the highest 32.76 cents per kilowatt hour in Hawaii.

“Every day WAPA kills our economic development efforts and enough is enough,” Ms. DeGazon said. “We should try to sell the power generation side of WAPA in a deal that keeps our people employed and our power bills low.”