

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bryan Under Fire After Botched Address To Community On Tropical Storm Dorian

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Governor Albert Bryan was criticized by at least two senators on Tuesday night for the manner in which he addressed the U.S. Virgin Islands public on impending Tropical Storm Dorian, and the seemingly limited reach of the "watch party" held on VITEMA's Facebook page.

The hurriedly put together event failed to reach a large swath of Virgin Islanders both on and off social media. For many attempting to listen to the radio stations that were connected, the audio was bad, and the VITEMA "watch party" format, if the goal was to reach a great portion of VI residents, failed as well. As of 5:48 a.m. Wednesday, the video only had 39 shares on Facebook.

The address's format, too, was criticized. In the VITEMA video, Mr. Bryan is seen in Gov't House, St. Croix at a round, dinning table with St. Croix Administrator Sammuel Sanes and VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen. Karl Knight, Mr. Bryan's chief of staff, is seen leaning on a corner wall as the address was happening.

An email notifying the media of a phone conference gave publications only minutes to prepare and join the call, even as the National Hurricane Center [for days had warned that the territory could be impacted](#), and that interests in the USVI and PR should continue to monitor the storm's path closely.

Now, [the National Hurricane Center's 5:00 a.m. advisory](#) is projecting hurricane-force winds as Tropical Storm Dorian impacts the U.S. Virgin Islands later today, and many Virgin Islanders have yet to hear from their leader.

Senator Janelle Sarauw's criticism of Mr. Bryan was the most scathing.

"People are still traumatized from the impact of the storms. Any little type of weather evokes all possible emotions from citizens. I cannot fathom why the Governor of the United States Virgin Islands is addressing the people of this Territory from a dinner table on social media. How did the hearing impaired know what was said tonight? Where was the sign language interpreter? We blatantly overlooked a special population. What happened to standing behind the podium and plugging into all media outlets so that those who do not have social media can hear you? What senior or person who does not have social media heard the press conference? Poor WSTA was trying and it was an epic failure. Why isn't he standing at a podium addressing us, calming fears, giving information with a united front behind of him (commissioners of Public works, human services, VIPD, VITEMA Director, National Guard and the likes)? To address the people of the Territory the night before weather is scheduled to pass us is unbelievable. Preparation, awareness, hurricanes know no political affiliation. These are matters we must take serious. I rather no address to the people than to speak to me sitting by the dinner table where I am struggling to hear. It is time to govern. How did the hearing impaired know what was said tonight? Where was the sign language interpreter? I rest my case," Ms. Sarauw [said](#).

Senator Kurt Violet also shared his disappointment. "It is important to address the entire territory by utilizing all mediums," he said.

The norm when addressing a community ahead of an impending storm is to stand behind a podium or sit behind a long desk flanked by department and agency heads responsible for leading the response effort, with each agency head giving a status update on preparedness. On Tuesday night, only the VITEMA director and the St. Croix administrator sat with Mr. Bryan, and there were no media cameras to stream the event live. The Consortium, for its part, was ready and willing to be at Government House on short notice to carry the event live to its Facebook audience of over 130,000 followers, and to the tens of thousands who visit the website either directly or via links daily.

The video below shows Barbados Prime Minister, Mia Amor Mottley, addressing the Barbabian community well ahead of Tropical Storm Dorian.

[View the original embedded media](#)

