

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Op-Ed | Why Can't I Have My Money?

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We Virgin Islanders are seemingly very patient people. We have a government that, for decades, keeps what is rightfully ours, our tax refunds. The reasonable question to ask is: Why does the VI Government consider its priorities more important than those of the law-abiding citizens it purports to represent and serve?

Many use our tax system as sort of an annual savings where, if taxes are overpaid, a refund is owed. It's sort of a yearly anticipation windfall, used to settle necessary household expenses, or other personal uses. This has not been an option for Virgin Islanders, not for many years, and not by choice. It is a reality forced upon us by the VI Government.

The IRS rule of thumb is roughly 6 weeks for a mailed tax refund. The fact is that VI taxpayers have no reasonable expectation of a refund, or perhaps, maybe, a refund many years after it is rightfully due on the whim of the VI Government. Are we worthy? Further, we'll get a tax form for the minor interest sum paid on the tardy refund. Moreover, taxpayers are expected to be suitably grateful when it is decided that some, not all of us, rate refunds. It has devolved to the point where it's a political talking point for votes. It's tantamount to officially sanctioned theft.

So, what can we the people do given this official government payment default?

Unlike the citizens of Hong Kong, or the yellow vest citizens of France, we Virgin Islanders in general, find the act of protesting such arbitrary government control and overreach to be wholly undesirable. Therefore, the civilized option for civil disobedience I recommend is for all of us to review our incomes and adjust our IRS Form W-4 in such a way that we legally owe the VI Government at the end of each tax year and deny them the chance to abuse our loot. Imagine the impact if all us VI taxpayers, as a block of law-abiding citizens, did this, sending a unified message. Enough of the officially sanctioned shared misery, we're not taking it anymore. If we all do this, we'll get our government's attention because it clearly isn't listening, or worse, by its actions, doesn't care.

If each taxpayer arranges their taxes, via W-4 adjustments, to either be net zero, or to legally owe the government, it will get their attention as government will be otherwise denied those funds. They're not paying us back anyway, so what's the difference? The difference is that you will have use of your hard-earned money, and you know better than government how to best deploy your funds to meet your needs. Further, if you choose to owe money, request a payment plan from IRB to spread what you owe over the course of a year. You can tweak your W-4 as many times as you like in any given tax year. There are several online sources to assist taxpayers in making these W-4 adjustments.

It's common knowledge that our government has financial problems, but that's not our fault. Worse, the only solutions government has is more debt, higher taxes, fees and levies that, in the final analysis, has to be paid by we the people. Yet the sad reality is that we the people keep voting in politicians who do not put the people they purport to serve, first.

No matter your political ilk, be it Republican, Democrat, green, or no party independent, we the people all drive on the same bad roads, suffer from unreliable, expensive utility power, unsatisfactory schools, a myriad other government induced maladies, and yet we all have a reasonable expectation of a timely tax refund. What value are we getting for our tax dollars when even basic services are not reliably provided? Given these undisputable realities, we the people are essentially funding a government that serves only itself. So, a little self-help in this regard is both overdue and justified. Do your due diligence, and submit that tweak to your W-4.

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