

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Gov. Bryan Introduces New Net Metering Program

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Governor Albert Bryan on Monday announced the proposal of a net-metering successor program, which the administration says would allow residents to offset their electricity costs by selling power back onto the V.I. Water and Power Authority grid. The program is for residents utilizing alternative sources of energy.

According to Government House, the Virgin Islands Energy Office worked with WAPA and the Public Services Commission, with technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Energy and the Bloomberg Associates and the Secunda Family Foundation to develop a new Net Energy Billing program (NEB). The program modifies and revises the former Net Metering Program, which ended in 2017 after reaching the 15-Megawatt cap territory-wide.

The primary focus of the NEB program is to foster the deployment of distributed generation of renewable energy throughout the territory and foster greater energy independence for property owners, the release said. Government House said the Net Energy Billing program is designed to allow the territory to aggressively pursue its renewable energy goals in a sustainable fashion that does not harm the economic viability of WAPA or adversely impact those ratepayers that choose not to participate in the program.

Under the proposed program, which is scheduled to go before the Public Services Commission on Oct. 3, residents can sell distributed energy back into the power grid at a rate of 75 percent of the Levelized Energy Adjustment Cost (LEAC). For example, at the current LEAC of 19.3 cents per kilowatt-hour, the excess generation credit for a consumer would be 14.5 cents per kilowatt-hour.

Also, under the proposal, participants in the program would be required to pay a monthly grid access charge based on the customer's system size and generation capacity. The proposed grid access charge is based on the size of the system installed:

- 2 to 5.9 kilowatts would be \$20 per month.
- 6 to 8.9 kilowatts would be \$35 per month.
- 9 to 11.9 kilowatts would be \$50 per month.
- 12 kilowatts and higher will require a supplemental review on a case-by-case basis.

Under the new proposal, customers will be allowed to offset the full amount of their billed usage during each monthly billing period. However, excess generation credits exceeding a customer's total billed amount will not accrue as it did under the previous program but will be zeroed out at the end of each billing period. Additionally, unused excess energy credits cannot be used to offset the grid access charge.

To roll out the newly proposed program, the V.I. Energy Office will develop and manage a streamlined distributed generation permitting process, according to Kyle Fleming.

"The overall goal is to simplify and expedite the permitting process for applicants, organize and manage data and documentation for WAPA and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, and provide the community with consistent and accurate information relative to the program," Mr. Fleming said.

WAPA customers who currently participate in the previous Net Energy Meter Program will not be transitioned into the newly proposed NEB program. The proposed NEB program will apply exclusively to future adopters and grid-connected customers who installed solar outside of the original Net Energy Meter program.