

The Virgin Islands Consortium

V.I. Consumer Group Collecting Signatures for Petition Calling for a WAPA State of Emergency and Other Oversight Measures

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The Alliance for Consumer Justice collected signatures Saturday for a petition calling on Virgin Islands lawmakers to support a territory-wide WAPA State of Emergency and other measures that hold the Water and Power Authority accountable to the public.

Shoppers at the Tutu Park Mall jumped at the chance to add their voices to the mounting outcry for oversight of the power authority's troubled finances and inability to provide consistent electrical service.

“The drive was organized to engage the public and give them a voice as the WAPA issue continues to wreak havoc on our islands,” said Alliance co-founder Clarence Payne. The petition “... allows those individuals to participate in this most basic constitutional right.”

The Alliance also issued a statement late last week putting its full support behind Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, who originally called for Gov. Albert Bryan to declare the utility situation in the Virgin Islands an emergency, in part, to access federal expertise and financial assistance.



Alliance for Consumer Justice collects petition signatures outside Tutu Park Mall in St. Thomas Saturday

Virgin Islands senators subpoenaed WAPA executives and members of the Public Services Commission to appear on Tuesday, Oct. 1 before the Committee of the Whole to address “serious and myriad” problems at the authority.

“We must get to the bottom of what is really taking place at WAPA and start working to chart a new path forward,” said Sen. Kenneth Gittens, who moved to subpoena utility officials. “The current state of affairs is absolutely unacceptable – our bills are outrageous and service is increasingly unreliable.”

The petition to the Legislature’s Committee of the Whole asks that WAPA be urged to turn over within 120 days of Tuesday’s hearing certain financial records to the VI Inspector General for a detailed forensic audit.

Within 90 days of the October hearing, community organizers also want the Senate to compel WAPA to “... stop with the delay, avoidance and ignoring tactics” that the union says have put off contract negotiations for several years.