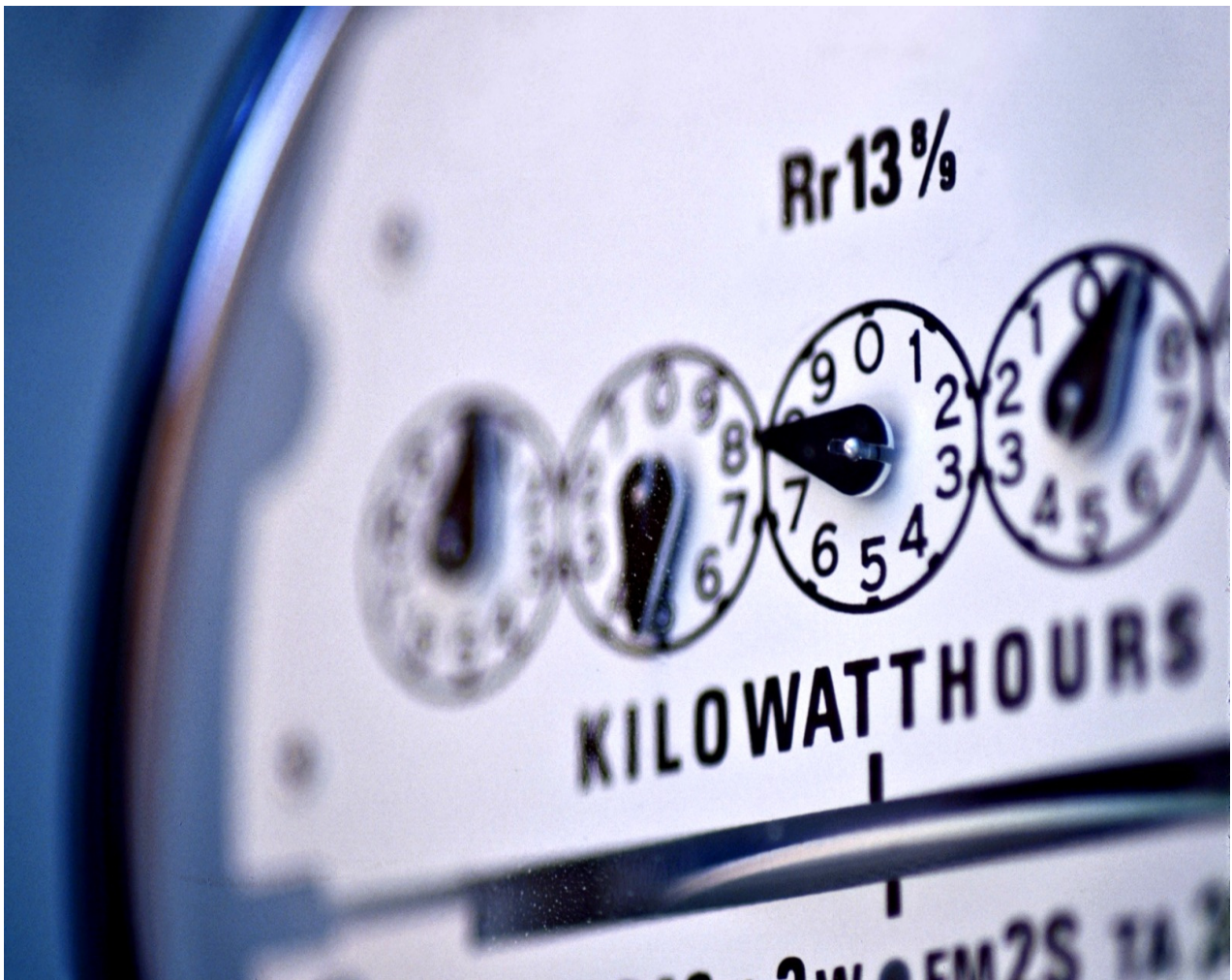


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Opinion | We Stand With Delegate Plaskett and the Call for an Energy State of Emergency

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The Virgin Islands Alliance for Consumer Justice endorses Delegate Stacey Plaskett's recommendation that Gov. Albert Bryan declare a territorial energy emergency and seek federal assistance to resolve the ongoing failure of our public utility.

The Water and Power Authority has failed over many years to deliver reliable or affordable power. WAPA has repetitively broken the public's trust. WAPA has failed many times to present a credible plan for ending the current energy crisis and crippling outages. WAPA has failed to present a credible plan to extricate itself from the fiscal mess and massive debt load it has created.

Every facet of our energy source is imperiled. On Thursday, September 19, 2019, the V.I. Consortium media outlet reported that WAPA had missed several payments to CIGNA. Hence, if the embattled power company is not making timely payments on health insurance what other expenditures are not being met?

Delegate Plaskett reported in her press release that WAPA has a negative cash flow balance of \$13 million and by the end of the November 2019, the cash flow crisis is expected to increase up to 33 million.

Thus far, WAPA's only creative initiative has been to fleece the ratepayers of this territory, the same ones who have rescued this outfit time and time again.

And what do we have to show for our commitment? Massive debt, no accountability, no transparency, no reliability, and by the way, power went off in Sunday during church.

We implore Governor Bryan to declare such an emergency, which would allow federal resources and expertise to be brought to the territory to immediately assist our severely challenged utility.

This radical action is required if we hope to resolve this energy crisis in an orderly and structured manner and have a viable public utility serving the needs of all Virgin Islanders.

A different course is required now on WAPA – and that will require the governor to truly be bold and politically courageous.

Submitted on Sunday by the Virgin Islands Alliance for Consumer Justice