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Senators to Decouple Their Salary From Lowest Paid Commissioner's During Tuesday Session; State of Emergency Extension Request to be Addressed

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Money flying around. By. iStock/VICONSORTIUM

Facing an election in less than a month, senators who make up the 33rd Legislature will move on Tuesday to untie their \$85,000 salary from the lowest paid commissioner's during a session, the Consortium has learned, an action that became necessary following [swift backlash](#) lawmakers fielded from constituents last week.

The backlash resulted from an amendment introduced by Senator Javan James that sought to prevent senators' salary from climbing to \$100,000 in January along with Calvert White's, the commissioner of Sports, Parks and Recreation. The raise was given to the commissioner by

Governor Albert Bryan, who as of Monday had yet to issue a statement on the matter.

The senators plan holistic action that would not only decouple the salary, but also address compensation of top government officials across the board, which they argue would stop the practice of governors raising the salaries of administration officials on the whim with little to no oversight.

Mr. James envisions a more restricted action that would see senators setting their own salaries, a stance Senate leaders see as flawed. Mr. James, however, has pointed to Article I, Section 6 of the U.S. Constitution, which states, "The Senators and Representatives shall receive a compensation for their services, to be ascertained by law, and paid out of the Treasury of the United States." The section that reads "ascertain by law" means Congress must pass the law that sets its salary. Mr. James says this would force senators to only seek raises if they were producing results on behalf of the people. Otherwise, he contended, the ill-fated pay raise would result in senators being voted out.

During the Tuesday session, lawmakers will also address extending the state of emergency declaration, which was requested by Governor Bryan. The Consortium learned of the request through Senate sources, as the Bryan administration hasn't provided the media with notification of the latest extension request. It is, however, expected that an announcement will come before the session.

For the [previous request](#), the administration argued an extension would ensure that the territory maintains access to federal benefits and assistance that arise from emergency status relative to Covid-19.