

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Police Unions Express Frustration as Government Fails to Pay Salary Increases Owed Since 2019, Provide Uniform Allowances

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VIPD vehicles parked at a police station in Basin Triangle, Christiansted, St. Croix. By. VI CONSORTIUM

The Bryan administration has failed to provide contractual salary increases to police officers negotiated years ago through a collective bargaining agreement, and law enforcement union heads are expressing frustration and disappointment that police officers, who put their lives at risk daily in service to the people, are being treated as such.

The unions include the Law Enforcement Supervisors Union (LESU), Locals 118 and 119, and the Policeman's Benevolent Association (PBA). According to the unions, the 2018 contracts stipulate that a pay step increase shall occur annually to all members under the agreement. However, LESU members have not received any increases since 2019. LESU also stated that the Virgin Islands Police Department on occasion would meet with the unions to make amendments to its contract, however, the union's leadership contends that it is difficult to agree to amend the contract in favor of the government when the government has failed to abide by the current agreement.

PBA St. Croix President Police Corporal Uston Cornelious said some officers have not received raises as far back as 2018, the year both contracts were signed. Additional concerns include officers not receiving their allotted uniform allowances and continued violations of the contractual agreement.

Union heads were also frustrated that while police officers owed salary adjustments for multiple years have not been addressed, government employees' 2011 eight percent cut [received a commitment](#) of repayment by Governor Albert Bryan, and teachers were provided with checks of up to \$1,200 this week for supplementing students' virtual needs when the government fell short during virtual learning.

"I have been in regular communications with [Police] Commissioner Velinor as he has made attempts to speak with Office of Management and Budget Director Ms. Jennifer O'Neal. Commissioner Velinor advised the union that the monies are still being worked on as they search for a funding source. This shouldn't be the case. It's an annual step increase so it doesn't come as a surprise," said Police Sergeant and President of LESU St. Croix, Jamale Griffin. "The monies are budgeted by the Department and in turn should be paid to the officers who work very hard and are dedicated to serve our community. We are asking for this matter to be rectified immediately. The Government answered the call to pay increases owed to LESU for the 2018 step increase and we are expecting the same good faith once received."

LESU St. Thomas-St. John District President Aaron Krigger shared the same concerns. PBA President for the St. Thomas-St. John District, Hadiya Casimir, who was sworn in last week, stated, "As the PBA president one of my main concerns are my constituents, the police officers of the Virgin Island Police Department... Since I have taken office, I have been overwhelmed with a plethora of concerns and issues by the officers, which have not been addressed." She said PBA "will continue to listen to the officers' concerns and will be addressing these concerns to the Police Commissioner, Governor of the Virgin Islands, and the Legislature should the need arise."

The Consortium reached out to Governor Bryan and the administration's communications director, Richard Motta, Tuesday but a response had not been furnished at time of writing.

The PBA agreement [was reached in November 2018](#) during the Mapp administration, and it covers police officers, detectives and corporals, many of whom had not seen a step increase for eight years. The LESU contract was also signed in 2018 by former Governor Mapp.

In October 2018, PBA officials territory-wide issued a vote of no confidence in the Mapp administration, [contending](#) that the government was "in violation of the current collective bargaining agreement, which provides for annual step increases to the members of the association, among other violations of the conditions of employment contained in the collective bargaining agreement."