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Bryan Pushes Back Against Opposition to Early Beach Closing

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Kyle Murphy **February 23, 2021**

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Frederiksted beach before the Covid-19 pandemic. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS CONSORTIUM

Governor Albert Bryan said he has been fielding a lot of pushback regarding why beaches in the territory are still closing at 4 p.m. while bars and restaurants are allowed to remain open late. The governor addressed those concerns during the administration's weekly press briefing Monday.

“The beaches are not closed to parties and normal festivals because we want them closed. The reality is though, as good as we have fared, we are in the midst of a global pandemic,” the governor said.

Mr. Bryan spoke on alcohol consumption on beaches and how it leads to individuals becoming less compliant with Covid-19 protocols.

“We all know what happens as the day goes on when the bar gets lower and the drinking gets higher,” he said, adding that people tend not to wear masks and they forget social-distancing rules when intoxicated.

For those who criticized the governor for allowing restaurants to open while beaches are closed at 4:00 p.m., Mr. Bryan said restaurants are controlled operations with structure, whereas beaches are free for all, and suggested the USVI did not have the capacity to monitor all the territory's beaches.

“There are far too many beaches and places on the ocean for us with our scarce Covid team to manage all of those places,” Mr. Bryan said.

He noted the impact that bars and restaurants have on the local economy. “All these bars and restaurants create livelihoods for their owners, tax dollars for the government and perhaps most importantly, jobs for Virgin Islanders who would otherwise have problems paying their bills and providing for their families,” he said.

“Our goal is to keep you safe, even from yourself,” stated the governor. “We can leave the beach at 4 o'clock and have a little control, or have no control on the beach and have everything shut down for 30 days.”