

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett Calls on EPA to Facilitate Revitalization of St. Croix's South Shore Following Announcement of Indefinite Refining Shutdown at Limetree Bay

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Limetree Bay

Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett has called on the Environmental Protection Agency to do more than just regulate and enforce environmental laws, but to also assist in stewardship and revitalization of contaminated areas," she said, as the EPA mission mandates.

Ms. Plaskett, a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, Budget Committee and Committee on Agriculture, said she has been engaged in discussions with the EPA,

Limetree Bay Refining, community stakeholders and the Office of the Governor on the Limetree Bay matter. The refinery on June 21 announced [an indefinite halt of oil refining](#), blaming the decision on "severe financial constraints." The decision has led to hundreds of jobs being lost, with Governor Albert Bryan expecting [up to 800 employees being made redundant](#) in total as the closure reverberates across St. Croix.

"The announcement by Limetree to suspend refinery operations have once again brought the island of St. Croix, specifically, and the people of the Virgin Islands in general to a place of reckoning. What is the economic foundation of St. Croix? How do we balance the needs of our residents, the environment, our workforce and our businesses?" the delegate to Congress said in a statement. "I am grateful that Governor Bryan has engaged the local Department of Labor to support the immediate job loss and that his administration has put together a 20-year economic development strategy that works on the diversification of our private sector – particularly the marine industry and small businesses."

Ms. Plaskett said the indefinite suspension of oil refining "reminds us, however, that any response must be 'whole of government' — meaning at the local and federal level. For example, locally, while the Department of Labor supports those individuals out of work, the Economic Development Authority must engage the local businesses which will inevitably lose contracts and other forms of business as a result of the refinery's closure.

"Additionally, while the Department of Planning and Natural Resources works aggressively to ensure monitoring of emissions, water quality and other environmental concerns are met, our Department of Health and healthcare sector must continue to support and investigate any health concerns or public health issues that may have resulted from plant activity."

She added, "At the federal level, I invite and urge Governor Bryan and the local legislature to work with me to collectively pressure the EPA to not just regulate and enforce environmental laws but to, as their mission mandates, assist in stewardship and revitalization of contaminated areas. We must also press the Biden Administration to demonstrate their commitment to renewable energy and equitable wealth creation by engaging the Department of Defense, Department of Energy along with the Department of Commerce and the White House Economic Council to partner and invest in our community as we reimagine St. Croix."

Ms. Plaskett said her office in the coming weeks will meet with stakeholder groups, individuals and government agencies "and work to support the community and rebuilding our future."