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Bryan to Announce Actions Aimed at Making Life Easier for the Vaccinated, More Difficult for the Unvaccinated

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Cascade Locks, OR, USA - July 21, 2021: The mask policy sign at the entrance to Bonneville Lock and Dam Visitor Center says mask is required for the unvaccinated while encouraged for the vaccinated. By. GETTY IMAGES

Governor Albert Bryan will announce today during the governor's weekly press briefing actions aimed at supporting individuals in the U.S. Virgin Islands who are vaccinated against Covid-19, while making life more difficult for those who have chosen not take the shot.

Mr. Bryan, who spoke to the Consortium Sunday about the administration's plans, said it was time that people who have become inoculated against Covid-19 stop being punished through

restrictions along with those who haven't.

"We have decided to take a position that supports the vaccinated and makes the unvaccinated life a little more difficult," the governor said. "More than half of the people of the Virgin Islands have now taken the vaccine, why are we punishing them because other people don't want to take it?"

The territory's leader said the administration intended on shutting down the USVI last week, but officials took into consideration the businesses that have complied with the territory's restrictions and people who are vaccinated. "Why are we punishing the vaccinated for people who don't want to take the vaccine? It's like the house is burning, you're in there, I'm trying to save you with the fire truck and you're saying you don't want to come out the house," he said.

The governor, who said these days he has been consumed with keeping Virgin Islanders safe, pointed to the British Virgin Islands as an example of how the Covid-19 virus could ravage a community that has low vaccination rates. "Even though our [Covid] numbers high, we're nowhere as high as the BVI. Why? Because we have the vaccinated people. The vaccinated people are who keeping the numbers where they are, or else we would be up to 1,000 easy."

At its peak, Covid-19 topped 1,600 active cases in the BVI, and the virus ravaged the British territory with over 30 hospitalizations at one point and 36 deaths in just over a month. The BVI surge [has since receded](#), though at 441 active cases and eight hospitalizations, the numbers are still high for a territory of roughly 30,000.

Following the devastating surge, vaccination in the BVI, which was low, saw a marked increase: as of July 28, a total of 16,445 of the eligible population in the BVI had received vaccination, while 11,438 were fully vaccinated. The BVI government has set a goal of 22,500 vaccinations which the territory says would help it reach herd immunity.

Mr. Bryan said while changes will be announced today, the USVI will not be shut down. "We're going to make more changes Monday. Shutting down is a bandaid to a major problem. We're going to have to learn to live with Covid-19. If I have to induce things to inspire people to get vaccinated then so be it," he said.

The administration is pushing for an additional 15,000 Virgin Islanders to get vaccinated, or 70 percent of the eligible population. According to the administration, as of last week 53.6 percent, or 47,350 people had taken at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine in the territory, while 37,350 were fully vaccinated, or 44.7 percent. The administration has said about 6 percent are individuals who during the early days of vaccine availability traveled to the USVI to get vaccinated, so when accounting for those individuals, the territory's true vaccination rate as of last week stood at 47.6 percent of the eligible population, [among the lowest in the nation](#).

Active cases [shot up to 336 as of Saturday](#), according to the V.I. Dept. of Health. St. Thomas accounted for 201, St. Croix for 121 and St. John for 14 of those cases. Hospitalizations were at twenty-nine as of Friday, with eight patients on ventilators — four at the Schneider Regional Medical Center and four at the Juan F. Luis Medical Center, according to Gov't House.