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Bryan Walks Back Sept. 9 Implementation of Mandatory Covid-19 Test for Government Employees

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Employees of the central government may not face mandatory Covid-19 tests beginning Sept. 9 as [previously stated](#) by Governor Albert Bryan, a reversal in position that comes as active infections in the USVI — which recently peaked at just over 400 cases as a result of the highly infectious Delta Variant — have been receding.

Speaking to the Consortium Sunday, Mr. Bryan said he was misquoted by the media about the Sept. 9 mandatory weekly Covid tests or proof of vaccination for gov't employees. "I said that I wanted to do that but I never said that I was going to do it. The paper misquoted me and said I said I was going to implement it in September. I never said that; I said we were thinking about doing it for September, the day after Labor Day."

In fact, what Mr. Bryan did say is that proof of vaccination or mandatory tests would be required beginning Sept. 9, however, if 15,000 first-dose vaccinations were administered before then, there would be no need for the weekly tests or proof of vaccination, [as stated](#) in a Consortium Aug. 9 article.

"We're shooting for Sept. 9 but we're hoping we don't have to do that," the governor said, "because if we get 15,000 first shots or close to it coming up to Sept. 8, the day after Labor Day, we won't have to do that. We will be good."

Moments earlier during the same Aug. 9 press briefing, Mr. Bryan — speaking relative to the Sept. 9 mandatory testing requirement — stated, "So if you want to get a cotton swab up your nose every single week, then so be it. That's what we mean by a little bit more difficult."

On Aug. 9, 47,192 individuals had taken at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine. Last week Monday (Aug. 24,) that number climbed to 49,919 — equating to 2,727 new first-dose vaccinations and 12,273 first-dose vaccinations short of Mr. Bryan's 15,000 first-dose goal by Sept. 9.

Mr. Bryan not only walked back the mandatory testing requirement, his tone relative to vaccination has also changed. "The better approach is let's work together to get this done. We got to stop dividing us and work together. And if you noticed I've changed my approach in the last couple of weeks and say, let's give people every single reason in the world to get vaccinated," the governor said, speaking to incentives the administration has been offering instead of rhetoric that would serve to divide. "We have so much to do it's not really worth creating the amount of emotion to get everybody to do it," he said of mandatory vaccination.

Mr. Bryan also spoke of options available to some government employees who at the moment have chosen to remain unvaccinated. "We have a situation where if you are not vaccinated you could stay home and work," he said. "In some situations you can't do that; we're looking at a more focused approach like who needs to be vaccinated."

The governor spoke of nurses resigning from the territory's hospital because of the mandatory vaccination policy imposed by the territorial hospital board, and he offered employment elsewhere in the government. "It got other places you could work... You have Human Services, Education..." He said being vaccinated is a personal decision, "but people can't go to the hospital and get sick, that's not cool."

As of Saturday, there were 209 active Covid-19 cases territory-wide: 122 on St. Thomas, 70 on St. Croix and 17 on St. John, [according to the V.I. Dept. of Health](#).