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## Gittens Calls on Senate to Unite Against Bryan Administration Efforts to 'Block WAPA Reform'

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### Night shot of WAPA's Richmond Powerplant By. VI CONSORTIUM

Senator Kenneth Gittens on Monday said the 34th Legislature must formally petition the Superior Court to dismiss the Bryan administration's efforts to stop measures to enforce reform at the V.I. Water & Power Authority.

Act 8472 was passed into law unanimously on August 3 after previously being vetoed by Governor Albert Bryan. Mr. Gittens said the legislation restructures the WAPA board to afford greater accountability and establishes minimum criteria for those who serve.

Following last month's veto override, the Bryan administration [took steps to prevent the implementation](#) of the new law by filing for both a temporary restraining order and a permanent

injunction with the V.I. Superior Court.

“This institution must formally petition the Court to dismiss what is a frivolous claim by the V.I. Attorney General,” Senator Gittens wrote in a letter to Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory.

“This body established the V.I. Water & Power Authority Board, to include its composition, and it is within our power to reorganize or dismantle it if such an initiative is in the best interest of the people of this Territory.”

According to the release, Mr. Gittens is encouraging his colleagues to unite once again on behalf of consumers.

“The unanimous support of the 34th Legislature’s override of the Governor’s previous veto of the legislation in question is indicative of this body’s clear support for reform at WAPA. The Government’s efforts to block these reforms are without merit and, frankly, repellant,” Mr. Gittens wrote. “This said, I am urging that we act as a body to make a strong statement against any effort to prevent lawfully enacted reforms at the Water & Power Authority.”

Mr. Gittens's office said the senator spearheaded the 2018 subpoena of WAPA personnel and documents that revealed a plethora of waste, fraud, and abuse at the utility. He is also the sponsor of several legislative initiatives to institute reforms, to include the Ratepayers Bill of Rights – which became law last year. And Mr. Gittens is the primary sponsor of Bill# 34-0080, which calls for the appointment of a special investigator with the authority to thoroughly review concerns related to WAPA and to make prosecutorial recommendations. He noted that an expert analysis of problematic deals and financial transactions at WAPA remained essential to ensuring future accountability.

“I am calling on my colleagues to reconsider the Special Investigator legislation, which was held in Committee last month,” he said. “The effort to stop reforms at WAPA by court order once again underscores the need for an independent investigation of the utility.”

Act 8472 was sponsored by Senator Janelle Sarauw. Following the Bryan administration's move to block implementation of the law, she told the Consortium, “I am nauseated by the the lengths the administration is going to go to protect the utility. Through legislation, this body established the utility and its board and we have the right to amend the composition or abolish it altogether if we so choose. It is evident Governor Bryan is tone deaf to the cries of the people and defending WAPA at any costs matter more.”