

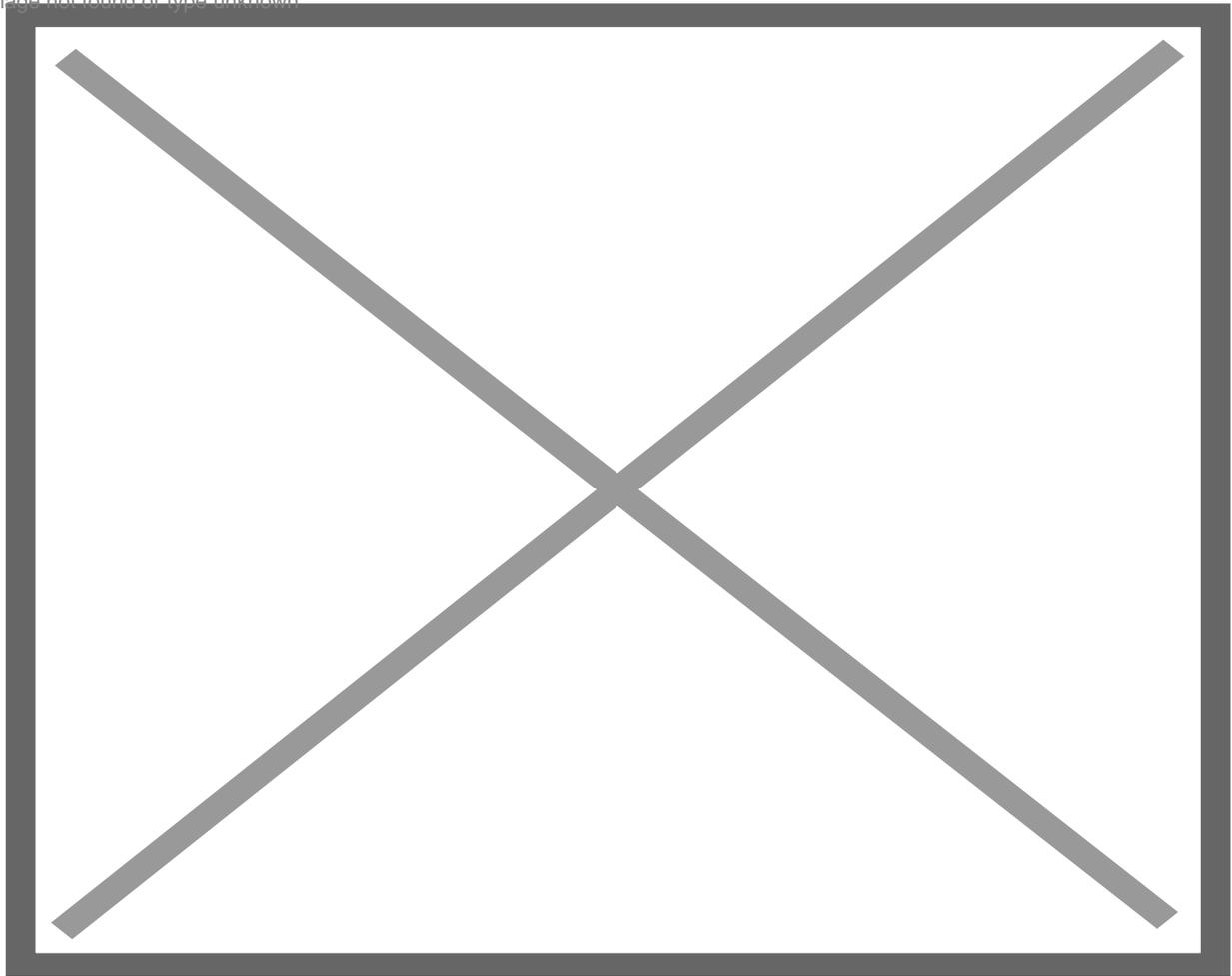
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Federal Employees in USVI, Private Businesses With More Than 100 Employees to be Affected by Biden's Mandatory Vaccine or Weekly Testing Initiative

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President Joe Biden's sweeping announcement on Thursday that calls for private employers with 100 or more employees to require workers to be vaccinated or undergo weekly testing, is set to impact the U.S. Virgin Islands, where private businesses and the central government have steered clear of such mandates. The mandate also requires federal employees in the executive branch and government contractors to be vaccinated.

The announcement is part of a six-point Biden administration initiative to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus, whose Delta variant has disrupted America's march back to normalcy. It includes boosting vaccinations, the improvement of access to testing, and making Covid-19 treatments more readily available.

Governor Albert Bryan, who [had stated](#) he would require vaccination or mandatory weekly Covid-19 testing for government employees beginning Sept. 9, [walked back the comment](#). A request for comment from Mr. Bryan relative to the Biden plan and its impact on the USVI had not been returned at time of publishing.

The Biden mandate is set to affect roughly 80 million private sector workers, and businesses that don't comply can face fines of up to \$14,000 per violation. The mandate also requires vaccination for workers in a plurality of healthcare settings that receive Medicare or Medicaid reimbursement. The Juan F. Luis Hospital and the Schneider Regional Medical Center are Medicare and Medicaid participating institutions.

Additionally, all federal employees in the USVI working on the executive branch level will need to be vaccinated, according to the Biden initiative. Those include V.I. District Court, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Social Security Administration employees, among others.

Private firms in the USVI with 100 or more employees, most notably Limetree Bay, would need to require vaccination or mandatory weekly testing. Limetree Bay Refining, however, has said it will make redundant its remaining 271 employees on Sept. 19. Limetree Bay Terminals has roughly 115 employees, according to CEO Jeff Rinker. If this employee count holds, terminal workers will face the requirement as well.

The Biden plan has been welcomed by some and seen by others as gross government overreach. "My legal team is standing by ready to file our lawsuit the minute @joebiden files his unconstitutional rule. This gross example of federal intrusion will not stand," tweeted South Dakota Republican Gov. Kristi Noem (via the Wall Street Journal).

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett lauded the decision in a statement issued late Thursday. "Since President Biden took office, he has pulled every lever to save lives and stop the spread of the virus. Since January 20, our nation has gone from 2 million fully vaccinated Americans to more than 175 million. And since early July, we have seen a consistent trend of increasing vaccinations with an average of 825,000 shots a day. Throughout the pandemic, the Biden administration has worked around the clock to get more people vaccinated, decrease hospitalizations and deaths, and keep our schools and economy open," Ms. Plaskett said.

She added, "... President Biden outlined a robust plan to build on our progress, stop the spread of the Delta variant, and increase vaccinations. The wartime spirit and science-based plan reflects the Biden administration's whole-of-government approach and unwavering commitment to defeat the deadly virus at home and abroad."