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Pointing to Increasing Regional Competition, Bryan Says USVI Will Start Verifying People Vaccinated in U.S. for Travel to Territory in 30 Days

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Governor Albert Bryan said Monday the U.S. Virgin Islands within 30 days will start verifying people vaccinated in the U.S. for travel to the territory through the USVI Travel Portal, another change in stance following previous comments to the contrary. Mr. Bryan said his latest decision was in response to increasing regional competition as Caribbean islands start accepting U.S. vaccination cards, and following the U.S. government's move to start accepting foreign nationals into the country who can prove they are vaccinated while providing a negative Covid-19 test result.

Currently, only people vaccinated in the U.S. Virgin Islands can use the travel portal's vaccination verification system. All other individuals must upload an acceptable Covid-19 test result and wait

to be verified by the system, which is in part manned by humans. Vaccinated Virgin Islanders can simply upload their information and await verification.

"The whole Caribbean is starting to accept U.S. vaccination cards now. And now that the U.S. is easing restrictions coming from foreign places, it's just amping up the competition for us," Mr. Bryan told the Consortium following a query on the matter during his Monday press briefing. The governor said he was talking to a charter boat broker from Antigua who said "they are already doing 80-90 percent so they are seeing a lot of travel come in as well as U.S. travel." To that end, Mr. Bryan stated, "So we got to kick it up a notch to make sure that we can maintain a level of tourism, especially with the closure of [Limetree Bay]... we got some other challenges going on."

On Oct. 26, Mr. Bryan [walked back](#) a previous plan to verify people vaccinated in the U.S. for travel to the USVI using the territory's travel portal system, stating that he wanted to be sure that tourists traveling here are free of Covid-19. Those comments were in stark contrast to [what he said on Oct. 4](#), when Mr. Bryan stated that people who got fully vaccinated in any U.S. state would be able to verify their vaccination status through the USVI Travel Portal.

On Monday, the governor said the implementation should take place within a month. "If everything goes well I see it happening in within the next 30 days as the season kicks in, because we just want people to be able to come down," Mr. Bryan said. He was sure to assert that the administration's priority remains protecting Virgin Islanders from Covid-19. "Most importantly, we want to make sure our people are safe," he said.

As of Monday the territory had 89 active Covid-19 cases, with St. Croix accounting for 82, St. Thomas 6 and St. John 1, [according to](#) the V.I. Dept. of Health.