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Premium Pay Stimulus, Previously Set to Go Out in February and March, Now Scheduled For Release in the Summer

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Governor Albert Bryan has announced that the Premium Pay program for private and public sector employees which was [scheduled to be paid out in February and March](#), is now scheduled to be issued during the summer.

Each U.S. state, territory, and tribal government will receive their portion of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act, or ARPA, which includes an amount for Premium Pay stimulus checks. The U.S. Virgin Islands is allocated \$547.1 million from ARPA, and as of January, the territory was in receipt of \$531 million. For the Premium Pay program, \$40 million was set aside for the Virgin Islands.

Premium Pay is a one-time payment that is based on guidelines established by the U.S. Treasury and is for employees who worked throughout the pandemic. The 437-page rule book on how to spend the money was published on January 6.

"We're scheduling premium pay for the summer; in March we are trying to get out some tax returns," Governor Bryan disclosed during his Monday Covid-19 press briefing. He said "cash is running slim" because revenue collection expected for January was not fully aligned with projections and there were added expenditures.

"We really did not expect Omicron to have the impact as it did on travel in January 2022 so cash is looking a little bit slim...so we're just watching to see what is going to happen," the governor said while explaining the position of the government's financial situation. "We have liquidity but when you look at our revenues coming in for the year, some of our stuff is down significantly."

Mr. Bryan said while corporate income tax collection was up, gross receipts and ordinary income tax collection trended downward. He also mentioned a number of financial commitments to include union contracts, a lump sum payment to the Gov't Employees' Retirement System of \$40 million as part of [a recent agreement](#) to settle court matters, and "I also said we are going to give [the \\$25 million back on the retro payments](#)," he said.

The administration, Mr. Bryan added, is "watching our cash to make sure that we could manage the job so that we don't put ourselves in a cash-strapped situation."

During a Senate hearing in January, Office of Management and Budget Director Jenifer O'Neal told members that not all essential workers would receive the stimulus. She also promised lawmakers that her office would provide a copy of the plan outlining the number of people who should receive the payment once it is finalized.

"We will provide the plan once it is complete to this body, but we do have specific guidelines that we have to follow once it is Premium Pay, and we will continue to read through the 437-page rule document to make sure that we stay in compliance with the treasury," she said.

The governor [late last month](#) told the Consortium that most Virgin Islanders deemed essential during the Covid-19 pandemic in both the private and public sectors would qualify for the Premium Pay stimulus checks. Mr. Bryan said the \$70,000 salary limit established locally to follow the U.S. Treasury's guidelines was a base pay limit that does not include other compensation such as overtime.

"Remember it's your base pay, it's not your overtime. It's not how much money you made in overtime, it's your base pay, they are very specific about that," Mr. Bryan said. "So even if you make \$200,000 but your base pay is \$50,000 you still qualify."

He added, "If you're making \$71,000 base pay, that's good pay."