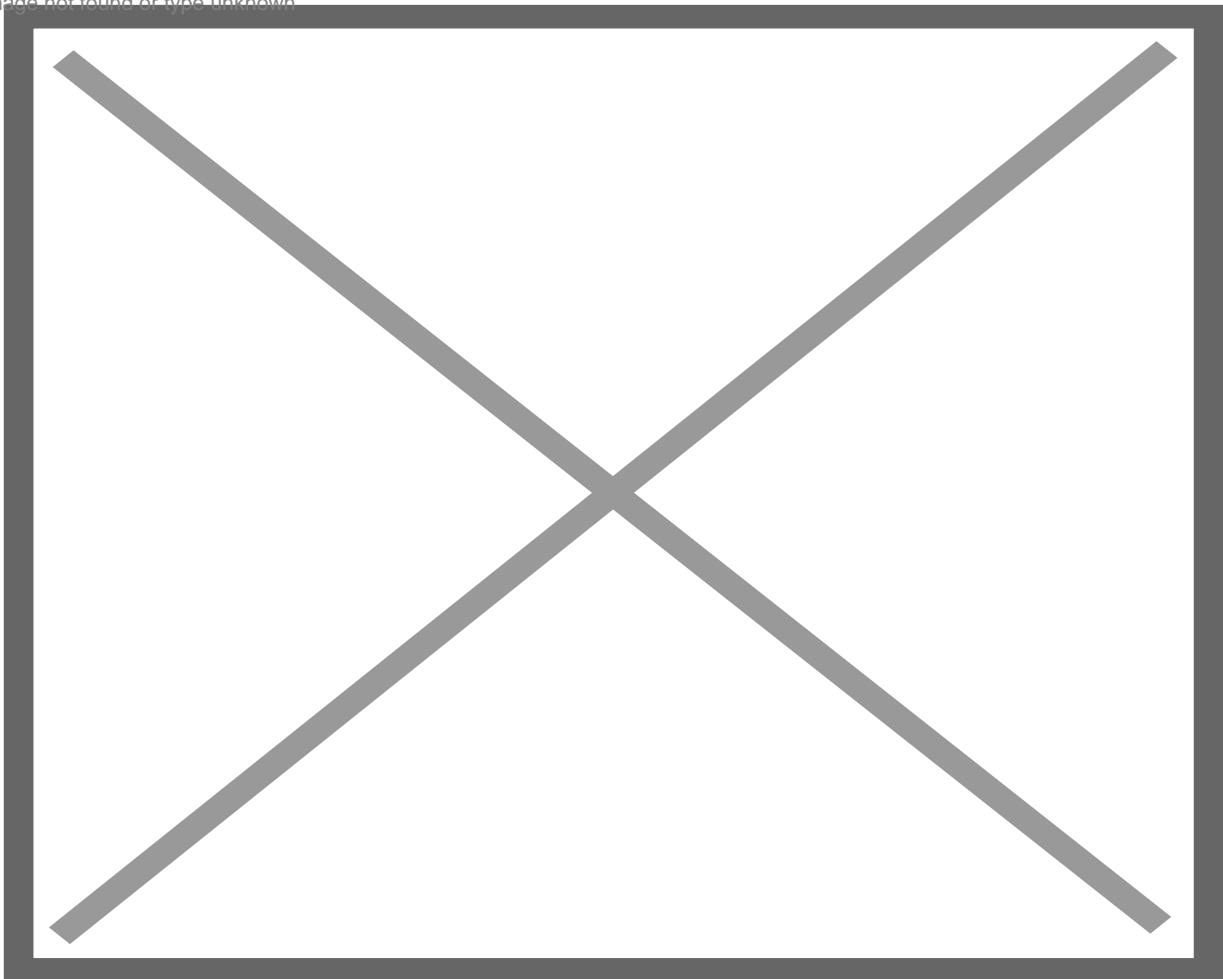


Premium Pay Sums and Eligibility Revealed; Tax Refunds Going Out End of March; OMB Director Announces March 25 as Date for Revenue Generating Conference

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Office of Management and Budget Director, Jenifer O'Neal, on Wednesday disclosed important information relative to the Premium Pay program. She also confirmed that \$25 million in tax refunds will be released at the end of March, and she shared information regarding the territory's financial condition.

Ms. O'Neal was speaking during an appearance on the Bryan administration's "Inside the Cabinet" program, where she disclosed that the territory's first Revenue Estimating Conference for 2022 will be held on March 25. Law mandates that the conference be held twice yearly, and the events

traditionally occur in March and September.

“This is where we set the baseline for government revenue for the next budgeting cycle. This is where we will have the government revenue-generating agencies coming together presenting on their revenues [and] projecting what they expect to collect in the next budgeting year that begins in October,” Ms. O’Neal explained Wednesday.

She said there will be updates from the Departments of Planning and Natural Resources, Licensing and Consumer Affairs, Finance, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Lieutenant Governor's Office and other government arms.

Premium Pay Program

One of the topics discussed during the program was upcoming Premium Pay for those in an approved sector who had to work during the pandemic period of March 2020 to March 2021. The payments, originally set to go out in February and March, have been [pushed to the summer](#).

Ms. O'Neal said approved sectors have been posted on the OMB website, and they include healthcare, emergency response, sanitation, disinfection cleaning, grocery stores and restaurants, among others. "Those people whose work required them to show up to their jobs; they could not do it from home, those are the individuals who are eligible for Premium Pay," said the OMB director.

Relative to the time period to that secures qualification, Ms. O'Neal said, "In particular, if you worked through March 05 to April 05th, 2020 and from August 13th to September 08th, 2020 you are eligible for Premium Payments if you meet all of the other criteria," she said while explaining that that period was the time when Governor Bryan declared a territory-wide lockdown.

"We had to remain at home, we were in that stay-at-home phase but there were some people who had to go to work like grocery stores workers who ensured that we all got food," she explained.

Workers whose salaries fall above \$50,000 but no more than \$70,000 will receive \$1250; salaries less than \$50,000 will receive \$2,000 while those who worked for a minimum of two weeks or less than three months will receive a payment of \$500.

Persons from the private sector cannot prepare individual applications, Ms. O'Neal made known, stating that employers must be the ones to prepare the application for the Premium Pay program. The deadline to apply was March 9, according to the OMB director. Ms. O'Neal did not clarify whether private sector businesses were notified of the filing process and deadline. Wednesday's "Inside the Cabinet" aired at 5:00 p.m.

Government employees and semi-autonomous agencies will be contacted by OMB while central government employees will be contacted by the Division of Personnel regarding Premium Pay, she said.

Revenue Generating Conference and Tax Refunds

Relative to the Revenue Generating Conference, Ms. O'Neal said government departments and agencies "will present on all of the things they are doing to raise revenue for the government because you know government operates on taxes, and fees, etc.," she said. Ms. O'Neal also confirmed that the session will be broadcast live on various platforms and the public will be able to participate via Zoom.

The event will provide information on all government revenues for the upcoming fiscal year or two, Ms. O'Neal said before admitting that the government is currently experiencing low revenue but it's expected to improve by April.

"This is typically the time of year when government finances are lower than other times," she said. "We are still actually collecting more than our projections at this point but the cash I should say is running a little bit lower than where we were in October, November, or December 2021.

"That should only last for about another month until we get to April and people file their taxes...at which point the government will have a lot more cash on hand again and then we can start to pay a lot more on the bills and debts that we have," she said.

Governor Albert Bryan has committed to paying tax refunds amounting to \$25 million once per quarter. Ms. O'Neal said \$25 million was paid at the end of December and another \$25 million will be paid at the end of March.

"These payments are for outstanding tax refunds that are owed," she said.

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