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Bryan's Two-Year Budget Proposal Rejected Again

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Senator Kurt Vialet, chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Though the budget proposal for fiscal years 2023 and 2024 was submitted to the Legislature by Governor Albert Bryan, the Committee on Finance will only be considering the estimates and projections for fiscal year 2023 when it commences budget hearings in the coming days.

“Once again we have received a submission of a two-year budget; the committee will only be considering the fiscal year 2023 budget,” Senator Kurt Vialet, chairman of the Finance Committee said during the Tuesday hearing.

Last week Governor Albert Bryan announced that his office had sent the budget for the years 2023 and 2024 to the Legislature — mirroring the governor's two-year submittal in 2021 that was

[rejected by the Senate](#). At the time, lawmakers said the measure was unconstitutional and that the timing was bad.

“The governor shall submit at the opening of each regular session of the Legislature a message of the state of the Virgin Islands and a budget of estimated receipts and expenditures, which shall be the basis of the appropriation bills for the ensuing fiscal year — key word is ensuing — which shall commence on the first day of July or such date as the Legislature of the Virgin Islands may determine,” she Sen. Janelle Sarauw last year, quoting the Revised Organic Act of 1954 to make her case that the two-year submission was unconstitutional.

The current submission, among other things provides \$16 million for public employees' wage increases and funding for 1,200 vacancies across all government agencies. [It also sets aside \\$25 million for retroactive wage payments](#).

Mr. Bryan argued that framing the territory's financial future is making sure that it is done in a responsible way. The administration is projecting growth in all five major revenue categories – Personal Income Tax, Corporate Income Tax, Real Property Tax, Gross Receipt Tax, and Excise Tax.

“We expect all of them to go up because the strength of these revenue collections has allowed us to propose a budget plan that addresses several critical expenditure areas. So, the highlight of this budget is what we have been able to do because of financial management,” he said.

Other highlights of the budget include \$225,000 for the continuous support for the Office of Gun Violence Prevention; \$1.8 million for the expansion of [GVI Fellows](#); an additional \$2 million for the Supreme Court of the Virgin Islands; \$5 million in the Trust Fund to allow for road maintenance; and \$5 million for the Rainy-Day Fund.