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Major Milestone: Bryan Pays Total of \$288.8 Million in Tax Refunds, Bringing Gov't Up to Date For First Time Since 1990s

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Governor Albert Bryan during a press event Monday announced that his administration has paid in full tax refunds owed to the people of the territory and is now up to date with current-year payments.

The feat is notable as the government of the Virgin Islands has for years been behind on owed refund payments, and it's an accomplishment that past governors sought but were unable to achieve.

"We have paid, believe it not, tax refunds as far back as 2001 — that's 22 years ago," Mr. Bryan said during the press event today, held at Government House in St. Thomas. "And we continue to

pay tax refunds from before as they may have been in audit or they may have been filed late. But regardless, we have been paying them out as quickly as they have been filed."

Coming up to date is a promise Mr. Bryan made during his State of the Territory Address in 2019 that he's been able to keep, said the administration in a release today.

Since September 1, 2022, the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Department of Finance released 14,269 income tax refund checks totaling \$31,444,284, said the governor, who was flanked by BIR Director Joel Lee and Office of Management and Budget Director Jenifer O'Neal. Since 2020, the governor's executive budgets have earmarked \$25 million to be distributed quarterly and pay income tax refunds that the government owed.

In the latest round of checks distributed to residents this month, 2,941 refunds are for the 2021 tax year for returns filed earlier this year. All 2020 returns that were processed without audits or other issues have been paid out.

"This takes care of everyone that has filed up until February of 2022. This also means we are now paying refunds in the same year they were filed," Governor Bryan said. "We are on track to issue refunds to everyone that files by the April 15th filing deadline this year before the end of the year. This means we have officially caught up on the payment of tax refunds. A goal that once seemed insurmountable."

"We have put this government in a position to be able to make this announcement today and while some may seek to downplay the significance of this milestone, we know that the employees or BIR, OMB (the Office of Management and Budget) and the Dept. of Finance and the Lieutenant Governor's Tax Division, know how difficult it was to get here," he said.

To date, the Bryan administration has issued 110,138 refund checks totaling \$288,807,743. Additionally, the refunds paid out in the last two weeks included more than \$1.3 million funded through the reimbursement of the Earned Income Tax Credit by the federal government. The governor took time to thank Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett for her efforts making that possible.

The distribution of tax refunds during the Bryan administration dating back to 2002 totaling \$288,807,743 is as follows:

- 2002 (1) \$108.92
- 2003 (4) \$201,479.97
- 2004 (4) \$68,634.23
- 2005 (2) \$674.83
- 2006 (14) \$49,711.97
- 2007 (19) \$162,089.40
- 2008 (47) \$425,922.91
- 2009 (71) \$309,462.12
- 2010 (119) \$421,785.38
- 2011 (172) \$900,761.55
- 2012 (238) \$2,671,789.05
- 2013 (346) \$1,644,210.67
- 2014 (713) \$3,745,116.90
- 2015 (2,020) \$6,619,917.38
- 2016 (16,770) \$41,371,900.29
- 2017 (23,395) \$63,963,742.65

- 2018 (23,164) \$61,570,771.15
- 2019 (22,542) \$52,424,434.56
- 2020 (18,467) \$47,267,140.12
- 2021 (2,030) \$4,988,089.54

According Gov't House, while the majority of refunds that were owed to taxpayers dated back to 2016, some of the refunds issued by BIR since Mr. Bryan took office date back to 2002-2003, and 3,770 of those refunds are for tax years 2002-2015.

“This is a mission that the administration embarked on from our first year in office, and we have worked meticulously and tirelessly to achieve this goal,” Governor Bryan said Monday. “As a result of this reimbursement and with the hard work and diligent fiscal practices of this administration, we will be able to remain current on the payment of refunds moving forward.”

Along with coming up to date, the administration has paid out more refunds than all of its predecessors dating back to the 1990s, according to the governor who said the closest a past administration came to coming up to date was efforts made during the Charles W. Turnbull administration.

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