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'If You Ain't Doing Your Job You Gon' Be Looking For One': Bryan to Axe Cabinet Members Deemed Underperformers

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Governor Bryan following his victory against challenger Sen. Kurt Vialet on Nov. 8, 2022.
By. MEDIA ONE

As newly reelected Governor Albert Bryan seeks to speed up progress in the territory in a range of categories, the governor said several cabinet members deemed underperformers will be relieved from their duties and replaced with professionals assessed to be better suited for the tasks at hand.

Speaking during his first post-reelection interview, the governor expressed a desire to work on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands who he said has over the years contributed to the benefits enjoyed by government employees.

"We have to return government to service," he told the Consortium. "I have no problem signing contracts and negotiating wages, and giving benefits or whatever. But the government has to be about serving the people, not serving the government employees. And we have to bring that service back, and it's about each and everyone of us who are in government jobs recognizing the sacrifices that people out there are making in order for us to have good retirement, good healthcare plans, decent salary, 30 days off, 480 hours of leave in sick, and 480 hours of holiday pay. I mean, they treat us good so we need to start to treat them good. I think that's important to me right now."

On his agenda is building new schools; moving hospital operations on St. Croix to JFL North — the modular facility located just north of the Juan F. Luis Hospital — continuing road construction; completing the Paul E. Joseph Stadium; [major development at both the territory's airports](#) and more.

"The recovery isn't moving slow because of Tregenza and I, we're moving slow because we can't find enough workers, and when we find workers they're not doing the job fast enough," he said.

"We have to be able to modernize now," Mr. Bryan said, giving an example of an Amazon order that arrives the same day to a buyer after being ordered online.

"We can't be cutting purchase orders and writing requisitions and having contracts that last four, five, six months in order to get signed," the governor added, bemoaning a government red tape process that he believes hinders progress. He said the effort to streamline the process will be done collectively between the legislative and executive branches of government.

"We have to catch up. And there's no way to do it doing it the same way that we always did it," the governor said.

Mr. Bryan, no longer worried about being reelected, hinted to acting more boldly and without fear of backlash as compared to someone with reelection on their mind. "The beauty of being a lame duck governor is I don't have to be so nice anymore," he said. Asked by the Consortium whether changes were coming to his cabinet, the governor said, "We accept excuses a lot and you try to do the best with people. But I gave people four years; we know who performs and who doesn't perform."

He added, "The changes don't have anything to do with my animosity to anybody or how anybody feels. All it has to do with is what's best for the people of the Virgin Islands."

Asked again whether there would be changes to his cabinet, Mr. Bryan responded, "Absolutely."

The governor also hinted at changes coming to underperforming government employees in leadership roles outside his immediate cabinet. "I listen a lot about accountability. We are going to get some accountability in government as well too. You can't me tell you're in a school, you are the principal of the school, and it doesn't have water in the school and the governor is getting blamed for it. You're responsible for that. And everybody jumps over everybody that's responsible and places the blame on Tregenza and I. That's got to stop. If you are not doing your job, you're going to be looking for one, I could tell you that tonight," Mr. Bryan told the Consortium Tuesday night following a decisive victory against Sen. Kurt Vialet.

The first test of Mr. Bryan's do-your-job-or-find-another stance came on Wednesday — one day following his reelection — when the Office of Management and Budget [completely botched a rollout of Social Security stipend checks distribution](#) to seniors and people with disabilities. Mr. Bryan is being assailed for OMB's failure, with seniors decrying the operation on Wednesday,

expressing exasperation after witnessing multiple elderly individuals fainting because of scorching heat while waiting in line for the \$500 stipend.

OMB Director Jenifer O'Neal sought to absolve her department. "The problem is the way we received the list and the way the checks were printed, it just created a mess," she said, adding that the list was provided by the U.S. Social Security Administration.

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