

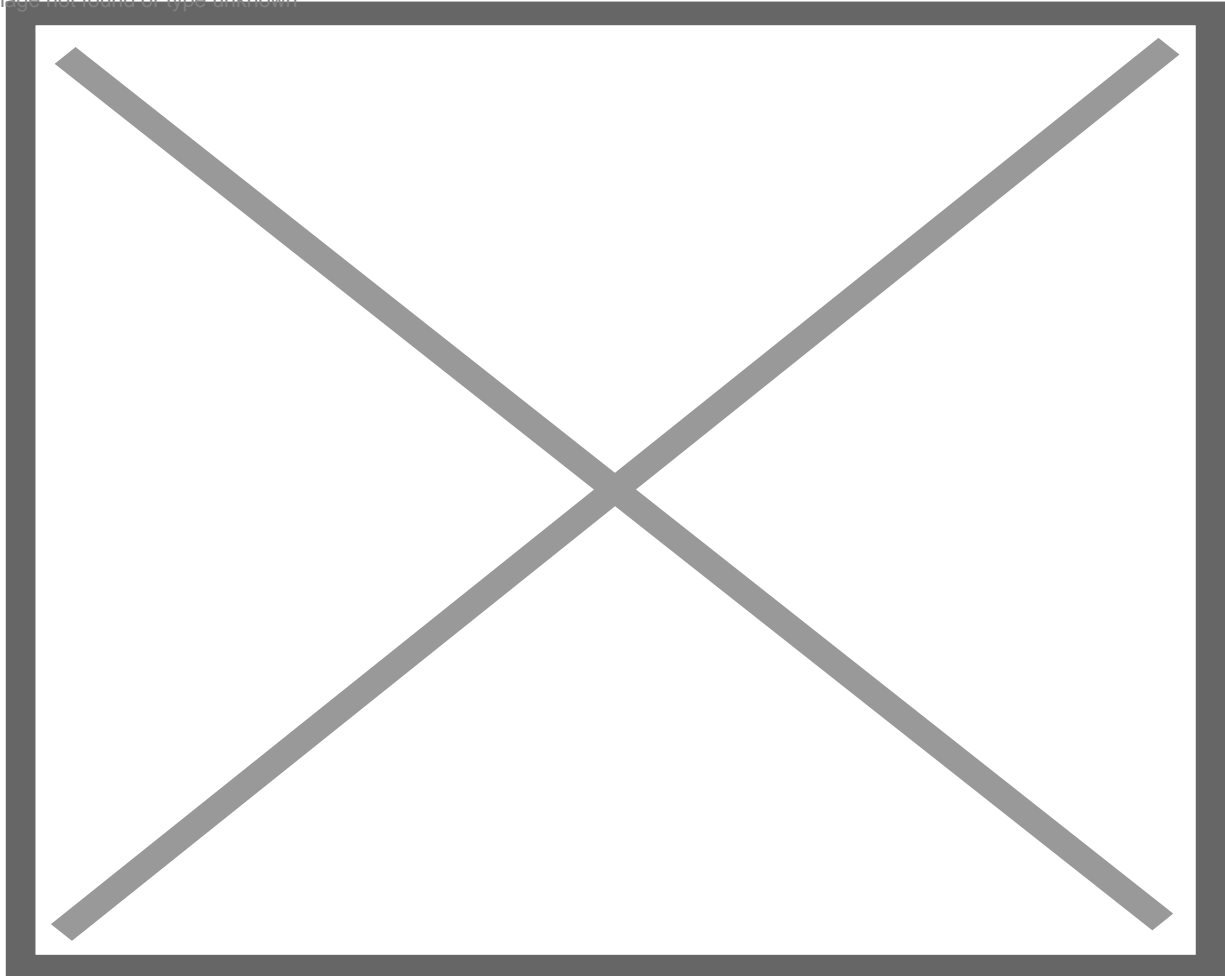
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Gittens to Hospital Board: Rescind Recent Executive Pay Raises

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Raises for Schneider Regional Medical Center (S.R.M.C.) hospital executives must be off the table until rebuilding efforts are well underway, Senator Kenneth Gittens said Tuesday. Mr. Gittens's comments follow a territorial board action Monday evening that saw board members voting to give executives of S.R.M.C. with already rich salaries [annual raises totaling \\$71,000](#).

Mr. Gittens said given the current state of the territory's hospitals, he was appalled that several hospital executives would be granted significant raises.

"Our hospitals are in shambles and Virgin Islanders are being forced to fly off-island for basic services," he said. "Lives are literally being put at risk and families are going into debt in order to receive care in Puerto Rico or the states. Where are our priorities? We should be looking at salary

decreases for executives right now given that neither of our hospitals are fully functional.”

Mr. Gittens noted that any executive salary increases should be tied to performance.

“When we actually begin rebuilding or resuming services at our hospitals then we can take a look at raises,” he said. “I do not know how in good conscience the Hospital and Health Facilities Territorial Board could consider raising salaries by even one dollar at this crucial time.”

The senator said funds designated for salary increases should be diverted to helping senior citizens with the expense of traveling off-island for care.

“This \$71,000 spent on executive raises could go a long way in assisting those in need,” the St. Croix lawmaker said.

He said he would be making inquiries relative to the justification for these raises.

“In the meantime, I am publicly calling on the Board to reconsider its decision to grant these salary increases,” Mr. Gittens concluded.