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Internal Revenue Director Off WAPA Board Ahead of Monthly Meeting as Utility Complies With Prevailing Law

WAPA / **Published On March 30, 2023 05:26 AM /**

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BIR Director Joel Lee.

Bureau of Internal Revenue Director Joel Lee is off the Governing Board of the Water and Power Authority, following a recent [court ruling](#) that a law that reshaped the Board was valid and should come into force.

Ahead of Thursday's Board meeting, WAPA indicated that the governing body was now in compliance with the legislation.

“After thorough legal review, the Governing Board and legal counsel confirm that the Governing Board structure is legally compliant after reflecting the removal of Joel Lee,” the Board announced. “The Authority will be proceeding with its monthly Regular Governing Board meeting as scheduled and looks forward to continuing efforts to improve our essential services to the people of the Virgin Islands.”

The law, sponsored by former senator Janelle Sauraw, was the latest effort by lawmakers to improve oversight of the struggling utility company by stocking the board with experts in relevant industries, and reduced the size of the board to seven, down from nine. The two board positions eliminated were ones that were previously filled by members of the governor’s cabinet, leaving only one member of the executive branch of government on WAPA’s Governing Board.

These measures prompted Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to [veto](#) the law when it was passed in 2020, and when the Senate overrode the veto, he took the matter to court the following year, arguing that the changes unduly infringed on his ability to wield executive power. The courts disagreed, clearing the way for the changes to WAPA’s Governing Board.