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Bryan Submits Bill to Senate for Proposed Land Swap in St. John to Establish New K-12 School

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Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. By. GOV'T HOUSE

Governor Albert Bryan on Thursday forwarded proposed legislation to the 35th Legislature for a [land exchange with the National Park Service](#). The measure, which aims to facilitate the construction of a K-12 school on St. John, marks a significant step towards addressing a long-standing issue in the territory, particularly for St. John students who have to commute daily to St. Thomas for their education.

The governor highlighted in his transmittal letter that the territory has been seeking suitable land for a school on St. John for the past 50 years. If approved promptly by the Legislature, the agreement with the NPS can move forward by July 1.

Mr. Bryan stated, "After half a century of setbacks and obstacles, our collective goal of establishing a secondary school on the island of St. John is at last a reality." He emphasized the importance of this achievement in ensuring the future of education for Virgin Island children and called on Senate President Novelle Francis Jr. to act swiftly.

The proposed legislation involves the exchange of Tract No. 02-101 Whistling Island (also known as Whistling Cay) from the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) to the U.S. Department of the Interior. In return, the NPS will hand over a portion of Tract No. 01-137A Catherineberg (Hammer's Fann) to the GVI for the purpose of constructing a public school.

Under the proposal, the GVI will retain the water rights to Whistling Cay, and an equalizing payment of \$210,000 from the NPS will be directed to the St. John Capital Improvements Fund.

The construction of the modern K-12 school facility is set to be funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as part of the territory's recovery from hurricanes Irma and Maria. Governor Bryan added that the school would also function as a hurricane shelter, a public meeting space, and athletic facilities for the community of St. John.

"The acquisition of this property will allow us to position the school in a convenient location for students, and finally enable St. Johnians to graduate from high school on their home island of St. John," the governor said.