

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bryan Approves Key Bills, Criticizes Legislature's Veto Override of WAPA Audit, School History Curriculum Measures

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Governor Albert Bryan, Jr.

Governor Albert Bryan on Friday announced that he's taken action on several measures forwarded to his office by the 35th Legislature. Two standout items among the measures were the Senate's override of two bills he had vetoed.

The first, Bill No. 35-0055, involves a curriculum change in elementary and secondary schools to integrate VI and Caribbean history. Governor Bryan wrote, "Mandating specific courses alters graduation requirements and will likely displace other requirements and

electives.” He suggested a more collaborative approach to crafting legislation that considers expert opinions and mitigates obstacles.

The second overridden veto was Bill No. 35-0061, which directs an audit of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority costing \$250,000. The governor expressed concern over this development, warning it "sets a dangerous precedent by effectively forcing the Inspector General to operate as an extension of the Legislature, rather than as an independent agency overseeing the totality of government."

Elsewhere, the governor was proactive in approving eight bills and acknowledging two resolutions sent by the 35th Legislature. Among the approved was Bill No. 35-0012, which amends the V.I. code to allow individuals living outside the territory to serve on boards and commissions. “This will better allow us to fill vacancies on boards and commissions with qualified public servants,” Governor Bryan noted.

Furthermore, the same bill enhances the retirement pension for National Guard retirees and eases funding for the Virgin Islands Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation's programs. While expressing support for these initiatives, the Governor expressed concern about the additional \$145,000 allocation from the General Fund without executive branch consultation.

In addition to these legislative actions, the Governor approved a bill appropriating \$700,000 from the General Fund to hire dialysis nurses and other staff, emphasizing the critical need for continuing care for Territory residents requiring dialysis.

Governor Bryan also approved several zoning change requests and issued a 20-year permit for submerged land use by Emerald Beach Hotel.

Finally, the governor acknowledged two resolutions honoring Board of Elections Supervisor Caroline Fawkes, the Virgin Islands Election System team, and local entertainer Gregory Hodge, better known as DJ Avalanche.