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Sen. Gittens Raises Alarm Over WAPA's Lack of Transparency in \$45 Million Debt Settlement With VITOL

WAPA / **Published On July 11, 2023 06:34 AM /**

Staff Consortium **July 11, 2023**

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In what the Office of Senator Kenneth Gittens described as a clear breach of legal requirements, the V.I. Water & Power Authority has once again neglected to provide a monthly status report regarding its attempts to regain government funds used for its substantial debts to VITOL.

VITOL, the company engaged to undertake WAPA's costly propane conversion, initially projected the endeavor to be around \$87 million. However, the final cost exceeded \$200 million. In response, Act No. 8701 was enacted, authorizing the government to establish up to a \$100 million line of credit to start paying off WAPA's ballooning debt. This Act also necessitates WAPA to provide monthly updates on the progress of its application to the federal government to cover these debts. These updates are due on the final day of each month.

However, as Sen. Gittens stated on Monday, "The report has not been received and I am disappointed." He further mentioned that a similar delay occurred in the previous month. "We did not get a status report until I called for it publicly."

In an attempt to prevent a threatened fuel supply cutoff by VITOL, legislators authorized a line of credit for the government on April 14, permitting a \$45 million payment to the company. This bill was amended to establish a degree of accountability, specifically to ensure WAPA was vigorously pursuing federal reimbursement for its debt to VITOL.

Despite repeated requests, WAPA has failed to provide a copy of the settlement agreement with VITOL, according to Mr. Gittens, who did not support the borrowing bill. WAPA has claimed some settlement provisions as "confidential", an assertion that Mr. Gittens finds unacceptable. "The people of the Virgin Islands are essentially paying off VITOL for WAPA. We need both this information and the required status report from WAPA," he said.