GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 28, 2022
Press Contact
Richard Motta
340-474-2399
www.vi.gov
richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov



Bureau of Internal Revenue Issuing Another $25 Million in Income Tax Refunds

Latest distribution includes 2020 refunds due to Virgin Islanders as Bryan-Roach Administration remains on track to fulfill promise of bringing Income Tax refunds current

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During Monday's weekly briefing, Government House Communications Director Richard Motta Jr. announced that the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) is distributing another $25 million in income tax refunds, which includes refunds from tax year 2020.

This latest issuance addresses 2019 and prior year refunds that have been filed on time and are not under audit or otherwise contain any errors — and it also includes approximately 1,431 refunds for tax year 2020 that were filed on or before February 12, 2021.

To date, the Bryan-Roach Administration has paid off several years of income taxes that had been in arrears, and the Administration has budgeted for the distribution of quarterly refunds totaling $25 million for Fiscal Year 2022.

"With this latest payout, this is the closest the Virgin Islands Government has ever been to paying out refunds to taxpayers in the same year their income tax returns were due," Director Motta said. "It was the plan of Governor Bryan and Lieutenant Governor Roach for the Bryan-Roach Administration to accomplish this feat, but more importantly a testament to the hardworking personnel at the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Department of Finance and leadership of Director Joel Lee and Commissioner Bosede Bruce."

2022 Spring Revenue Estimating Conference
Director Motta said the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is preparing to send down the FY2023 and FY2024 Executive Budgets to the Legislature and in as part of its preparations, OMB held its 2022 Spring Revenue Estimating Conference on Friday, March 25.

As part of the conference, the Government of the Virgin Islands' (GVI) revenue-generating agencies are required to report their financial forecasts.

Among the highlights at the 2022 Revenue Estimating Conference were that:

- Hotel revenues are up 75%.
- 1st Quarter 2022 visitors are almost double the same period in 2021.
- Unemployment hits lowest level in years at 7.9%;
- The restart of the Limetree Bay refinery and the reopening of the Marriott are expected to provide a major additional boost to Government finances.

According to presentations from 21 revenue generating GVI agencies, autonomous entities and, for the first time the Chambers of Commerce from both districts, the financial outlook for the U.S. Virgin Islands is stable and growing, with revenues on par with, or better than, pre-COVID levels.

Bolstering the projections for positive revenue increases, which are forecast to trend into Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024 is:

- The Territory's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remains stronger than that of the average of most states and territories in the aftermath of the pandemic.
- Tourism has rebounded strongly, with air arrivals and hotel taxes eclipsing pre-COVID levels.
- More than 200 upcoming private sector and GVI capital projects are forecast to substantially boost government revenues in Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024.

"Edibles" Education Initiative
Assistant Health Commissioner Dr. Nicole Craigwell-Syms announced the launch of a new initiative coordinated through the Department of Health, Department of Education and V.I. Police Department to students, parents and the community about the dangers of ingesting unregulated "edibles," which are foods and candies infused with THC, the active ingredient in marijuana.

Because there is no regulation governing the manufacture of edibles, students can be especially susceptible to getting sick from overuse, or improper use of them.

Edibles often are not marked clearly as to their potency and there are no controls in place to regulate how much THC is allowable. People who ingest edibles can become ill from eating too much of an edible product, which typically are not intended to be fully eaten at one time.

"The reality is that students of all ages have access to cannabis-infused cookies, brownies, candies, etc., which means parent/guardian conversations must shift. These conversations need to be as open as possible on these topics – without ramifications," Dr. Craigwell-Syms said.

Dr. Syms said the intent of the edibles task force initiatives to address edibles use in schools is to proactively provide more education about the risks and dangers of using unregulated edibles to students, their parents and the entire community.

St. Thomas Administrator's Abandoned Vehicle Task Force
Director Motta also informed the St. Thomas-Water Island community of a temporary halt in the operations of the abandoned vehicle task force on those islands until May.

Under some emergency situations, vehicles still will be tagged and removed during the temporary halt to the abandoned vehicle program.

In the interim, residents still can contact the St. Thomas-Water Island Administrator's office at 340-693-4350 if they have an abandoned vehicle or need one removed so that arrangements can be made to have that vehicle removed when the task force resumes operations.

COVID-19 cases as of March 28
- 1.76% seven-day positivity rate
- Currently tracking 40 active cases (28 STX; 11 STT; 1 STJ).
- 110 fatalities.
- There are no COVID-19 patients hospitalized at Luis Hospital on St. Croix or at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

Free Vaccinations
Free vaccinations are available in both districts at the Community Vaccination Centers at the Charles Harwood Complex on St. Croix and at Schneider Hospital on St. Thomas:
- St. Croix (ages 5 and older) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday.
- St. Thomas (ages 12 and older) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday.
- Pediatric vaccinations for children ages 5 to 11 on St. Thomas are available by appointment from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays at the Maternal Child Health Center at Schneider Hospital. Call 340-777-8227 to make an appointment. Please bring IDs for the child and parent or guardian, as well as a copy of the child's birth certificate.

Pop-Up Vaccinations
As of March 31, 2022, the pop-up vaccination program will be discontinued on St. Croix and St. Thomas.

This includes the locations at The Market (formerly Plaza Extra West) and the Farmers Market at the Agriculture Fairgrounds on St. Croix and the Cost-U-Less parking lot on St. Thomas.

On St. John, vaccinations will remain available for all age groups from 1 to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays at the V.I. Port Authority gravel parking lot.

COVID-19 Testing
The Department of Health is offering testing for people with COVID-like symptoms or who suspect they were exposed from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. by appointment.

Testing on St. John is available from noon to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays at the V.I. Port Authority gravel lot.

Pre-register for an appointment at covid19.usvi.care/testing.

More COVID-19 information
The hours for the Department of Health hotlines will change beginning March 2 to 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays-Fridays. Anyone who thinks they may have contracted COVID-19 can call the Epidemiology hotline at 340-712-6299 (STX) or 340-776-1519 (STT-STJ). For more information, visit covid19usvi.com.

For information about the COVID-19 vaccines or to schedule an appointment to get vaccinated, call the VITEMA hotline Mondays-Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 340-777-VACS (8227).

Vaccination appointments also can be scheduled online at covid19usvi.com/vaccines. The Department of Health will bring the COVID-19 vaccine to children and adults who are homebound.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory's people, infrastructure and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov

###