GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 20, 2021
Press Contact
Richard Motta Jr.
340-474-2399
www.vi.gov
richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov



Governor Bryan to Hold Third Community Business Forum

Free Two-Hour Online Session Will Focus on COVID Financial Relief and Business Advice for Local Small Businesses

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Governor Albert Bryan Jr. will hold the third session of the USVI Community Business Forum series focusing on connecting businesses to opportunities for financial relief provided through President Joe Biden's American Rescue Plan and business advisory services available through local economic-related agencies.

Bouncing off the successes of Parts I and II, Part III of the USVI Community Business Forum series will be held virtually via Zoom from 9 to 11 a.m., on Wednesday, May 26, 2021. The forum will also be streamed live on the Government House Facebook page, Facebook.com/GovernmentHouseUSVI. Business owners and those interested in starting a business are encouraged to register for the forum by visiting www.vi.gov/cbf/. For more information call 340-774-0001. The Community Business Forum is free.

The agenda includes presentations from the University of the Virgin Islands' Business School, the VI Small Business Development Center, the US Small Business Administration, the VI Economic Development Authority and UVI's Research and Technology Park.

"All of us know and have felt how adversely the pandemic has impacted our local businesses," said David Bornn, Chief Legal Counsel for the Office of the Governor and facilitator for the Forum. "The American Rescue Plan provides significant and tangible support to help businesses regain their footing and to strive forward. It's important that our business owners know and understand what is available to help them rebuild, and how to access it."

The American Rescue Plan provides new funding for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) – originally introduced in the CARES Act – this time in the form of grants instead of loans. It also expands the PPP to include eligibility for more types of non-profits and introduces the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF). The RRF provides $28.6 billion in grants to restaurants and bars – among the hardest hit businesses in the pandemic – as well as to caterers, food trucks and companies that provide live performances.

The Business Forum will also provide information on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and the Homeowner Assistance Program (HAP) offered through the VI Housing Finance Authority. The ERAP helps individuals and families who have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic keep up on their rent and remain in their homes. The HAP assists homeowners behind on their mortgage and utility payments avoid foreclosure and eviction.

“The USVI Community Business Forum is working in tandem with our efforts to reach herd immunity and get to a new COVID normal,” Governor Bryan said. “This is essential because there is no option for fully reopening our Territory without our businesses being able to fully reopen their doors, particularly as we prepare for the return of cruise ships to both St. Thomas and St. Croix, possibly as early as this summer.”

“I encourage all businesses owners, landlords and homeowners to attend the forum, join the conversation and give their input,” he said.

The CBF series is an initiative of the Office of the Governor, the V.I. Economic Development Authority and the V.I. Department of Tourism to provide business owners with the tools and resources they need to adapt, innovate and embrace technology to rebuild the VI economy.

For more information about the USVI Community Business Forum, materials presented in previous sessions or to register, visit www.vi.gov/cbf.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is committed to transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring the disaster recovery is completed as quickly as possible.

###