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Press Contact
Richard Motta
340-474-2399
www.vi.gov
www.richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov



Governor Bryan Announces 54th COVID Death

Governor also sets aside $1 million for reward money to residents who provide information about violent crimes in the Territory

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – During the Government House weekly press briefing on Monday, August 30, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. announced the 54th death from COVID-19 – that of a 61-year-old woman from St. Thomas – and once again urged Virgin Islanders to get vaccinated to help stop the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant of the virus.

"I pray for God's grace and mercy for our residents fighting their best against this virus in our hospitals. I pray for God's protection over our doctors, nurses and healthcare workers, who tirelessly and selflessly work around the clock to provide treatment and save as many lives as possible," Governor Bryan said in offering condolences to the woman's family and friends. "Tregenza and I urge you to continue doing things that can prevent you from becoming infected and to take advantage of the vaccines that can reduce the severity of your illness and prevent your untimely death."

In-person learning resuming
The Governor said the Virgin Islands Department of Education is set to resume in-person learning for Pre-K through 3rd grade, C-TEC and special education students in the Territory's public schools beginning Tuesday, September 7, 2021, and that returning students to the classroom is of the utmost priority.

Students in 4th through 12th grades will continue to learn virtually.

"As a parent, I often think of the challenges that our parents are facing today. Single moms and dads that have to work and figure out how to ensure that their children get educated at home while they have to go to work. Equally

as troubling is the infectiousness of the Delta variant and its proliferation among children," Governor Bryan said. "I do not want our children to be unnecessarily exposed. I think about the long lasting effect that this will have on their educational growth. We have to move forward as this virus doesn't seem to be going anywhere soon, but forward must be with the utmost concern with the health and safety of our children and educational staff first."

The Governor also said that the "No VI Child Goes Hungry" feeding initiative continues Territory-wide. Parents and guardians of students engaged in virtual learning can pick up breakfast and lunch between 9 and 11 a.m. Mondays-Fridays, while supplies last.

Students attending classes in-person will be provided meals at the school.

Vaccination Lottery winners
The winners for the August 20 drawings for $100,000 in the Vax-to-Win Lottery are:

- Jarell O'Connor on St. Croix
- Segunda Freylinger in the St. Thomas-St. John District

The $50,000 surplus from the August 6 drawing will be put into a drawing for five residents to win $10,000 each, and the results will be announced next week.

Anyone 12 and older is eligible to receive the vaccine. Please make sure to have a parent or guardian accompany any minor wishing to get vaccinated and must bring an ID for both the minor and the parent or guardian.

Anyone who thinks they may have contracted COVID-19 can call the Epidemiology hotline at 340-712-6299 or 340-776-1519. 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.

Residents can pre-register for testing online at www.covid19usvi.com/testing and free vaccines are available at the pop-up testing sites.

Crime Stoppers Initiative
Governor Bryan also announced he has put aside $1 million to encourage residents to provide information about violent crimes in the Territory. Going forward, a $50,000 reward will be offered for information that leads to the arrest of a homicide suspect, and a $25,000 reward will be given for information that leads to the arrest of an armed robbery suspect.

"Each life, regardless of how it was lived, within the law or outside the lines of our society, is priceless. We, as a society, have to work together to bring these killers to justice," Governor Bryan said, noting that gun violence has increased 40 percent nationwide since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. "I know the fear and trepidation one faces to come forward and the reality of living in a small community. We have decided to support those that find the courage to come forward and help save our society."

Income Tax Refunds
Governor Bryan also announced that the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Department of Finance will issue approximately $10 million dollars in past due income tax refunds this week.

This issuance of refunds should address all of the currently pending 2018 returns, anything prior to tax year 2018 and the 2019 returns that were filed during the first two months of last year.

Washington Trip
Governor Bryan also provided some details about his trip to Washington, D.C., last week to lobby on behalf of the Territory through a number of meetings with members of Congress.

Among the priorities of the Governor's trip were meetings about increasing the amount of highway funding that is allotted to the U.S. Virgin Islands, which currently stands at about $16 million per year for the past 30 years.

Governor Bryan also lobbied for an extension to avoid the "Medicaid Cliff," which will cut funding to the Territory, affecting thousands of Virgin Islanders, and go into effect this fall,

The Governor also met with U.S. Treasury officials to discuss policies that will benefit be of greater benefit to the Territory's tax incentive programs.

COVID-19 cases as of August 28

- 2.76% seven-day positivity rate
- Currently tracking 269 active cases (101 STX; 152 STT; 16 STJ).
- 167,344 individuals tested to date.
- 161,496 people tested negative.
- 5,848 individuals tested positive.
- 5,526 individuals have recovered.
- 54 fatalities.
- Since confirming the presence of the Delta variant in the Territory, 21 people have died from COVID-19.
- There are 5 COVID-19 patients hospitalized, with all 5 on ventilators, at Juan F. Luis Medical Center on St. Croix.
- There are 10 COVID-19 patients hospitalized, with 4 on ventilators, at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is committed to transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov

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