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Governor Bryan, Congresswoman Plaskett Meet with FEMA To Discuss Bipartisan Budget Act, Progress Of Recovery Projects

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Governor Albert Bryan Jr., Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, Office of Disaster Recovery Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien, and senior Bryan-Roach Administration officials met Tuesday with FEMA's Region 2 Acting Administrator Chad Gorman and his team regarding the status of recovery projects throughout the Territory that resulted from Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The daylong session centered on how the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is applying the mandates of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (BBA) regarding federal assistance for the U.S. Virgin Islands' recovery from the devastation of the 2017 storms.



The meeting focused on negotiations on the cost estimates to repair or replace several storm damaged structures to include schools, healthcare facilities, roads, and sewer infrastructure.

Discussions included the appropriate cost escalation factors to reflect current construction costs in the Virgin Islands, the formula utilized to determine whether the replacement of a structure is more prudent than repairs, and how does rebuilding to industry standards versus simply repairing storm-related damages affect the scope of work for the affected projects.

Governor Bryan hosted the meeting from Government House on St. Croix and virtually with Congressional staffers in Washington, D.C., to accomplish a number of goals:

- Getting clear guidance on implementation of the BBA and supplemental provisions for USVI projects.
- Achieving a clearer understanding of road eligibility determination.
- Reaching agreement on solutions for the fair application of cost factors.
- Reaching agreement on timelines and extensions for fixed cost offers.
- Finding resolutions to lingering issues that are affecting progress of the recovery.

"I am grateful for Regional Administrator Chad Gorman and the FEMA delegation agreeing to spend the day with us to work out some of the technical issues affecting several important recovery projects," Governor Bryan said. "Delegate Plaskett and I were able to make significant progress in ensuring FEMA understands that the intent of Congress in passing the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 was to allow the Territory to not only recover from the storms, but to build back better in a resilient and sustainable fashion. I believe we are all on the same page following this discussion."



Office of Disaster Recovery Director Adrienne Williams-Octalien

Congresswoman Plaskett thanked Governor Bryan for calling the meeting and said she and her team are pleased to have been a part of these important discussions that she hopes will facilitate a clear understanding of how the disaster recovery projects will move forward.

"It's been unfortunate that to date we have not seen the high rate of FEMA's approval of projects and the determinations of what will be repaired and what will be replaced," Congresswoman Plaskett said. "Today, FEMA committed to making these determinations expeditiously and in accordance with the provisions laid out in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018.

"Congress purposefully designed specific law for the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico to create resilience. Our office, the Office of Disaster Recovery, and the Bryan-Roach Administration will work together to ensure that the proposed timelines are met," the Delegate said. "So much of what we are working to do here in the Virgin Islands falls directly within President Biden's commitment to make sure that every community is not only resilient but has a foundation for the community's success."



FEMA's Assistant Administrator, Recovery Directorate Keith Turi

Governor Bryan also thanked FEMA's Assistant Administrator, Recovery Directorate Keith Turi and Recovery Director Kristen Hodge, of FEMA's USVI Joint Recovery Office for facilitating Tuesday's discussions.

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

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