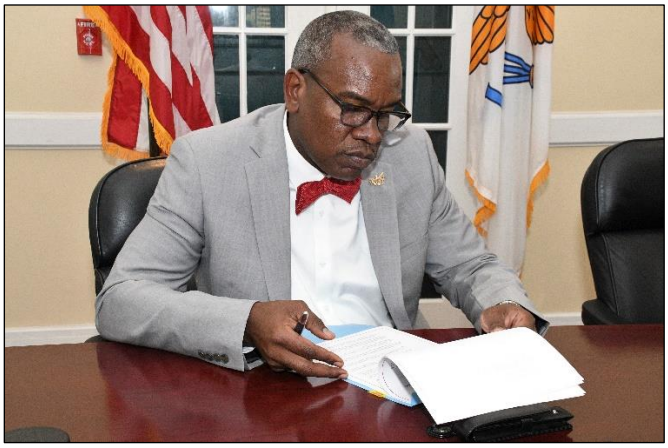
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Governor Bryan Takes Action on Legislation

Governor signs measures that enable repayment of the 8% wages withheld from Government employees in 2011 and create the Virgin Islands Timeshare Act

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – Governor Albert Bryan Jr. last week took action on legislation sent up by the 34th Legislature after its session on August 3, 2021, and signed 13 bills, including the measure enabling repayment of the 8% wages withheld from Government employees in 2011, the creation of the Virgin Islands Timeshare Act and a bill extending the COVID-19 State of Emergency to January 10, 2022.

Lt. Governor Tregenza A. Roach Esq., as Acting Governor, also sent a letter on Friday to Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory acknowledging the Legislature's override of vetoes on Bill No. 34-0021 and Bill No. 34-0026.

Bill 34-0021, now Act 8471, sets the Virgin Islands Public Services Commission (PSC) as a semiautonomous agency; mandates the regulation of the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority by the PSC; and authorizes the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority to hire a turnaround management company. Bill 34-0026, now Act 8472, relates to the makeup and the number of members of the WAPA Governing Board.

Regarding Bill No. 34-0077, which enables repayment of the 8% wages, Governor Bryan wrote in his transmittal letter to Senate Frett-Gregory: "I am most pleased that the Legislature picked up the effort set forth in my State of Territory Address and have approved Bill No. 34-0077, an Act amending Act No. 8365, the Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget, and Act No. 8348, the Legislature's Fiscal Year 2021 Budget, to restore the 8% reduction in salaries to the employees of the Government of the Virgin Islands."

However, the Governor also noted that the bill still requires amendments needed for the inclusion of all employees affected by the salary reduction provided by Act No. 7261; appropriation of additional funds to cover these additional employees; and closure and termination of the VIESA Contingency Reserve Fund established by Act No. 7987 and which presently has no monies in it but has no sunset date.

The Governor also thanked the 34th Legislature for working with the Bryan-Roach Administration on passage of Bill No. 34-0071, which establishes the Virgin Islands Timeshare Act.

"After several prior efforts to implement a Code specifically related to Timeshare sales, management, operations, and property taxation were unsuccessful, we are pleased that this collaborative effort between the Executive and the Legislative branches, and the Timeshare Industry has completed the task," Governor Bryan wrote in his transmittal letter.

Governor Bryan also said he is pleased to sign into law Bill No. 34-0060 to establish the First-Time Homebuyers Program Act but noted that the 34th Legislature needs to add two crucial amendments to the bill.

"The first is found in Title 21 section 10(2)(c) to set a time frame within which to repay the construction loans in the event that the construction is not completed or delayed and extended over many years," Governor Bryan wrote in his transmittal letter. "The second is found at Title 21 section 9(a)(3) where the cap on home improvement loans was removed. Unless it was the intent of the Thirty-Fourth Legislature to not place a cap on home improvement loans, amendment of this section is much needed."

Other bills that Governor Bryan signed into law include:

- **Bill No. 34-0095,** which extends the COVID-19 State of Emergency to January 10, 2022.
- **Bill No. 34-0066,** which allows the Office of the Lt. Governor to foreclose on properties for which the property taxes and public sewer fees are delinquent.
- **Bill No. 34-0076,** which grants seniors and the terminally ill preference in civil actions and expediting trials.
- **Bill No. 34-0058,** which establishes the Virgin Islands Catalyst Fund to provide loans to eligible entities to promote economic resiliency, and to support the retention or creation of jobs.
- **Bill No. 34-0037,** which relates to decedents' estates and payment of certain debts without administration to increase the aggregate amount that a surviving spouse and family may receive from debtors upon the death of the decedent-creditor.
- **Bill No. 34-0034,** which enacts the Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act, to provide for the management of electronic legal to guarantee the trustworthiness of and continuing access to governmental legal material.
- **Bill No. 34-0030,** which divests the jurisdiction of the Virgin Islands Superior Court for consenting to the marriage of a child under the age of 18.
- **Bill No. 34-0031** and **Bill No. 34-0032,** two Acts amending the Virgin Islands Code to require the person convicted of child abuse or child neglect to attend counseling in addition to imprisonment or fine.
- **Bill No. 34-0004,** relating to the payment of fuel taxes to change the time for remittance of the tax to the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

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