GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 6, 2021
Press Contact
Richard Motta Jr.
340-474-2399
www.vi.gov
richard.mottajr@go.vi.gov



Governor Albert Bryan Jr. (center) and V.I. Port Authority Executive Director Carlton Dowe welcome Capt. Kate McCue of the Celebrity Edge cruise ship.

Governor Bryan Welcomes First Cruise Ship to USVI in 15 Months

Governor Also Announces Nomination of LEPC Director Ray Martinez
To Replace Trevor Velinor as V.I. Police Commissioner

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During the weekly Government House briefing, which took place on St. Thomas on Tuesday, July 6, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. announced the arrival of the first cruise ship to visit the Territory since the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the cruise industry in the United States.

The Celebrity Edge docked at the Austin "Babe" Monsanto Marine Terminal on St. Thomas at 11 a.m. Tuesday, and additional cruise ship calls are expected throughout the summer to both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

The ship had 1,500 passengers and 700 crew members and had a 97 percent vaccination rate.

"While this is welcome news to our vendors, taxi drivers and local small businesses who depend on the tourist traffic, our success depends on how well we each adhere to our COVID policies and the health guidelines that are put before us and how many of us are vaccinated against the virus," Governor Bryan said.

Although the Vendors Plaza was not open for Tuesday's cruise ship call, DLCA Commissioner Richard Evangelista said he is working with the Virgin Islands Department of Health to create a COVID-safe environment for the next cruise ship arrival.

Police Commissioner nominee
Governor Bryan also announced his nomination of Law Enforcement Planning Commission (LEPC) Director Ray Martinez to replace Commissioner Trevor Velinor, who is retiring on July 13 to spend time with his family after a long and successful law enforcement career, including decades working for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank Commissioner Velinor for his service at the helm of the VIPD and for his leadership in our efforts to remove illegal firearms from our streets and apprehend violent criminal offenders," Governor Bryan said. "I understood the importance of building a stronger relationship with our federal law enforcement partners and the need to introduce the ATF culture and resources as we continue to fight gun violence. Commissioner Velinor brought that to our Virgin Islands Police Department and while he says he's retiring; law enforcement is in his blood, so I won't be surprised if we see him in some other capacity in the near future."

Commissioner Nominee Martinez also has a long and distinguished career with the V.I. Police Department and was appointed to the LEPC by Governor Bryan when the Bryan-Roach Administration took office.

Mr. Martinez, a 12-year employee of the Virgin Islands Police Department, served as that department's Director of Internal Affairs and Labor Relations Manager and as Director of Intelligence, during which time he developed the Criminal Intelligence Unit and its policies and procedures.

He has a Bachelor of Science degree in International and Comparative Criminal Justice from Kaplan University and a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice and Criminology from the University of Cincinnati. He also is a graduate of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's Criminal Investigation Training Program.

The incoming commissioner will have the benefit of a closed-circuit surveillance network that currently is being deployed to help the VIPD combat crime.

"This includes Shot Spotter and strategically placed cameras. The first set of cameras are now operable, and we are working towards fully installing and energizing a total of 280 in this first phase," the Governor said.

Income Tax refunds
Governor Bryan also announced that the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Department of Finance are mailing a second batch of income tax refund checks totaling $10 million, which follows the disbursement of $15 million in tax refunds mailed out last week.

These two distributions address most refunds for tax year 2018 and for those who have recently filed their 2016 and 2017 income taxes.

To date, the Bryan-Roach Administration will have issued approximately $156.4 million of income tax refunds since Governor Albert Bryan Jr. took office in January 2019:
- $29.2 in the Fiscal Year 2019 months the Bryan-Roach Administration was in office
- $68.7 million in FY 2020
- $56.4 million in FY 2021

Limetree Bay

Governor Bryan also addressed concerns some members of the community have expressed about the Limetree Bay refinery and the oil released by the refinery in May.

“The refinery has been cleaning affected rooftops, cisterns and properties for those impacted. In some instances, they have agreed to provide compensation to the property owner in lieu of the actual cleaning,” the Governor said. “In all instances, they require the property owner to sign a Release and Settlement Agreement. This agreement should release the refinery of further claims of Bodily Injury and or Property Damage arising from the incident on May 12th.”

Governor Bryan said the agreement and the terms in it were negotiated between the Limetree refinery and the law firms involved in a civil action against the refinery related to this matter. The agreements should not extend a blanket release for any incidents prior to or in the future.

Residents who are presented with a release to sign that appears to hold the refinery harmless beyond May 12 should contact St. Croix Administrator Sammuel Sanes at 340-773-1404.

“We have assurances from Limetree that this is not their intention. The refinery has vowed to continue their efforts to address community concerns even as their operations are currently idled,” Governor Bryan said.

Vax-to-Win lottery
Governor Bryan also reminded residents that they still have time to be entered into the Vax-to-Win lottery, and the first of 10 drawings in each district takes place on Friday, July 9.

“We fell just 5,295 doses short of our goal of having 50,000 Virgin Islanders with at least one dose of the vaccine by July 1,” Governor Bryan said. “Thank you to the 44,705 who went and took their best shot against this virus. I ask that you please encourage those around you to do so as well. Just as a reminder, there is still time to go out and get your vaccine to be eligible for our Vax-to-Win drawing and School-based Special drawing.”

Rules, prizes and other information about the lottery can be found at vaxtowinusvi.com, and the drawing is open only to Virgin Islands residents.

There will be a drawing in each district for 10 consecutive weeks, with a prize of $50,000 for anyone who has received a first dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or a $100,000 prize for individuals whose name is drawn and is fully vaccinated with both doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

There is no need to register for the drawings. Once vaccinated, residents are automatically registered for the drawing, and any winners younger than 18 will have their prize held in escrow in accordance with the rules of the Virgin Islands Lottery until their 18th birthday.

Residents who are eligible to enter the special drawing on August 9 that is open only to school-based professionals also can enter at vaxtowinusvi.com by filling out the form found there. School-based personnel are eligible to win one of three prizes in each district: $25,000 for 1st place; $10,000 for 2nd place; or $5,000 for 3rd place.

Registration for the special school-based drawing also can be done by calling 340-777-VACS (8227) or by visiting either of the Public Community Vaccination Centers on St. Thomas and St. Croix or the Administrator's Office on St. John.

Digital Vaccination Records
During Tuesday's briefing, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion announced that the Department of Health's Digital Vaccination Records system is now operational for people who received the vaccine in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"The Digital Vaccination Record will make it easy for individuals to securely share their vaccination status while maintaining their privacy with a growing network of local organizations," Commissioner Encarnacion said. "We're linking it not just to travel but to businesses throughout the Territory, as well, or having activities as we look to safely reopening businesses and resume public events."

Vaccinations administered
- 44,705 first doses (56.3% of eligible population)
- 36,956 persons fully vaccinated (46.6% of eligible population)

Anyone 12 and up 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, call the VITEMA hotline Mondays-Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 340-777-VACS (8227).

Pop-Up testing sites
This week, pop-up testing sites will be at the following locations:
- The V.I. Port Authority Gravel Yard on St. John on Wednesday, July 7, from 1 to 4 p.m.
- Charles Harwood Complex on St. Croix on Thursday, July 8, from 10 a.m. to noon.
- Fort Christian Parking Lot on St. Thomas on Thursday, July 8, from 1 to 3 p.m.

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

COVID-19 cases as of July 3
- 2.94% positivity rate
- Currently tracking 71 active cases (34 STX; 36 STT; 1 STJ).
- 130,945 individuals tested to date.
- 127,029 of those tests were negative.
- 3,916 tests came back positive.
- 3,815 have recovered.
- 32 fatalities.
- Two COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Medical Center on St. Croix.
- Two COVID-19 patients are 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

###