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Renewable Energy, Waiver of Federal Match Requirement Lead Bryan's Priorities at 2023 Interagency Group on Insular Areas Plenary Session

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Governor Albert Bryan Jr highlighted the two key federal priorities of his second term agenda at the Department of Interior's Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA) Plenary Session Wednesday, February 8, in Washington, D.C.

Governor Bryan expressed his gratitude for the support of the Biden Administration in his remarks and noted the administration's passage of a long fought for healthcare provision that would provide access to care for more Virgin Islanders and millions of dollars in savings for the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI).

The Governor noted that the U.S. Virgin Islands led the fight for parity in Medicaid funding to the territories for more than two decades and thanked Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, who also gave remarks at Wednesday's plenary session, for her efforts to move the legislation through Congress.

"In terms of healthcare, our FMAP being raised to 83 percent is a tremendous win for us," Governor Bryan said. "Four years ago, I came to the IGIA and raised issue with things that our Territory has been complaining about for 20 years, and many of those things are now done."

While expressing gratitude to the Biden Administration for its support, the governor also spoke about efforts to increase renewable energy and the federal government's requirement to use local funds to match disaster recovery funds as two remaining areas of concern for the territory.

“We have $12 billion worth of repairs to do and a match requirement that is close to $1 billion dollars, which is almost the exact size of our annual operating budget just to put into scope what a tremendous lift that is,” Governor Bryan said, “And with the stroke of a pen, the Biden Administration and FEMA can wipe that away.”

Governor Bryan added that while every Island nation has energy concerns, the U.S. Virgin Islands has a unique opportunity to stand out as a model for renewable energy use in the United States and as an example of the success of Biden Administration’s investments in clean energy.

“If you look at what we are doing in the U.S. Virgin Islands, within two years we will have 85 megawatts of renewable energy, which is equal to the entire load of the Territory,” the governor said. “Not that we will be completely off of fossil fuels, but we will be in a position where we will have the most renewables, percentagewise, in the United States.”

“The tunnel is dark now and to get there, we need the flexibility and immediacy in our federal dollars allocated through HUD, FEMA and the other federal grant agencies,” Governor Bryan said. “We can do it. We need the advocacy of the Department of Interior to get there.”

“We believe in the president’s message. I ran on stronger than ever, but we can’t be strong unless our individual people are strong, and strong people make strong families who make strong territories,” Governor Bryan said. “I thank the Department of Interior and the Biden Administration for their incredible support and ask that as we go forward, you assist us in accessing the dollars that have already been granted to us so that we can truly make our territories stronger.”

Following the remarks by Governor Bryan and other governors of the U.S. Territories at the meeting, a number of agencies gave presentations on federal infrastructure issues, including:

- Department of Interior
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Energy
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce and Federal Communications Commission

The IGIA allows a forum for the sharing of information and advice from the elected leaders of the U.S. Insular Areas to the leadership of federal agencies and allows for recommendations to the President on the establishment or implementation of federal programs concerning these Insular Areas.

This year’s plenary session focused on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in the Territories.

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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