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Governor Bryan Discusses Infrastructure Challenges Facing USVI At Interagency Group on Insular Affairs Meeting in Washington

Highway and other infrastructure grant funding, waiver of cost share match and workforce challenges among key topics discussed

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — While in Washington, D.C., for the National Governors Association winter meetings, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. joined the other governors from the U.S. territories for a discussion with Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and White House officials on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and its impact in their island territories during the Interagency Group on Insular Affairs (IGIA) 2022 Senior Plenary Session Tuesday.

In his remarks, Governor Bryan asked for assistance from the Department of the Interior in streamlining the requirement processes to receive federal funding, which sometimes delays projects for years, and he requested that the "local match" requirements be waived for the Territory.

"There are several ways the federal government can assist us with implementation of federally funded projects. As I have explained, local match requirements present formidable obstacles to our ability to timely access appropriated funds," Governor Bryan said. "I understand the agencies' desire for the Territory to have 'skin in

the game,' but where that desire effectively forecloses the Territory's ability to use critically needed federal funds, it contravenes the will of Congress."



Governor Albert Bryan Jr. stands with U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland (red jacket), Julie Chavez Rodriguez, Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (blue dress) and representatives of all the U.S. territories during Tuesday's Interagency Group on Insular Affairs Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Federal representatives attending the IGIA Plenary included:

- U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland
- Keone Nakoa, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Insular and International Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior
- Julie Chavez Rodriquez, Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

The Governor also gave an update on the status of infrastructure sectors in the Territory.

"For decades, the Territorial highways have been systematically underfunded by the federal government. Our airports are operating at capacities beyond their design parameters and lack basic conveniences like covered jetways and high-speed wireless internet," Governor Bryan said during his presentation.

"Our electrical grid offers the most expensive electricity in the United States but remains so unreliable that the largest businesses prefer to generate their own, depriving our water and power authority of its largest customers," the Governor said. "Our public transportation is inadequate to the unique needs of a Territory whose population is spread across three major islands, the two largest of which are connected only by commercial aircraft that a large majority of our citizens cannot afford to fly. This is not how the American government should treat an American territory, or the Americans who live there."

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

- Interior
- Transportation
- Energy

- Commerce
- Agriculture
- Environmental Protection Agency

On Wednesday, Governor Bryan has meetings scheduled with Housing and Urban Development Secretary Adrianne Todman; House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Gregory Meeks of New York; Senator Mike Crapo of Idaho; Rep. Bryan Steil of Wisconsin and a ranking member of the Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth; and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York.

On Monday, Governor Bryan met with representatives of the U.S. Departments of Transportation, Commerce, Interior, Health and Human Services, Labor, Energy, Agriculture and State and the Environmental Protection Agency.

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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