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Bryan Says Trump Has a Willing Partner in the USVI, Highlights St. Croix Refinery's \$400M Potential and Praises Administration for Rum Cover-Over Victory

Bryan told federal officials the USVI is vital to national security, citing the Port Hamilton refinery's \$400M potential and 400 jobs, urging federal partnerships on energy and healthcare while praising the Trump administration's rum cover-over extension.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. joined federal and territorial leaders this week at the U.S. Department of the Interior's Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA) 2025 Mid-Year Plenary Session, where he pressed for deeper collaboration on energy, healthcare equity, and economic development.

Bryan noted the Virgin Islands' role as a strategic gateway to the continental United States, stressing that reliable and affordable energy is not only critical for residents but also tied directly to national defense. "President Trump has a willing partner in the U.S. Virgin Islands," he said. "Our economic and energy stability go hand in hand with America's national security."

The governor pointed to the Port Hamilton refinery on St. Croix as central to that vision. Though currently idle, Bryan said the facility could generate over \$400 million annually, contribute \$45 million in revenue to the government, and create more than 400 jobs. "With the right federal partnership, Port Hamilton can be more than a refinery," he said. "It can become a model for clean and innovative energy development that powers growth here at home and strengthens America's energy supply."

Bryan also emphasized that reopening and modernizing Port Hamilton would help stabilize the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority, reducing costs and improving reliability for residents. He further called on federal partners to support the full rollout of the Solar for All initiative, which will provide solar panels and battery storage to over 4,300 households, add 21 megawatts of solar capacity, and 55 megawatts of storage across the territory. "One thing we have in abundance in the Virgin Islands is sunshine," Bryan said. "This resource can lower costs for families and make our energy system more reliable. We must make sure these funds are put to work where they are needed most."

Healthcare equity was another priority. Bryan urged an end to Medicaid caps and outdated Medicare reimbursement schedules that he said unfairly penalize Virgin Islanders. He noted that hospitals are still operating under cost schedules frozen for more than 40 years. He also pushed for greater collaboration among territories to modernize health information technology, expand electronic medical records, and lower costs through shared investments. "Together, the territories can affordably and sustainably implement best-in-class technologies to improve healthcare delivery and align with federal mandates," he said.

The governor applauded the Trump administration and the 119th Congress for approving the permanent extension of the rum cover-over, calling it a major victory for the Virgin Islands economy. He urged continued partnerships to achieve similar results in energy, infrastructure, and healthcare. "When America invests in its territories, it invests in its own security and prosperity," Bryan said. "The Virgin Islands is ready to do our part."

Bryan closed by reaffirming his commitment to advocate for Virgin Islanders. "Our territory depends on the commitment of this group and on your willingness to champion our cause in the spaces where our voices are not always heard or invited," he said. "I look forward to continuing our partnership in building a greater United States Virgin Islands as part of a greater United States of America."