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Gittens Demands Answers on Delayed WAPA Audit as Power Outages Disrupt Government Services Across St. Thomas

Senator Kenneth Gittens requested an immediate update on WAPA's long-delayed forensic audit, while Senator Ray Fonseca called for federal intervention as outages disrupted waste management, health services, government offices and the Legislature.

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Three Wartsila engines at WAPA's Randolph Harley Power Plant, part of the generation fleet involved in restoration efforts as ongoing power disruptions continue affecting the St. Thomas-St. John District.

Senator Kenneth Gittens is demanding answers on the long-delayed forensic financial audit of the V.I. Water and Power Authority as extended power outages continued disrupting public services, government operations and business activity across the St. Thomas-St. John District on Monday.

In a press release, Mr. Gittens said he has “formally requested an immediate status update from the Office of the Virgin Islands Inspector General regarding the long-awaited forensic financial audit.”

Act 8731 appropriated \$250,000 for an independent forensic audit of WAPA. However, according to Senator Gittens, “three years after the enactment of the law, the audit has yet to be completed and delivered to the Legislature.”

Mr. Gittens expressed frustration over the situation, a sentiment seemingly shared by the general public as outages continued affecting daily life and government services. He wrote that he “vehemently disagreed with WAPA’s statements today that the current situation in the St. Thomas-St. John district was “not an emergency”.”

In correspondence to Inspector General Delia Thomas, Senator Gittens requested “a detailed status report on the audit, an explanation of any factors contributing to delays, an estimate of the remaining work, and an anticipated timeline for completion.”

Senator Ray Fonseca, chair of the Committee on Health, Hospitals, and Human Services, also escalated pressure on WAPA, issuing a press release calling for federal intervention. In it, Senator Fonseca encouraged his colleagues to “pass his resolution petitioning the United States Congress to authorize federal oversight and management of the daily operations of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA).”

According to the release, “Senator Fonseca believes that if Congress were to create a special intervention framework for WAPA, several strong federal options exist that could bring immediate and lasting relief to Virgin Islands residents.”

The lawmakers’ statements came as a massive power outage on St. Thomas effectively brought business operations and several government services to a halt on Monday, including critical public services and a Legislative update on important healthcare services.

In a press release issued Monday morning, the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority informed the public that its administrative office on St. Thomas, along with the Bovoni Scalehouse and Bovoni Landfill, “will be closed for the remainder of today...due to extended power outages affecting the area.”

The Department of Health was also forced to delay the start time for a health fair as a direct consequence of the outages. The power disruption also prompted Acting Governor Tregenza Roach to postpone the opening of all government offices in the St. Thomas-St. John District to 12 p.m. Monday.

The absence of reliable electricity affected the Legislature as well. At 12:49 p.m., a notice was issued stating that the Capitol Building would remain closed “until power is restored.” A meeting of the Committee on Health, Hospitals, and Human Services was postponed to Thursday, June 11th.

The disruptions extended beyond public service interruptions and lawmakers’ demands for action at WAPA. Businesses and residents across the St. Thomas-St. John District were again forced to absorb the consequences of unreliable electricity. While the full economic impact of the outages

may never be quantified, Monday's disruptions underscored how deeply WAPA's instability can affect government operations, public health services, waste management, legislative work and the broader economy.

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