



**THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS**  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Bryan's Statement From March 19 Press Conference**

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS—The following is a transcript of Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s statement at the Thursday, March 19, press conference on the Territory's response to the COVID-19 virus:

Good Day,

I want to begin today, as I did Monday by thanking each of you for continuing to follow the CDC and Department of Health's guidance on how to protect yourselves, your loved ones, and our community against the spread of the coronavirus.

It is very heartening to see the community's response to the virus and efforts to keep our families and neighbors safe. During this crisis, our priorities are to contain the virus as much as possible and to isolate and keep our most vulnerable population safe— that being our seniors and individuals with compromised immune systems.

As a government, we are striving to keep you as informed as possible with the latest information as soon as we get it.

Yesterday afternoon, the Department of Health received confirmation from the Center for Disease Control that a third person had tested positive for COVID-19 coronavirus in our territory.

Like the previous two cases, that individual remains under quarantine and is expected to recover fully. I ask that you join me in wishing them all a safe and speedy recovery.

### **PUI Update**

We are currently awaiting the results of tests conducted on 21 individuals. We have already received the test results on 11 individuals, 3 of which tested positive, and the remaining 8 tested negative.

At this point, we are testing the most likely people to have contracted the virus either because they have traveled, or we know they have come in contact with persons who may have tested positive. We also continue to contact trace the positive individuals to ensure that we test those with whom they may have come in contact.

### **Mass Gatherings and Large Events**

On Monday, following the CDC's guidance on mass gatherings and large events, we announced restrictions on in-person events consisting of 50 or more people.

Today, as we continue our efforts to stay on the offense in protecting against the spread of this virus in our community, I am announcing that effective Saturday 6 am, we are limiting in-person events to a maximum of 10 individuals. This decree also includes bars and restaurants, which are now prohibited from seating more than ten individuals at any one time. This mandate will be strictly enforced.

We are willing to exempt big box stores such as K-mart, Home Depot, Plaza, Pueblo, and the like, who can maintain adequate social distancing of their customers.

However, any business or commercial establishment seeking an exemption from this requirement is required to contact the Commissioner of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs to discuss a waiver. We are also exempting funerals, but we are asking people other than immediate family to refrain from attending until this crisis is over.

We recommend that memorial services be planned for some point after the state of emergency has been lifted. While we understand that this is very disruptive, we must cooperate to prevent the further spread of this disease in our community.

### **Easter Camping**

In light of this, we are also prohibiting camping on public beaches for the upcoming Easter season. We understand that camping is a longstanding tradition this time of year; however, in the interest of the public's health, we must curtail this practice.

### **Government Operations**

Finally, effective Monday, March 23rd, until Monday, April 6th, or further notice, government services will be restricted to essential services only.

We have directed all commissioners to establish essential versus non-essential employees.

Being that this is much different from a hurricane, employees will be notified by their supervisors who will be required to come to work, who will work from home, or remain at home until April 6th.

At this time, I am ordering a 60-day extension on motor vehicle registration and licenses, renewal of business licensing, and other permits. Online services will remain operational. For benefit services like SNAP, Medicaid, and Medicare, please contact the respective government agency to make arrangements.

Passengers arriving by air have slowed to a trickle, but we still have over 1500 visitors in the territory. There are no requests by my administration to close the airports at this time.

Today we are announcing the escalation of emergency measures to increase the containment of the virus. We will continue to monitor the progress of these measures and expect to increase them if necessary.

We are urging the public to be responsible and comply with the measures in place, so we do not have to impose a curfew. Continue to be diligent and stay informed.

### **Alerts**

Once again, I am asking that all cellphone subscribers sign up for the local alerts on news and information about the coronavirus in the U.S. Virgin Islands by texting COVID19USVI to 888777.

**God Bless you, and God Bless the U.S. Virgin Islands.**

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