



## **The Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands' 2020 Platform Is Being Carried Out by Governor Albert Bryan's Administration**

The Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands' 2020 Platform is below along with key details in which the platform is already being carried out by Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s Administration. For the first time in years, Governor Bryan's agenda, the Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands' platform, and the U.S. federal government's leadership are all in alignment. In 2021, with President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at the helm, we are in an excellent position to advance our goals as Virgin Islanders and as Democrats. During 2021, the party will continue to engage with the community and communicate important information.

### **ENSURING TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP**

- Instituted a government transparency website (<http://transparency.vi.gov/>), which makes public all financial transactions and payments to vendors.
- Implemented and broadcasts Government House weekly press briefings.
- Developed and broadcasts The Press Box.
- Developed and broadcasts Recovery in Focus.
- Developed and broadcasts One Health V.I.
- Governor Albert Bryan, Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach and Cabinet members are regular participants on local radio call in programs.



## REFORMING THE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM FOR LONGEVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Governor Bryan submitted a debt refinancing plan to the Legislature of the Virgin Islands three times and made adjustments along the way. The plan and adjustments pertained to the savings to be generated from the proposed refinancing, expected to have a beneficial economic impact in the territory that continues to be affected by the loss of revenues, the COVID-19 pandemic, Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, and other revenue shortfalls. The administration is committed to working with the Legislature to reform the GERS for longevity and sustainability and looks forward to achieving an agreed-upon plan. Working together and achieving that goal will bring relief, hope, and real security for people of the Virgin Islands.

## PROMOTING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FOR ALL

**The Office of Disaster Recovery's (ODR) overall mission is to Build a Legacy of Resilience by ensuring that projects are funded, executed and in accordance with federal regulations. Programs underway include:**

- In 2021, ODR is tracking over 223 projects with obligated funds, encompassing the repair of parks, government facilities, schools and health facilities, that will provide jobs and stimulate economic activity.
- \$10M is being invested to provide job training and development for recovery projects support utilizing federal disaster funds.
- \$339M of federal funds were circulated in the territory during the past year in support of the recovery. It is anticipated that this amount will multiply with many major projects moving to construction.



- Governor Bryan and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza A. Roach, Esq., were instrumental in the passage of a law that provides free college tuition to students at the University of the Virgin Islands, the only Historically Black College outside of the 48 contiguous states. It is also the only academic institution in the nation that offers free tuition.
- Governor Bryan originally submitted the Cannabis Amendment Bill to the 33rd Legislature in December 2019. The bill was not acted upon. Governor Bryan resubmitted the amended bill to the 34th Legislature in January 2021. The matter is pending. Similar to GERS, Governor Bryan is hopeful that an agreed-upon plan can be brokered to enhance the economy, bringing in urgently needed revenues to the Virgin Islands.

## **ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND NURTURING OUR YOUTH**

### **The Virgin Islands Department of Education has:**

- Increased early childhood opportunities for our youngest learners throughout the territory by expanding preschool services in the St. Croix District and implementing preschool services in the St. Thomas-St. John District. There are now three preschool programs in St. Croix—Pearl B. Larsen PreK-8 School, Claude O. Markoe Elementary School, and Ricardo Richards Elementary School. There is one preschool in St. Thomas at the Yvonne E. Milliner Bowsky Elementary School and one on St. John at Julius E. Sprauve K-8 School. Maintained accreditation for all four senior high schools and celebrated the success of John H. Woodson Jr. High School's 2020 reaccreditation.
- Developed a partnership with John Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth and launched a Gifted and Talented Program at Joseph A. Gomez Elementary School and Addelita Cancryn Intermediate and Junior High School. Forty-five



students in 5th Grade are currently enrolled in the program and will benefit from an enriching experience that will boost their success throughout their educational journey.

**In response to COVID-19:**

- Ensured continuity via a “learn-from-home” model that offers manual and virtual learning for students. Furthermore, to remedy setbacks students have experienced as a result of school closures during the pandemic, the Department offered extended learning opportunities to students during the summer of 2020.
- Developed the “No V.I. Child Goes Hungry” feeding initiative that has, to date, provided more than 580,000 nutritious meals to students since school buildings closed in March 2020.
- Planned and executed the territory’s first virtual graduations for our four senior high schools in May 2020. As a result, the class of 2020 was properly recognized for its achievements and received the all-important credentials to take advantage of post-secondary educational opportunities. Moreover, we are proud to report an increase in the graduation rate from 62.6% in 2019 to 70.9% in 2020—a 8.3% increase.
- Used the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to level the technological playing field for students by providing them with the tools to prepare them to learn, work, and thrive in the 21st century. Twelve thousand (12,000) Chromebooks were purchased to equip every public school student with a device for learning.

**Increased efforts to ensure the well-being and mental health of our students by:**

- Partnering with public and private mental health service providers for students in crisis who require clinical or specialized intervention.





- Coaching families on how best to implement useful tips and strategies to cope with and balance the stress of the pandemic.
- Providing academic, college/career, and social/emotional guidance, focusing on students' social and emotional learning.
- Providing support to parents and students struggling with various personal and school-related issues.

**Prior to COVID-19:**

- Partnered with the Virgin Islands Police Department and successfully acquired a Teens and Police Service Academy Grant (TAPS), aimed at crime prevention and improving school safety. The grant will be used to address students' maladaptive behaviors, socially deviant behaviors, and criminal acts through implementation of stronger, more robust programs to deter these behaviors and create an environment more conducive to teaching and learning.

**Building new public schools:**

- Developed a "facilities master plan" that will guide the new construction or modernization of resilient schools in the territory.
- Served as part of the V.I. Government's team that acquired the land swap with National Park Services to build the first PreK-12 school on the island of St. John.
- Negotiated and acquired upwards of \$142.2 million, to date, for the rebuilding of the Arthur A. Richards K-8 School.



## DELIVERING AN EQUITABLE 21ST CENTURY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL

### **The Department of Health (DOH) has accomplished the following:**

- Equipped the islands' health facilities with the necessary beds, staff, supplies, and equipment to treat the anticipated influx of patients laid low by COVID.
- Joined with federal agencies, local nonprofits and private entities to distribute call-in numbers, masks, and hand sanitizers to all USVI inhabitants and visitors, further curtailing COVID transmission.
- Conducted continuous outreach with an on-the-ground approach to educating and training community members in public health guidelines to contain the virus.
- Attended Governor Bryan's weekly press conferences, made radio appearances, and broadcast radio PSAs and ads that ran multiple times a day. The soundtrack makes our jingles heard around the territory, with guidelines in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.
- Teamed up with the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation and the Office of Disability Rights on the territory's first "AccessMat," launched at Magens Bay Beach. The brightly colored vinyl mats, along with beach-friendly wheelchairs, give the physically disabled easy access to the water and pave the way for enhancements to come.
- Linked communications efforts on behalf of the COVID-19 vaccine to the flu vaccine campaign, launched in October 2020.
- Joined the President's COVID-19 response, then known as Operation Warp Speed, to ensure that the territory received vaccines at the same time as all other states and territories.





That effort has been successful.

- Approved over 30 providers who have administered 4,500 vaccines and counting.
- Worked with the federal government—principally the HHS, the CDC, and FEMA—to ensure that all data are confirmed and counted.
- Offered educational opportunities to a cross-section of staff via monthly data point tracking.
- Securing A&E firm to begin rebuilding the Charles Harwood Memorial Complex, which will provide state-of-the-art public health services on St. Croix.

## **PROVIDING SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS, INCLUDING HOME OWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**

**The Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority has done the following:**

- Broke ground on the Estate Donoe Redevelopment Project. This is the first phase of a larger effort to replace and reinvent Donoe and the Tutu High Rise.

**Projects underway:**

- Estate Fortuna, St. Thomas: Phase One Infrastructure started for 57 single-family homes.
- Estate Mt. Pleasant, St. Croix: A Request for Proposals has been issued for 13 single family turnkey homes.
- Estate Solitude, St. Croix: A 20 single-family home development is in the design phase.
- Whispering Hills, St. Thomas: Request for Proposals were developed for 8 turnkey single-family homes.



## SAFEGUARDING THE PUBLIC FROM CRIME, TERRORISM AND NATURAL DISASTERS

- The Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD), as the lead agency for Emergency Support Function 13 (ESF-13), provides protection to the territory by integrating territorial peace officers and resources from other governmental agencies to safeguard the public. The combined units patrol communities and protect businesses from threats of terrorism. Monthly meetings with ESF-13 ensures the agencies stay abreast of significant developments in the territory and abroad.
- The Virgin Islands Crime Initiative (VICI) was implemented in October 2019. The focus of the initiative is to reduce violent crime using local and federal agencies to disrupt potential criminal behavior planned by known bad actors. Additionally, the VICI proactively utilizes intelligence and technology to address community concerns. The VICI has recovered illegal firearms and intercepted potential narcotic crimes. The VICI seized 175 illegal firearms in 2019 and 176 in 2020.
- VIPD has specialized operational plans for each district to prepare for and aid the territory during natural disasters. In collaboration with VITEMA, the lead for natural disasters, VIPD along with collaborations from other government agencies provide safety and security to the territory.

## PROTECTING LABOR RIGHTS AND PROVIDING FAIR COMPENSATION

**The Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) continues to be an information resource to the workers of our community in relation to areas of enforcement of fair labor practices.**

- VIDOL provides an unbiased forum to air grievances in wrongful termination cases as well as when a claimant is denied unemployment insurance benefits.





- VIDOL acting on its mission has also entered into a contract to significantly automate the Workers' Compensation Administration claims process in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Division of Occupation, Safety and Health (VIDOSH) and the Department of Finance-Government Insurance Fund.
- The Maximum Weekly Benefit Amount (MWBA) for Unemployment Insurance in the Virgin Islands for benefit year beginning January 1, 2021 is \$677.00 and the Taxable Wage Base (TWB) for employer contributions is \$32,500.00.
- The established Average Weekly Wage for Workers' Compensation based on employment wage statistics from our Bureau of Labor Statistics is \$1,041.41 per week. The maximum benefit amount for Disability Income Benefits has increased from \$617.00 per week or \$123.40 per day to ***\$694.00 per week or \$138.80 per day***. This will affect all injuries that occurred on or about January 1, 2021.

## **PRESERVING AND PROTECTING OUR CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

- Governor Albert Bryan signed the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) updated territorial flood plain regulations, which will increase resilience to flooding impacts and will make the Territory consistent with the National Flood Insurance program.
- DPNR is conducting watershed studies across 8 major watersheds in the Territory. The studies will identify locations where runoff can be captured in greenspace, reducing the impacts on our coastal areas and improving our coastal water quality. Some locations will be prioritized for water capture and secondary reuse for farming.
- DPNR will be removing 40 derelict vessels, as well as other identified marine debris, across all four main islands.



- DPNR’s State Historic Preservation Office is offering assistance to owners of properties in the historic districts to restore their properties from the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The restoration must focus on the historic elements of the structures in order to preserve the architecture of our past.
- DPNR’s everyday permitting programs evaluate projects to reduce impacts from runoff and nonpoint source pollution, protecting our territorial clean air and clean water standards.
- Adjusting course, the government implemented “COVID-19 Path to A New Normal”, a five-part advisory plan to safely re-engage all of the Territory’s operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Territory is now in its “Safer-At-Home” status. As part of this strategy, the Department of Tourism collaborates with the Department of Health and the Office of the Governor to develop policies, procedures and protocols for welcoming travelers safely to the Territory, while continuing to protect the health of its residents and communities.
- **Going Virtual:** The USVI is home to not one or two, but three, distinctive carnival and festival celebrations each year, offering visitors multiple opportunities to experience the unique flavor of each island. In 2020, all three carnivals and festivals were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, putting a damper on the festivities for residents and visitors who look forward to this annual celebration of culture and pageantry. Preserving the tradition of carnivals and festivals in the USVI took a different direction in 2020 with the launch of “virtual” experiences - online social gatherings designed to create a sense of community and camaraderie.
- Virtual Carnival featured events such as “Home Wuk” with



St. Thomas' DJ Avalanche, as well as replays of Children's and Adults' parades, an online take on J'ouvert celebrations (dubbed "Jou'Virtual") and live-streamed village performances by popular DJs and local and regional entertainers.

## **PROMOTING RENEWABLE, SUSTAINABLE, RELIABLE, AND AFFORDABLE ENERGY**

**The Virgin Islands Energy Office (VIEO) is promoting progressive energy initiatives through the following initiatives:**

- **Hurricane Shelter Micro-Grid:** The VIEO is currently developing a Solar plus Battery micro-grid to support the Shelter Functions of the St. Croix Educational Complex. The project will reduce the demand on Diesel generators for emergency back-up power and seeks to improve the energy resilience of the territory's critical infrastructure.
- **Net Energy Billing Program:** The VIEO has rolled out a sustainable solar interconnection program that ensures the community can invest in privately owned renewable energy and can receive a credit for the excess energy they sell back to the Grid.
- **Sunpower Grant Program:** The VIEO will utilize a multi-million dollar US DOE grant to promote renewable energy adoption within Low-Moderate Income households territory-Wide. The grant will subsidize the significant upfront costs of solar plus battery storage investment.





**ACHIEVING POLITICAL MATURITY THROUGH ADOPTION OF OUR OWN CONSTITUTION AND DETERMINING OUR DESTINY THROUGH A DECISION ON OUR STATUS** *(The Bryan Administration is working with the party leadership and the legislature on the issue of self determination.)*

- Recall the 5th Constitutional Convention with the sole purpose of deleting the segments which are not in concert with the U.S. Constitution and the Virgin Islands Legislature.
- Adopt the Revised Organic Act as our Constitution via a 6th Constitutional Convention.
- The total number of delegates should not exceed 15 delegates.

**FOSTERING INNOVATION THROUGH THE USE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, THE ARTS, AGRICULTURE, MATH (STEAM), AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO ENHANCE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND OUR ECONOMY**

- Every traveler aged five or older who enters the U.S. Virgin Islands, by air or sea, including anyone in transit to another destination, is required to use the [USVI Travel Screening Portal](#) and submit a COVID-19 test result prior to travel to avoid processing delays and enhance health screening and/or mandatory self-quarantine.
- The technology undergirding the Travel Screening Portal allows for scanning on the ground, and its QR code functionality facilitates a seamless experience for travelers once they reach their destination.



- Implemented Virtual identification card processing and vehicle registration at the Virgin Islands Bureau of Motor Vehicles.
- Instituted complete digital processing of government contracts.
- Improved the online systems for applying for and renewing business licenses in the territory, dramatically improving the processing and approval time.
- Implemented an organization-wide credit card program managed in the cloud that drives compliance.
- Implemented an end-to-end cloud-based Worker's Compensation System. Businesses can apply or renew for worker's compensation insurance fully online. This includes printing the certificate. No need to visit government offices.
- Implemented a travel and expense management system. This cloud-based electronic system processes General Travel Requests and approvals in real time via a mobile phone.
- Implementing a One Payment experience that encompasses all points of payments to include online, point of sale terminal, contactless, mobile phones, smart watches, kiosks, etc. This will standardize systems, internal processes, and citizens engagement to name a few.
- Sports tourism received a powerful boost when D.C. United, Washington, D.C.'s professional soccer team, came to St. Croix for an exhibition game against the Bermuda National Men's team. It was the first time a major league team played and toured in the Virgin Islands. As such, the game brought recognition to the territory, boosted morale among adults and kids alike, sold out every hotel and Airbnb room on St. Croix and helped to counter post-hurricane gloom and discouragement.



- Bringing locally relevant, high-quality COVID-19 information to Virgin Islanders on a daily basis, thanks to the government's partnership with Google. The partnership has been protecting Virgin Islanders from fake news, price gouging, fraud, and spammers who prey on Internet users, especially the elderly.

