

Congress of the United States

September 10, 2019

The Honorable Albert Bryan Jr.
Governor
U.S. Virgin Islands
21-22 Kongens Gade
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, VI 00802

Dear Governor Bryan,

Thank you for your work in putting together the Strike Team that met on August 14, 2019, regarding the payment of contractors working on disaster relief projects throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Strike Team meeting is a great step forward, and your leadership is integral in resolving the many issues related to reimbursement for contractors involved in this important recovery work.

That said, the August 14th meeting was merely the first step. It is critical that a second Strike Team meeting be scheduled and held before the end of September. Maintaining the lines of communication that the Strike Team has established will keep the ball rolling toward a satisfactory resolution for all involved. For many of these contractors, time is of the essence. We cannot allow scheduling delays to slow or pause our progress.

Many of the invoices are well beyond the normal payment terms. Some of the invoices are over 500 days old and have been sent back and forth through the system, from the contractor to your representative Witt Obrien, to the USVI housing department, to your own recovery office, to FEMA, and then all the way back to beginning of the process. The only way to resolve this complicated issue is to have FEMA, your recovery officials, the contractors, AECOM, and Aptim at the table. Everyone should be held accountable, and the only way to accomplish that is through face-to-face meetings.

If these Louisiana businesses fold, they cannot make payments to local USVI businesses. The economic impact could severely affect not only to the USVI, but Louisiana as well. Additionally, if these contractors close their doors because of non-payment for completed work, it could create a chilling effect across the disaster relief industry. Failure here hurts all of us.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your work on this issue so far. We look forward to working together to ensure a second Strike Team meeting is held before the end of September.

Sincerely,

Bill Cassidy, M.D.

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator

John Kennedy

John Kennedy
United States Senator

Steve Scalise

Rep. Steve Scalise
United States Representative

Cedric Richmond

Rep. Cedric Richmond
United States Representative

Ralph Abraham

Rep. Ralph Abraham, M.D.
United States Representative

Garret Graves

Rep. Garret Graves
United States Representative

Clay Higgins

Rep. Clay Higgins
United States Representative

Mike Johnson

Rep. Mike Johnson
United States Representative

cc: Mick Mulvaney, Acting Chief of Staff
Dr. Ben Carson, HUD Secretary
Peter T. Gaynor, FEMA Acting Administrator