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Bars, Nightclubs Allowed to Reopen Today With Restrictions

*Government House Also Announces 12,000 New Chromebooks
Will Be Distributed to Students Territory-wide*

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During the weekly press briefing at Government House on St. Croix on Monday, Communications Director Richard Motta Jr. set out the guidelines and restrictions governing the reopening of bars and nightclubs in the Territory, as set forth in Governor Albert Bryan Jr.’s 19th Supplemental Executive Order.

“We have introduced a phased structure that defines our pathway to a new normal and have taken steps forward and backward,” Director Motta said. “Today, November 9, we officially take one of those steps forward on the path to our new normal.”

Among the restrictions pertaining to bars and nightclubs reopening are:

- Bars may operate for seated service only
- Serving alcohol at bar counters is prohibited
- No alcohol may be sold after 11 p.m. and all establishments must close by midnight

- Masks and facial coverings are required for all patrons unless they are seated
- The use of pool tables is allowed, as long as players wear facemasks, hand sanitizer is available for all players and cue sticks and areas around the pool table are disinfected after each game
- Live music and DJs are allowed in licensed establishments until midnight, and live bands must be set up with social distancing of at least 10 feet between the band and patrons.
- Occupancy in these establishments is limited to 50% of their capacity set by their business license or the Fire Marshal or 100 people, whichever is less
- Cabarets remain closed

Chromebooks

To date, Education Commissioner Racquel Berry-Benjamin and her staff have distributed more than 1,500 Chromebooks to Virgin Islands public school students Territory-wide:

- 997 in the St. Croix District
- 670 in the St. Thomas/St. John District.

In addition to the Chromebooks, to date the Education Department has issued 1,700 devices from its previous inventory and will distribute a total of 12,000 new Chromebooks Territory-wide.

“The Department of Education has been working tirelessly to ease the burden of virtual learning on teachers, students and parents,” Director Motta said. “They have been making progress on their efforts to provide the tools our students need to succeed at virtual learning.”

Governor’s Statements

Director Motta also conveyed the statement Governor Bryan issued Saturday congratulating President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

“For us here locally, a Biden-Harris Administration is promising, as President-elect Biden has a personal connection to the U.S. Virgin Islands and understands the issues confronting our community. We consider him our hometown president,” Governor Bryan said in the statement. “We will continue to work diligently with the current administration on our recovery and other federal priorities and are excited to continue that work with the Biden-Harris Administration.”

Additionally, Director Motta conveyed Governor Bryan’s congratulations to Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, who has been named as the co-chairperson of President-elect Biden’s COVID-19 Task Force. Dr. Nunez-Smith a native of St. Thomas and a graduate of All Saints Cathedral School.

“Speaking of President-elect Biden’s connection to the U.S. Virgin Islands and the limitless possibilities of what women of color can achieve, we congratulate our fellow Virgin Islander Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith on her being named co-chair to President-elect Biden’s Coronavirus Task Force,” Director Motta said. “Having one of our very own named to such an important and consequential role is indeed a proud moment for us all in the Territory.”

Unemployment

- To date, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) has issued 45,520 unemployment insurance checks totaling more than \$35,643,249.
- The department also has issued an additional 28,068 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation checks totaling \$43,315,620.

- VIDOL has issued 4,191 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance checks to self-employed Virgin Islanders totaling \$7,056,424 and \$2,309,811 in Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation.
- In total, the Bryan-Roach Administration has issued 79,109 checks totaling \$88,325,104.

Stimulus

The Bureau of Internal Revenue has extended the deadline to file a 2018 income tax return or form 1040 to receive a stimulus check to November 21. The Bureau will continue to make payments until December 31, 2020.

COVID-19 cases

- Currently tracking 37 active cases
- 25,451 individuals tested to date (about 25% of the population)
- 24,012 of those tests were negative
- 1,405 tests came back positive
- 1,345 people have recovered
- 23 fatalities to date
- No COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- Two COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

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