

# Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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The Honorable  
**Angel Bolques, Jr.**  
Senator-At-Large  
35<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands

**CHAIRMAN**  
Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, & Parks

**VICE-CHAIRMAN**  
Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture

**MEMBER**  
Committee on Rules & Judiciary  
Committee on Homeland Security, Justice & Public Safety  
Committee on Housing, Transportation, & Telecommunication  
Subcommittee on Energy & Infrastructure Development

## **MEDIA PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release:**  
**September 21, 2023**

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### **Senator-At-Large Angel Bolques Jr. Urges Swift Action to Address Landfill Fire Risks in the Virgin Islands**

VIRGIN ISLANDS - September 21, 2023 - Senator Angel Bolques Jr. of the Virgin Islands' 35th Legislature expresses deep concern and disappointment over the slow solution response to the imminent landfill fire crisis that has plagued the territory for decades. On September 5, 2023, Senator Bolques reached out to all key stakeholders, including Mr. Andrew Smith, Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer of the Virgin Islands Water & Power Authority (WAPA), Mr. Roger Merritt Jr., Executive Director of the Waste Management Authority, and Mr. Daryl A. George, Director of the Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Medical Services (VIFEMS), in an effort to organize a comprehensive plan to extend water lines to all landfills in the territory. This initiative aims to legislate funding to rectify the ongoing landfill fire threats and have a proactive strategy for extinguishing landfill fires as quickly as possible.

For decades, the Virgin Islands have faced recurring landfill fires, endangering the environment, public health, and safety. Senator Bolques believes that installing fire hydrants within all landfill compounds will provide a crucial water source for firefighting efforts and significantly reduce the risk of future landfill fires.

In a September 5, 2023, letter addressed to WAPA CEO, Mr. Andrew Smith, Senator Bolques requested a cost estimate from WAPA for the installation of at least two (2) fire hydrants within each landfill compound in the Virgin Islands. This estimate will play a pivotal role in preparing (DR# 23-0760) to become an appropriation bill to secure funding for this vital project. Senator Bolques emphasizes the urgency of this matter and encourages swift action to address the long-standing issue of landfill fires.

Senator Bolques also references recent news articles highlighting the dire situation, including the ongoing fire at the Bovoni Landfill in St. Thomas, which has resulted in poor air quality and forced the closure of schools and businesses. Governor Albert Bryan Jr. declared a state of emergency due to the uncontrolled fire, further underscoring the urgent need for action.

Senator Bolques urges Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to utilize the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, which have been expanded for notable uses, to be applied and fund this critical project which could expedite the otherwise timely legislative process. By investing in the installation of fire hydrants and supporting proactive measures to prevent landfill fires, the Virgin Islands can safeguard its communities and environment.

The Senator remains committed to working collaboratively and suggesting solutions with all stakeholders to address this and other pressing issues and ensure the well-being of the Virgin Islands and its residents.

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