

BILL NO. 36-0326

Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

July 21, 2026

An act appropriating \$500,000 to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority to provide a \$200 credit to eligible households that experienced an electrical service interruption for more than 24 hours during the months of March and April 2026

PROPOSED BY: Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
Sponsor: Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

WHEREAS, during the months of March and April 2026, electrical outages and system failures of the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) caused widespread service disruptions across the St. Thomas-St. John district; and

WHEREAS, power to St. John is delivered through a submarine cable, which was allegedly intentionally damaged in March 2026, leading to a three-day outage; and

WHEREAS, St. John residents are disproportionately affected by the power outages due to a vulnerable and aging infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the extended electrical outages resulted in financial losses to residents and businesses, including food spoilage, medication loss, and damage to essential household and business equipment and supplies; and

1 **WHEREAS**, many residents and business owners continue to recover from these losses
2 while facing high utility costs, and no State of Emergency has been declared to provide direct
3 financial relief to the average ratepayer; and

4 **WHEREAS**, existing relief has been limited to SNAP recipients; and

5 **WHEREAS**, the cost of living in the territory causes an undue financial and economic
6 burden to household and business ratepayers impacted by the recent electrical outages in St.
7 Thomas-St. John; Now, Therefore:

8 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

9 **SECTION 1.** The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority shall establish the
10 Ratepayer Relief Program to provide direct financial assistance to eligible residential and
11 business ratepayers impacted by utility outages in the St. Thomas-St. John district.

12 **SECTION 2.** Eligible households shall receive a one-time \$200 credit to their utility
13 bill. The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority shall administer the program and establish
14 criteria to qualify for assistance. An applicant must:

15 (a) be a residential and/or business customer of WAPA;

16 (b) have experienced a prolonged electrical service interruption of more than 24
17 consecutive hours during March and April 2026.

18 **SECTION 3.** The sum of \$500,000 is appropriated in the fiscal year ending September
19 30, 2026, from the General Fund of the Treasury of the Government of the Virgin Islands to
20 the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority to credit eligible households affected by the
21 electrical outages in March and April 2026.

SECTION 4. The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority shall submit a report to the President of the Legislature no later than January 1, 2027, detailing the number of recipients and total funds distributed.

BILL SUMMARY

This bill appropriates \$500,000 from the General Fund of the Treasury of the Government of the Virgin Islands to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority to provide a one-time \$200 credit to eligible households that experienced an electrical service interruption for more than 24 hours during the months of March and April 2026.

BR26-1120/June 24, 2026/AA