

The following is a Sunny 99.5/AM970 WSTX News Editorial Our Looming Light Bill Crisis:

To those of you out there who think their monthly Light Bills are high now, you're in for a big surprise. With the price of a barrel of crude approaching \$100.00 and with the fact that the present LEAC is based upon a \$65.00 per barrel fuel cost along with the Public Service Commission's failure to pass along the latest increase in the fuel cost escalator from WAPA to the consumer, there looms the crisis to WAPA and, more importantly, the beleaguered consumer.

As a result of these staggering numbers, the utility is experiencing a shortfall of \$3-4,000,000 per month. What business could survive this drain.

WAPA is approaching one of the most severe cash flow problems it has ever had in its history. We, as consumers are reaching the point of having to choose between putting food on our table, turning on our lights, buying needed medicines or putting gas in our cars.

The government itself is party to this problem. The Government of the Virgin Islands owes a whopping \$18,000,000 to WAPA, which it cavalierly disregards.

Let you or me not pay our utility bill and see how quickly we find ourselves in the dark.

It is time for leaders to lead; whether it be WAPA, the Legislature or the Executive branches of the Government. There are solutions; energy costs have been studied ad nauseum. There have been numerous Public studies offered as well as Private sector solutions to address these problems whether it be alternative energy sources or different forms of fuels or technologies.

The inability of our leadership to resolve this crisis has far-reaching negative economic and social ramifications. We no longer have the luxury of talking about the issue; we have to face it head-on.

We call upon the leadership to treat this issue for what it is - a crisis. The governor of the Virgin Islands should call together the stakeholders, those of WAPA and the Legislature, to sit down at a Summit to present recommendations and concrete options to solve this crisis.

After agreeing upon a solution or solutions the governor should set a time certain for implementation. The initiative should have the priority of the space race back in the 60's which put a man on the moon.

It may even mean supplementing the existing bonding authority of WAPA. Let there be no doubt, this could cost hundreds of millions of dollars up front. It is now time to bite the bullet and accept the reality that we have no choice but to solve it. The alternative is unthinkable.

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