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WTJX Appeals for \$4.4 Million Amid Threat to \$1 Million Advance Funding

Public broadcasting system highlights news coverage achievements and educational programming

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On Wednesday, the V.I. Public Broadcasting System (WTJX) told lawmakers that it will need \$4,431,902 to maintain momentum in FY2025. “Through this funding, we are able to continue to open up a world of possibilities,” assured Chief Executive Officer Tanya-Marie Singh.?

Ms. Singh reminded lawmakers that they “offer a broad range of high-quality news and informational programming to radio stations.” She outlined recent successes, including the Commissioner’s Corner program with Education Commissioner Dionne Well-Hedrington, and significant strides toward digitizing the system’s archives.

Ms. Singh also championed WTJX’s recently established news platform. “We are providing an outstanding news product on all of our platforms,” she announced. After the St. Croix Avis closed in early 2024, Ms. Singh said WTJX “moved swiftly” in reaching out to the newspaper’s Bureau Chief, Tom Eader. Mr. Eader is now WTJX’s chief reporter. According to Ms. Singh, the inclusion of news reporting has “truly been a giant undertaking.”

“The work that you’ve been doing with the news is really good work,” stated Senator Donna Frett-Gregory. “That news section is important to us,” said the lawmaker, appealing to Ms. Singh to
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WTJX Chief Executive Officer Tanya-Marie Singh (Credit: V.I. Legislature)

Both Senators Blyden and Frett-Gregory also pledged to keep tabs on a potential threat to WTJX’s financial future. As Ms. Singh explained, funding usually received from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting could be in jeopardy. “Last week, the House Appropriations Committee passed the FY 2025, Labor HHS Appropriations bill, which eliminates the two-year advance appropriation for CPB,” she shared. The committee, she said, “does not believe that CPB should continue to receive a two-year advance appropriation.” While the usual appropriation fluctuates, WTJX usually receives just over \$1 million.?

WTJX is concerned that when the bill proceeds to the next legislative step in the coming days, “there could be introduction of more amendments that would do more harm to public media funding.” Ms. Singh has promised to keep the Budget Committee updated on any “definitive CPB funding concerns.” Frett-Gregory wondered whether the WTJX team had “shared these concerns up the chain.” Per Ms. Singh, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett has been notified.

Until such time, WTJX intends to work with their \$4.4 million budget request. “We’re just grateful we didn’t get cut,” she said to Senator Ray Fonseca, who questioned whether the funding levels were satisfactory. Most entities that have appeared before the Budget Committee have received reductions in their FY2025 budget recommendations. The public broadcaster also plans to strategize new ways to increase dues and paid subscriptions.

As a responsible news organization, the Consortium supports public broadcasting, believing that a rich tapestry of public and private local media provides the best environment for keeping citizens informed and educated about current events in the Virgin Islands.

