

Tourism Leadership Pledges to Resolve WTJX Funding as Lawmakers Press for Parade Broadcast Support

With WTJX warning it cannot fund carnival parade broadcasts after federal cuts, Tourism’s new leadership pledged to “work out” a solution. Lawmakers suggested \$90K be added as a line item, criticizing TARF’s use for non-tourism expenses.

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St. Thomas Carnival 2025. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

The Department of Tourism’s new leadership has promised to “work out” a solution to ensure that WTJX, the territory’s public broadcaster, can continue broadcasting annual carnival parades.

[In July](#), Tanya Singh, chief executive officer of the V.I. Public Television System, informed the Legislature that WTJX would cease broadcasting carnival parades across the territory due to

federal funding cuts and the lack of financial support from the Department of Tourism. Attempts to solicit funding from the Department “went unanswered.” The 2025 St. John Celebration was the first to go unaired.

Lawmakers sought the perspective of the Department of Tourism when they appeared before the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance earlier this week.

According to Ian Turnbull, director of the Division of Festivals, “since forever, parades have been broadcasted by WTJX at no cost.” He explained that there had never been any transactions between the two parties for the broadcast of the parade. This year, WTJX “sent in a request for St. John specifically,” he stated.

“We have supported WTJX, I think, to the tune of about \$71,000 over a couple years,” stated Mr. Turnbull. It is unclear what that amount has funded, but parades were admittedly broadcast free of charge. Mr. Turnbull admitted that the separate request to cover St. John’s parade did include details of the “issues” that WTJX is facing after federal cuts for public broadcasters.

Committee chair Senator Novelle Francis attempted to be solutions-oriented. “Recognizing, in fact, that is a challenge...you're saying that there was no support in terms of a sponsorship or something, that the festival could have considered?” he asked Mr. Turnbull.

WTJX has “traditionally done this for the last umpteen years, according to you, for free, and now they're asking for support,” continued Sen. Francis, resolute that the Department of Tourism could have done more.

Commissioner nominee Matarangas-King seemed amenable. “Knowing that WTJX is even under more dire circumstances because of the federal government and the cuts, I think it's something that we need to take a look at moving forward,” she told Senator Francis. “It’s important,” Ms. Matarangas-King continued.

Indeed, Senator Francis believes it is unfair to “lock out” WTJX. “The fact is that a lot of people were looking forward to being able to view the parades via WTJX, and we really denied that opportunity.”

WTJX’s Tanya Singh estimates that it will cost approximately \$90,000 to broadcast all 5 parades, including 2 children’s parades and 3 adult parades. It’s a figure that lawmakers found reasonable, and one that Senator Kurt Vialet had suggested should be included as a line item in WTJX’s budget, sourced from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund.

Senator Vialet also complained that TARF funds were being used to fund activities wholly unrelated to tourism, resulting in a dearth of funds for the Department of Tourism. The lawmaker argued that [relying on TARF as “bank two”](#) was leaving the Department strapped for cash.