



OFFICE OF INSULAR AFFAIRS

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas

**Interior Approves \$2.1 Million in Capital Improvement Funds for
School Maintenance in the U.S. Virgin Islands**

To upgrade infrastructure in Territory's Schools

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 6, 2015) – This week Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina released \$2.1 million in grant funding under the Office of Insular Affairs' (OIA) Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Program to repair public school buildings in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) as part of OIA's Insular Assessment of Buildings and Classrooms (ABCs) Initiative. The funds will be used to install or replace fire alarm systems, upgrade fire protection and plumbing infrastructure, conduct Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) repairs in schools as well as conduct structural repairs at other public school facilities.

“Representatives from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers were in the USVI last week finalizing plans with the territory's Department of Education and work is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2015,” said Assistant Secretary Kia'aina. “This funding will be used to address high-priority health and safety deferred maintenance items identified in our most recent assessment of school buildings in the territories. We are pleased to support the territorial government and students of the U.S. Virgin Islands in this way.”

The U.S. Department of the Interior's five-year strategic plan includes a goal to improve quality of life in the insular areas, with a focus on education. Through the ABCs Initiative, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided Interior with a unified system for documenting and monitoring the structural conditions and operating systems of all schools in the territories, while providing indications of the adequacy and effectiveness of the resources devoted to facilities maintenance. As part of this initiative, all school sites and buildings, structural elements, and the health, safety, and welfare of inhabitants were assessed during the inspections.

The Assistant Secretary, on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, is responsible for coordinating federal policy with respect to the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and administering and overseeing U.S. federal assistance provided to the freely associated states of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau under the Compacts of Free Association. The Assistant Secretary executes these responsibilities through the Office of Insular Affairs whose mission is to foster economic opportunities, promote government efficiency, and improve the quality of life for the people of the insular areas.

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