

Overview of Vermont’s Legislative Process

The [Vermont Constitution](#) created the three branches of Vermont State government: the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches.¹ The Legislative Branch, entitled “The General Assembly of the State of Vermont,” comprises two chambers—the Senate and the House of Representatives—that must concur in all acts of legislation.² The Legislative Branch is the lawmaking branch of government.³

There are 180 members of the General Assembly: 150 Representatives and 30 Senators.⁴ Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 73 requires the General Assembly to reapportion legislative districts at least decennially following the U.S. Census for the purpose of maintaining equality of representation as nearly as is practicable. Pursuant to the latest reapportionment act, [2022, Act 89](#), the House has 68 single-member districts and 41 two-member districts⁵; and the Senate has 16 districts, comprising seven with one Senator, four with two Senators, and five with three Senators.⁶

To be eligible to be elected as a Representative or Senator, an individual must be at least 18 years of age, a U.S. citizen, and have taken the voter’s oath,⁷ and must have resided in the State for two years, the last year of which is in the legislative district for which the person is elected.⁸ Legislators in both chambers are elected at each general election, which is held biennially on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November in even-numbered years.⁹

Legislators serve two-year terms, with their terms commencing on the first Wednesday after the first Monday of January in odd-numbered years.¹⁰ The General Assembly sets its start date of the second year of the biennium by joint resolution, and usually convenes the second year on the first Tuesday of January of each even-numbered year.¹¹ There is no time limit on the length of each annual session, although they usually adjourn around the middle of May.¹² The General Assembly is considered a “part-time” legislature.¹³

¹ Vt. Const. Ch. II, *Delegation and Distribution of Powers*.

² Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 6.

³ [Hartness v. Black](#), 95 Vt. 190, 114 A. 44, 47 (1921).

⁴ Vt. Const. Ch. II, §§ 13 and 18. These sections, respectively, limit House districts to one or two House members, but allow senatorial districts to contain “one or more” Senators.

⁵ See [17 V.S.A. § 1893b](#).

⁶ See [17 V.S.A. § 1881](#).

⁷ Vt. Const. Ch. I, Art. 8 and Ch. II, § 42.

⁸ Vt. Const. Ch. II, §§ 15 and 66.

⁹ Vt. Const. Ch. II, §§ 43 and 44.

¹⁰ Vt. Const. Ch. II, §§ 7 and 46. The first year of the biennium is called the “Biennial Session.”

¹¹ See e.g. [2021, R-117 \(J.R.H.10\)](#) (adopted following [2021, R-116 \(J.R.S.29\)](#)). The second year of the biennium is called the “Adjourned Session.”

¹² See [General Assembly adjournment dates, 1969-present](#): Accessible via Leg. homepage > House > Clerk of the House > Legislative Statistics > “Session Length, Roll Call Votes, House Bill Statistics, Adjournment Dates (1969-Present).”

¹³ See [NCSL’s Full- and Part-Time Legislatures](#).

In addition to the two regular annual sessions within a biennium, the Governor has the constitutional authority to call the General Assembly together for a special session.¹⁴ Special sessions are usually called for a specific purpose and are their own discrete session.

On the first day of the first year of a biennium, the newly elected legislators convene and organize their chamber. Vt. Const. Ch. II, §§ 16 and 17 control the order of the House's organization, requiring the House members-elect to elect their Speaker¹⁵ and Clerk¹⁶ and to then take their oaths of office before they proceed to other business. The House will then adopt its chamber rules and seat new members in a seating ceremony.¹⁷ The Speaker will thereafter appoint the members of the Committee on Joint Rules on the part of the House and the members of the House's standing committees.¹⁸

In the Senate, Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 19 provides that the Lieutenant Governor is President of the Senate.¹⁹ For the Senate's organization, Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 17 requires the Senators-elect to take their oaths of office before proceeding to other business, which thereafter includes electing a Secretary,²⁰ a President *Pro Tempore*,²¹ and a third member of the Committee on Committees, and adopting its own set of chamber rules.²² The Senate's Committee on Committees comprises the President, President *Pro Tempore*, and the third elected member, and it appoints the members of the Committee on Joint Rules on the part of the Senate and the members of the Senate's standing committees.²³

The Vermont Constitution requires a majority of the members of each chamber to be present in order to constitute a quorum to enable the chamber to conduct legislative business.²⁴ Thereafter, the rules of legislative procedure used to carry out the lawmaking function are derived from several sources, in this order of precedence: 1) constitutional provisions²⁵ and

¹⁴ Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 20 (“The Governor . . . shall have the power to call together the General Assembly, when necessary, before the day to which they shall stand adjourned.”).

¹⁵ The Speaker is the House's presiding officer. House Rules 15–17 generally describe the duties of the Speaker.

¹⁶ The Clerk is the House's parliamentary officer. House Rules 18–23 generally describe the duties of the Clerk and Assistant Clerks.

¹⁷ See e.g. [2021 Day 1 House Journal](#); [House Rules, Part I](#) (organization).

¹⁸ House Rule 6.

¹⁹ As President, the Lieutenant Governor is the Senate's presiding officer. Senate Rules 15 and 16 generally describe the President's duties.

²⁰ The Secretary is the Senate's parliamentary officer. Senate Rules 18–23 generally describe the duties of the Secretary and Assistant Secretary.

²¹ The President *Pro Tempore* performs the duties of the President in the President's absence. Senate Rule 17.

²² See e.g. [2021 Day 1 Senate Journal](#); [Senate Rules, Part I](#) (organization).

²³ Senate Rule 6.

²⁴ Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 14 for the House; this section also requires a special quorum of two-thirds of House members to raise a State tax. Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 19 provides that a majority of Senators constitutes a quorum for all Senate business.

²⁵ See Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 6 (The General Assembly “shall have no power to add to, alter, abolish, or infringe any part of this Constitution.”). See also [Rufus v. Daley](#), 103 Vt. 426, 154 A. 695, 697 (1931) (“The Constitution is not a grant of power to the Legislature, but it is a limitation of its general powers. The Legislature's power is practically absolute, except for constitutional limitations.”); [City of Burlington v. Central Vermont RY Co.](#), 82 Vt. 5, 71 A. 826, 827 (1909) (“[F]or the law is, by all the cases, that, except where there are constitutional limits upon the Legislature, it is practically absolute.”); and [Dresden School District v. Norwich Town School District](#), 124 Vt. 227, 231 (1964) (“Our constitution is, in powers not surrendered to the Federal government, the single great

judicial decisions thereon²⁶; 2) adopted rules; 3) custom, usage, and precedents; 4) statutory provisions; 5) adopted parliamentary authority²⁷; and 6) general parliamentary law.²⁸

Lawmaking starts with an idea that a legislator would like to pursue. To do so, a legislator introduces that idea in the form of a bill. Bills are drafted by attorneys in the Office of Legislative Counsel.²⁹ To create a bill, a legislator communicates with a legislative counselor about the ideas the legislator would like to introduce in the bill, providing specific instructions for the bill's content to reflect the legislator's intent. The legislative counselor then drafts the bill in legal form and provides the draft to the legislator, who will then review, request any revisions, and ultimately approve the bill for introduction in the legislator's chamber. The bill is then assigned a number, printed, and presented to the legislator's parliamentary officer.³⁰ When a bill is introduced, that parliamentary officer reads it the first time by number and title³¹ and the chamber's presiding officer refers it to a standing committee of jurisdiction, based on the bill's subject matter: in the House, the Speaker decides the committee to which each bill will be referred³²; in the Senate, the Lieutenant Governor makes that decision.³³

The House has 14 standing committees of jurisdiction: Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry (11 members); Appropriations (12 members); Commerce and Economic Development (11 members); Corrections and Institutions (11 members); Education (12 members); Environment and Energy (11 members); General and Housing (12 members); Government Operations and Military Affairs (12 members); Health Care (11 members); Human Services (11 members); Judiciary (11 members); Rules (7 members); Transportation (11 members); and Ways and Means (12 members).³⁴ Each House member is appointed to one standing committee, except that three members of the majority and of the minority parties³⁵ also serve on the Committee on Rules along with the Speaker, who otherwise does not usually serve on any of the other subject-matter standing committees.

The Senate has 12 standing committees of jurisdiction: Agriculture (5 members); Appropriations (7 members); Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs (5 members); Education (5 or 6 members); Finance (7 members); Government Operations (5 or 6 members); Health and Welfare (5 or 6 members); Institutions (5 or 6 members); Judiciary

restraint on the autonomy of the Legislature as the repository of the law-making power of the people.”).

²⁶ Under the separation of powers, “it is the province of the court to decide whether Vermont’s laws comply with the State Constitution,” *Brigham v. State*, 179 Vt. 525, 528 (2005); “[i]t is the function of the courts to maintain constitutional government,” *C.O. Granai v. Witters, Longmoore, Akley & Brown*, 123 Vt. 468, 470 (1963); and the Supreme Court of Vermont is the “final interpreter of the Vermont Constitution,” *State v. Read*, 165 Vt. 141, 153 (1996).

²⁷ Both chambers have adopted *Mason’s Manual of Legislative Procedure* as their supplementary parliamentary authority. House Rule 88; Senate Rule 91.

²⁸ *Mason’s* Sec. 4-2.

²⁹ See [2 V.S.A. ch. 13](#) (Office of Legislative Counsel).

³⁰ See House Rules 40–43 and Senate Rules 39–42.

³¹ House Rule 45; Senate Rule 43.

³² House Rule 44(a).

³³ Senate Rule 44.

³⁴ House Rule 25.

³⁵ See House Rule 24.

(5 members); Natural Resources and Energy (5 members); Transportation (5 members); and Rules (5 members).³⁶ Each Senator is appointed to two standing committees, except that the President *Pro Tempore* and four other Senators also serve on the Committee on Rules. Senate committees are generally scheduled to meet either in the morning or afternoon in order to allow Senators to serve on two committees.

Standing committees are charged with the important responsibility of reviewing bills and recommending any action on them to their chamber. If a committee decides to pursue a bill, it may take testimony on it from the bill sponsor, the legislative counselor who drafted it, officers and staff of relevant State offices, members of the public, and other interested stakeholders, lobbyists, advocates, and experts. The committee may also hold public hearings. If the committee ultimately decides to recommend action on the bill to its chamber, the committee will vote out a “committee report.” Often, the committee will either report a bill *favorably* (without any recommended amendments) or *favorably with amendment* (with a recommended committee amendment). Less frequently used are the options to report a bill *without recommendation* (i.e., without taking a position on it) or *adversely* (i.e., ought not to pass).³⁷

When a committee votes out a committee report, a member of the committee is designated to report the bill to their chamber on behalf of the committee. The reporter of the bill delivers the committee report to the chamber’s parliamentary officer and is responsible for the committee report’s accuracy, the propriety of its language, and for explaining the committee report when it is considered by the chamber.³⁸ The Clerk or Secretary’s office then places the bill number and title and accompanying committee report on the Calendar for notice (the “Notice Calendar”), with chamber rules requiring that information to appear on the Notice Calendar for one legislative day prior to second reading.³⁹

House Rule 35(a) and Senate Rule 31 also require a bill with fiscal impacts reported by a committee to be referred to the chamber’s relevant “money committee.” By these rules, if a committee report affects the revenue of the State, the bill must be referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means or the Senate Committee on Finance; and if a committee report carries an appropriation, it must be referred to the House or Senate Committee on Appropriations. If the money committee pursues the bill, it will also vote out a committee report.

In addition to the chamber rules requiring referral of a bill to the initial standing committee of jurisdiction and the subsequent referral to one or both money committees, as applicable, a chamber may also vote to commit the bill to another standing committee upon motion by a member.⁴⁰ To pursue the bill, such a committee will also vote out a committee report.

³⁶ Senate Rule 24.

³⁷ See House Rules 34, 35, 46, and 47 and Senate Rules 45–47.

³⁸ House Rule 31; Senate Rule 32.

³⁹ House Rules 32 and 33; Senate Rules 33 and 34.

⁴⁰ See House Rules 36 and 55 and Senate Rules 35 and 54.

A standing committee may also sponsor its own bill; these are called “committee bills.” A committee bill is read the first time and then placed on the next legislative day’s Notice Calendar by number and title, unless the bill needs to be referred to a money committee. Committee bills then proceed in regular course as other bills.⁴¹

Note that the text of a bill as introduced does not appear in the calendar. Instead, all bills that are introduced may be found on [the General Assembly’s website](#)⁴² or printed in hard copy in the State House. Accordingly, one must compare the bill as introduced to the calendar in order to understand how a bill is proposed to be amended.

On the next legislative day following a bill’s appearance on the Notice Calendar, the bill proceeds to the chamber’s Action Calendar, which constitutes the chamber’s “Orders of the Day.”⁴³ When a bill first appears on the Action Calendar, it is scheduled for second reading on that day. Once a bill has been read a second time,⁴⁴ the reporters from each committee to which the bill was referred will speak on the chamber floor to explain their committee reports, in the order of referral. Then the chamber will vote on any recommended amendments set forth in each committee report, in the order of referral, unless a committee report of a subsequent committee recommends amendment to a prior committee’s report, in which case that subsequent committee report will be voted on first, followed by a vote on the prior committee report (as amended, if applicable).⁴⁵

When the chamber considers each question posed by a committee report (ex.: *Shall the report of the Committee on Government Operations be amended as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations?*), members are limited to debating that specific question, and the applicable bill reporter is responsible for answering questions when “interrogated” by other members, prior to the vote on the question. In addition, any member may offer an amendment to a committee report—or a committee report, as amended—and members may debate that question, interrogate the proposer of the amendment, and then vote thereon. After voting on all committee reports recommending amendments to a bill, a member may then move to amend the bill.⁴⁶ The final question that must be voted on at second reading is, *Shall the bill be read a third time?*⁴⁷ If third reading is ordered, the bill will appear on the next legislative day’s Action Calendar for third reading.⁴⁸

On the day of third reading, a bill may be amended before it is read a third time.⁴⁹ After voting on any offered amendments and the bill is read a third time, the question is, *Shall the bill pass?* After a chamber passes a bill, the Clerk or Secretary’s office incorporates any agreed-to

⁴¹ House Rule 48; Senate Rule 48.

⁴² <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>

⁴³ House Rule 32(a); Senate Rule 33.

⁴⁴ Second and third readings are by number and title only, unless reading in full is required as set forth in House Rule 45 or Senate Rule 43.

⁴⁵ House Rule 35(a); Senate Rule 31.

⁴⁶ House Rule 57; Senate Rule 57.

⁴⁷ House Rules 46 and 47; Senate Rules 46 and 47.

⁴⁸ House Rule 32(a); Senate Rule 33.

⁴⁹ A motion to amend after third reading is not in order except by vote of the chamber. House Rule 49; Senate Rule 57.

amendments into the bill's as-passed version. The bill must then sit one legislative day in that chamber office to allow for reconsideration (called a "reconsideration day")⁵⁰ before the office messages it to the other chamber.

That other chamber (the "non-originating chamber," i.e., the chamber in which the bill did not originate) then follows the same basic procedure: first reading, referral to committee(s), committee vote(s) on a committee report, Notice Calendar, second reading, committee report(s) presented on the floor, votes on any committee reports and individual member amendments, vote on whether to order third reading, third reading, vote on passage, and reconsideration day.

If the non-originating chamber passes the bill *in concurrence* (i.e., without any proposals of amendment), the chambers have achieved the constitutional concurrence necessary to create law. Conversely, if the non-originating chamber passes the bill *in concurrence with proposal of amendment* (i.e., the chamber proposes one or more amendments to the bill),⁵¹ that proposal of amendment will be entered on the Notice Calendar of the originating chamber and will be up for action on the next legislative day.⁵² The originating chamber may concur in the proposal of amendment; concur in the proposal of amendment with further amendment thereto; or refuse to concur and request a committee of conference.⁵³

If a committee of conference is requested, each chamber appoints three of its members to serve as conferees. The general purpose of a committee of conference is to attempt to reach agreement on the chambers' differences of opinion on the bill. Each committee of conference is supposed to meet and draft a committee of conference report. If at least two conferees from each chamber sign the report, the report is submitted to each chamber for adoption, starting first with the non-originating chamber.⁵⁴

Once the chambers concur in the contents a bill, it is signed by the originating chamber's parliamentary officer and attested to by the Speaker of the House and Lieutenant Governor.⁵⁵ However, in order to become law, it must thereafter be presented to the Governor in accordance with Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 11. This section provides that the Governor has five days after presentment, not including Sundays, to act on the bill.

If the Governor signs the bill or allows it to become law without the Governor's signature, the bill is sent to the Secretary of State's Office and is enacted as law of the State. Conversely, if the Governor vetoes the bill, the bill is returned, along with the Governor's objections in a veto message, to the parliamentary officer of the originating chamber. That chamber must then "reconsider" the bill as passed by both chambers, by voting on the question, *Shall the bill pass, notwithstanding the Governor's refusal to approve the bill?* If that chamber votes affirmatively by at least two-thirds of the members present, the bill is messaged to the

⁵⁰ See House Rules, Part XII (reconsideration) and Senate Rules, Part XII (reconsideration).

⁵¹ Neither chamber can *amend* a bill originating in the other chamber; a chamber can only *propose amendments* to the other chamber's bills. House Rule 58; Senate Rule 58.

⁵² House Rules 32 and 33; Senate Rules 34 and 62.

⁵³ House Rule 62; Senate Rule 62.

⁵⁴ [Joint Rules Part V](#) (committees of conference).

⁵⁵ Joint Rule 11.

other chamber to vote on that question by the same threshold. If both chambers pass the bill, the Governor's veto is overridden and the bill is delivered to the Secretary of State's Office and is enacted as law of the State. However, if either chamber fails to obtain the necessary vote, the Governor's veto is sustained and the bill is not enacted.

Aside from that two-thirds vote threshold for overriding a Governor's veto required by the Vermont Constitution, the default threshold for most other votes is a quorum's majority of votes cast.⁵⁶ However, chamber rules may provide different vote thresholds for specific procedures.⁵⁷

And except for any procedure required by the Constitution, each chamber has authority to suspend its rules by a three-quarter vote.⁵⁸ For example, motions to suspend rules may be made when it is desired to speed up the legislative process, such as the motion *to suspend rules to take up a bill off the Notice Calendar for immediate consideration* (ie., rather than waiting until the next legislative day, when it would be on the Action Calendar), the motion *to suspend rules to place a bill in all remaining stages of passage* (ie., to provide for the bill's second and third readings on the same legislative day) and the motion *to suspend rules to message the bill to the other chamber forthwith* (ie., to forgo holding the bill for one legislative "reconsideration day").

Each chamber records its votes and proceedings in its Journal, which is the chamber's official constitutional record.⁵⁹ Both chambers' parliamentary offices publish a daily Journal of each legislative day, as well as an annual Journal for each year of the two-year biennium.

The General Assembly uses three forms of voting on legislation:

1. The most common form is the *voice vote*, whereby the chamber votes audibly on a question: first, those voting Yes saying "aye," followed by those voting No saying "nay." The presiding officer then determines the prevailing vote based on those audible responses. The Journal reflects only whether the question was agreed to.
2. The second form is a *division*, which may be requested by any member.⁶⁰ In a division, members stand or otherwise indicate a vote in favor of a question and the clerks or secretaries count the number of those votes, and then the process is repeated for those members opposed. The Journal reflects only the number of votes in favor and opposed to the question.
3. The third form is a *roll call vote*, whereby the clerks or secretaries read each member's

⁵⁶ See *Mason's* Sec. 510-1 ("A majority of the votes cast, a quorum being present, is sufficient to carry a proposal unless a larger vote is required by the constitution. Members present but not voting are disregarded in determining whether an action carried.")

⁵⁷ For example, House Rule 68 requires a vote of three-fourths of members present to close debate.

⁵⁸ In the House, House Rule 91 allows for the suspension of rules by a vote of three-fourths of members *present and voting*. In the Senate, Senate Rule 97 allows for the suspension of rules by a vote of three-fourths of members *present*.

⁵⁹ Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 9 provides that each chamber's Journal is printed, when one-third of the members of the chamber think necessary, at the end of each session. Each chamber's adopted rules require its parliamentary officer to print the chamber's Journal. House Rule 19; Senate Rule 19.

⁶⁰ House Rule 71; Senate Rule 68.

name and record their individual vote, along with any vote explanation, in the Journal. Roll calls are required for votes on a Governor's veto⁶¹; otherwise, a roll call is only required in the House when requested by one member and sustained by four others, and in the Senate when required by one Senator.⁶²

While the General Assembly is the lawmaking branch and the above-described procedures apply to legislatively-enacted law, “[t]he Vermont Constitution is the fundamental charter of our state and is preeminent in our governmental scheme . . . As such, the constitution stands above legislative and judge-made law, and the rights contained therein speak ‘for the entire people as their supreme law.’”⁶³ For information on the legislative procedure required to propose amendments to the Vermont Constitution for voter ratification, see [Overview of Procedure to Amend the Vermont Constitution](#).

GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS

ACT---Legislation enacted into law. A bill that passed both chambers of the General Assembly becomes an act if the Governor signed it or allowed it to become law without the Governor's signature, or if the Governor vetoed it and the chambers overrode the veto. An act is a permanent measure, having the force of law until repealed.

ACTION CALENDAR---That portion of the calendar providing the list of legislation upon which a legislative body is scheduled to act on the current legislative day. The Action Calendar is also known as the “Orders of the Day.”

ADJOURNMENT---Termination of a session for that legislative day, with the hour and day of the next meeting being set prior to adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT *SINE DIE*---Final termination of a regular or special legislative session.

ADOPTION---Approval or acceptance, usually applied to resolutions, committee of conference reports, and proposed amendments to the Constitution.

AGENDA---Schedule of legislative business proposed for consideration.

AMENDMENT---Any alteration made or proposed to be made in a bill, resolution, or committee report by adding, changing, substituting, or deleting.

⁶¹ Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 11.

⁶² Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 9; House Rules 69, 70, and 72–74; and Senate Rules 68–70.

⁶³ In re Town Highway No. 20, 191 Vt. 231, 248 (2012) (other citations omitted).

AMENDMENT, CONSTITUTIONAL---A proposal of amendment to the Constitution concurred in by both chambers in two separate bienniums and ratified by the voters at the general election.

APPEAL---A parliamentary procedure for challenging the ruling of a presiding officer.

APPORTIONMENT---Establishment of legislative districts from which members are elected. *See also* REAPPORTIONMENT.

APPROPRIATION---Funding allocated by an act for a department or program of government.

APPROVAL BY GOVERNOR---Signature of the Governor on a bill passed by the Legislature.

ARCHIVES---Historical records maintained by the Secretary of State's Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA).

ASSISTANT CLERK---Non-member officer appointed by the Clerk of the House, who performs duties as prescribed by the Clerk and acts as Clerk in the Clerk's absence.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY---Non-member officer appointed by the Secretary of the Senate, who performs duties as prescribed by the Secretary and acts as Secretary in the Secretary's absence.

BICAMERAL---A legislature containing two legislative bodies. *Cf.* UNICAMERAL.

BILL---A draft of a proposed law sponsored by one or more legislators and presented to the Legislature for consideration.

BILL HISTORY---The record of all action on any given bill. The term is also applied to action on chamber resolutions and joint resolutions.

BILL INDEX---A list of legislative bills or resolutions by subject matter or number.

BILL, SHORT FORM---A House bill containing only the name of the sponsor, the bill subject and title, and a general statement of purpose, without specific legal provisions, which may be incorporated later by amendment.

BUDGET---A suggested allocation of State moneys, compiled by the Governor in conjunction with department heads and presented to the General Assembly for consideration.

CALENDAR, DAILY---The list of legislation that is scheduled to be taken up by a chamber on a legislative day, arranged according to the order of business that is scheduled for consideration in accordance with the rules of the chamber, and published daily.

CALL TO ORDER---The notice given by a presiding officer indicating that the chamber or a joint assembly is officially in session. It is also used to call a disorderly member to order.

CARRY-OVER LEGISLATION---Legislation held over from one annual session to the next during the two-year biennium.

CAUCUS---An informal meeting of a group of members, usually called on the basis of party affiliation.

CHAIR---An abstract designation of a presiding officer or committee chairperson.

CHAMBER---The official hall for the meeting of a legislative body. It is also used to describe the body itself.

CLERK---A non-member officer elected by the House as its administrative officer and advisor on parliamentary procedure, who performs duties as prescribed in the Rules of the House.

COMMIT---The sending of a bill or resolution to a committee upon a motion made by a member and agreed to by the chamber. *Cf.* REFERRAL.

COMMITTEE---A body of members appointed by the Speaker or Committee on Committees to consider and make recommendations regarding the disposition of bills, resolutions, or other related matters.

COMMITTEE CHAIR---A member appointed by the Speaker or Committee on Committees to function as the parliamentary head of a committee.

COMMITTEE, JOINT---A committee composed of members of both chambers.

COMMITTEE OF CONFERENCE---A committee composed of three members of both chambers, appointed by the Speaker on the part of the House and the Committee on Committees on the part of the Senate, to resolve the differences between the two chambers on a bill and to set forth its recommendations in a committee of conference report that is thereafter considered by the chambers.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE---Either chamber of the Legislature sitting as a committee to consider unique or special matters.

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES---The Senate President, President *Pro Tempore*, and a third member elected by the Senate, who together appoint Senators to committees.

COMMITTEE REPORT---An official release from a standing committee of a bill or resolution, either without a recommendation or with a specific recommendation, such as favorable, favorable with amendment, or adverse.

COMMITTEE, STANDING---A committee established by chamber rules, appointed by the Speaker in the House and the Committee on Committees in the Senate. Standing committees have a general jurisdiction over subject matters set forth in the rules of a chamber, are referred legislation based on their subject matter, and may introduce legislation.

COMMITTEE, STUDY or INTERIM---A committee appointed to study a specific issue between sessions, and usually required to make recommendations on that issue to the Legislature by a date certain. These committees are usually created by joint resolution or by statute.

CONCURRENCE---Action by which one chamber agrees to a proposal or action that the other chamber has approved.

CONFIRMATION---Approval by the Senate of an Executive appointment.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST---An immediate or direct interest in a question that prohibits a member from voting on a question in accordance with chamber rules.

CONSTITUENT---A citizen residing within the district of a legislator.

CONSTITUTION---A sovereign entity's written instrument that guarantees specified rights to its people and that establishes its framework of government.

CONTESTED ELECTION---A situation in which two or more candidates claim the right to represent a legislative district.

CONVENE---The meeting of the Legislature at the beginning of a biennium as provided by the Constitution, and thereafter on days prescribed pursuant to the legislative process.

CO-SPONSOR---One of two or more persons proposing any bill, resolution, or amendment.

DAY CERTAIN---Adjournment with a specific day to reconvene.

DEBATE---Discussion on and deliberation of a question according to parliamentary rules.

DEVOTIONAL---A short and inclusive homily, life lesson, song, poem, prayer, reading, or musical piece provided at the beginning of a legislative day to bring members of a chamber together for reflection and contemplation, prior to the chamber taking up legislative business.

DIED IN COMMITTEE---A measure that is defeated or not acted on in committee.

DILATORY---Deliberate repeated use of parliamentary procedure to delay action on a legislative matter.

DISSENT---Difference of opinion; also, to cast a negative vote.

DISTRICT---A geographical portion of the State represented by one or more legislators, within which those legislators live. Legislative districts are established through the process of reapportionment.

DIVISION---A form of voting that counts the number of votes in favor and opposed to a question.

DIVISION OF A QUESTION---A procedure to separate a question to be voted on into two or more separate questions.

EFFECTIVE DATE---The date on which an act takes effect. Pursuant to [1 V.S.A. § 212](#), July 1st of the year of enactment is the default effective date, but an act may specify a different effective date.

ENACTING CLAUSE---The clause of an act that formally expresses the legislative act. Vermont's enacting clause is required by [Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 10](#): "It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont."

ENROLLED BILL---The final version of a bill, including any amendments, that is passed by the Legislature.

EXECUTIVE SESSION---A session excluding from the chamber or a committee all persons other than members and essential staff and used only in exigent circumstances.

EX-OFFICIO---An individual who serves in an official capacity, such as on a committee, by virtue of another position they hold.

EXPULSION---The legislative procedure for a chamber to remove one of its members from office, generally on the basis of alleged misconduct. *Cf.* IMPEACHMENT.

FIRST READING---The first of three readings of a bill (by number and title only), which serves to formally present the bill to a chamber. *See also* INTRODUCTION.

FISCAL YEAR---An accounting period of twelve months. In Vermont State government, a fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30.

FLOOR---That portion of the physical chamber reserved for members and officers of the chamber and other persons granted the privilege of the floor while the chamber is in session.

GALLERY---The portions of the physical chamber from which visitors may view the legislative proceedings of the chamber.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY---The Vermont Legislative Branch's constitutional title pursuant to [Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 6](#); specifically, "The General Assembly of the State of Vermont."

GERMANENESS---The relevance or appropriateness of an amendment to the subject matter of the original proposal.

GOVERNOR’S PROCLAMATION---A means by which the Governor may call a special session of the Legislature or is required to provide notice of a proposed constitutional amendment.

HEARING---Public discussion and appearance on a proposal that may be scheduled by a committee.

HOUSE---A legislative body. The term may be used as a substitute for “chamber” to refer to either the House of Representatives or the Senate generally, or as a shorthand for the House of Representatives specifically. The Vermont House of Representatives has 150 members.

IMPEACHMENT---The legislative procedure to remove a non-legislator public official from office, generally on the basis of alleged misconduct. *Cf.* **EXPULSION**.

INTERIM---The interval between regular sessions.

INTRODUCTION---The first reading of a bill in a chamber, which serves to formally present the bill sponsored by a member of that chamber.

JOINT ASSEMBLY---A joint meeting of the House and Senate in the House Chamber that is called by a joint resolution for a specific purpose, such as an election or speech.

JOINT RULES---Rules adopted by the House and Senate to govern matters of common concern to and involving joint action by both chambers.

JOURNAL, DAILY---A record of a chamber’s votes and proceedings on a legislative day.

JOURNAL, PERMANENT---The official compiled record of a chamber’s votes and proceedings on each legislative day of an annual session, and which includes information on the chamber’s members, officers, and committees and a general subject matter index.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL, OFFICE OF---The office of attorneys, editors, and related staff members who draft and edits bills and amendments and perform legislative research.

LEGISLATIVE DAY---The day on which a legislative body meets.

LEGISLATOR---An elected member of a legislative body.

LEGISLATURE---The lawmaking branch of State government.

LOBBYIST---A representative of a special interest group who is compensated to influence legislation affecting the special interest group. *See* [2 V.S.A. ch. 11](#) (registration of lobbyists).

MAJORITY LEADER---A member of the majority party designated to be its leader.

MAJORITY PARTY---The political party having the greatest number of members in a chamber.

MEMBER-ELECT---An individual who has been elected to serve as a legislator in a biennium but who has not yet taken the oath of office for that biennium.

MEMBERS PRESENT---The term used to refer to those members who are actually present at a daily session.

MESSAGE---An official communication from one chamber to the other or from the Governor to a chamber that is transmitted for the purpose of notifying the recipient of an official action the sender has taken, such as action on legislation, and which is customarily printed in the receiving chamber's Journal.

MINORITY LEADER---A member of the minority party designated to be its leader.

MINORITY PARTY---The political party having the next highest number of members in a chamber after the majority party.

MINUTES---An accurate record of the proceedings of a meeting, set forth in chronological order.

MOTION---A formal proposal offered by a member for consideration and vote by the member's chamber or committee.

NON-DEBATABLE---Those subjects or motions that, pursuant to chamber rules, cannot be debated.

NOTICE CALENDAR---That portion of the calendar providing the list of legislation upon which a legislative body is scheduled to act on the next legislative day.

OATH OF OFFICE---The constitutional oaths or affirmations regarding legislative service that a member-elect is required to take prior to conducting legislative business.

ORDER TO LIE (a.k.a. LAY ON TABLE)---A method of setting aside a proposal that is currently pending that allows it to be called up at a later date.

ORDERS OF THE DAY---*See* ACTION CALENDAR.

OUT OF ORDER---Conduct that is not in accordance with proper parliamentary rules and procedures.

PAGES---Eighth grade students who apply and are selected to serve in small groups in an annual session to assist legislators with small tasks relating to official legislative business, such as supplying extra copies of bills, Journals, or Calendars; delivering communications between members; and running miscellaneous errands.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY---A member's question posed to the presiding officer to obtain clarification on a matter of procedure.

PASSAGE OF A BILL---A chamber's approval of a bill after its third reading in that chamber.

PENDING QUESTION---A question for determination that a chamber is currently considering.

PER DIEM---The Latin form of "per day," used in the context of daily expense allowances that legislators are entitled to receive.

PETITION---A formal request for legislative action submitted to a chamber by an individual or group.

POINT OF ORDER---A statement by a member calling the presiding officer's attention to another member's alleged breach of order or parliamentary procedure.

POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE---A statement defending the rights, reputation, or conduct of a legislator in the legislator's official capacity.

POSTPONE INDEFINITELY---A means of disposing of a matter and not setting a date to again consider it, with the effect being to prevent any further discussion of it for the remainder of the biennium.

POSTPONE TO A TIME CERTAIN---To defer consideration of a matter to a defined subsequent time or day.

PRECEDENT---A certain mode of procedure adopted for a specific circumstance that provides a guide for future similar circumstances, and which includes decisions made by a presiding officer in response to a point of order or by the body on an appeal thereof.

PRESIDENT---The Senate's presiding officer. By the Vermont Constitution, the Lieutenant Governor is the President of the Senate.

PRESIDENT *PRO TEMPORE*--- By the Vermont Constitution, a Senator elected by the Senate who acts as President in the President's absence.

PRESIDING OFFICER---The individual designated to generally guide and direct a legislative body's proceedings, including by preserving order and decorum, stating questions to be voted on by the body, and announcing the results of the body's votes. Unless absent, the Speaker presides

in the House, the Lieutenant Governor presides in the Senate, and the Lieutenant Governor presides in Joint Assembly.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR---Permission granted to a non-member of a legislative body to be in that portion of the legislative chamber during session that is otherwise reserved for members and staff.

PROCEDURE---Rules and traditional practices of a legislative body.

QUORUM---The constitutionally-required number of members of a legislative body that are necessary to be present to enable the body to conduct legislative business.

REAPPORTIONMENT---The periodic division of the State's population into legislative districts for the purpose of maintaining equality of representation among the districts as nearly as is practicable, which is at a minimum required to occur on a decennial basis after the taking of the U.S. Census.

RECEDE---A chamber's withdrawal of its proposed amendments to legislation.

RECESS---Intermission in a daily session.

RECOMMIT---To send a bill or resolution back to an original committee of reference upon a motion made by a member and agreed to by the chamber.

RECONSIDERATION---A process whereby a measure previously adopted or defeated can be reopened and acted on again.

REFERRAL---The sending of a bill or resolution to a committee of jurisdiction pursuant to chamber rules. *Cf.* COMMIT.

REGULAR ORDER OF BUSINESS---The established sequence of business set up for each legislative day.

REJECTION---An action that defeats a bill, motion, or other matter.

REPRESENTATIVE---A member of the House of Representatives.

RESOLUTION, JOINT---A type of legislation that affects the internal operation or procedures of the General Assembly, the members thereof, or both, and that must be adopted by both chambers to take effect. A resolution does not have the force or effect of law.

RESOLUTION, HOUSE OR SENATE---A type of legislation that affects the internal operation or procedures of a chamber, the members thereof, or both, and that must be adopted by that chamber to take effect.

RETURN OF CUSTODY---The return, upon a chamber's request, of legislation that has already been messaged by that chamber, in order to allow that chamber to further consider it.

REVENUE---Yield of taxes, fees, and other sources of income that the State collects.

ROLL CALL---A vote on an issue by the alphabetical calling of the individual names of the members of a chamber, each of which is recorded in the chamber's Journal.

RULES, ADMINISTRATIVE---Rules applicable to and adopted by agencies within the Executive Branch of State government in accordance with authority of law enacted by the Legislative Branch. *See* [3 V.S.A. ch. 25](#) (administrative procedure).

RULES, JUDICIAL---Rules applicable to the Judicial Branch that are promulgated by the Supreme Court of Vermont for the purpose of governing the administration of the courts and the practice and procedure in civil and criminal cases in courts. *See* [12 V.S.A. ch. 1](#) (rules of court).

RULES, LEGISLATIVE---Rules applicable to legislative procedure. The Vermont Constitution provides legislative rules; the House adopts House Rules, the Senate adopts Senate Rules, and the two chambers jointly adopt Joint Rules; and legislative rules are also derived from other sources of parliamentary law.

SECRETARY---A non-member officer elected by the Senate as its administrative officer and advisor on parliamentary procedure, who performs duties as prescribed in the Rules of the Senate.

SENATE---A legislative body, usually the body in a bicameral legislature having the fewer number of members. The Vermont Senate has 30 members.

SERGEANT AT ARMS---An officer of the Legislature elected by Joint Assembly to maintain order in and maintenance and upkeep of the State House.

SESSION---The formal continuous convening of the Legislature, from the first legislative day until adjournment *sine die*. The term may also be used to refer to an annual session within a two-year biennium, or to a daily legislative session.

SINE DIE---The Latin form of "without day," used in the term "adjournment *sine die*," which means to adjourn without a day being set to reconvene and which therefore constitutes the final adjournment of a biennium.

SPEAKER---The House's presiding officer, who is elected by the House.

SPECIAL ORDER---A matter of business set for a specified time and day.

SPONSOR---A legislator who is an author and proposer of a bill, resolution, or amendment.

STAND AT EASE---A term referring to that situation in which the House or Senate does not recess or adjourn and is therefore still in session, but pauses its deliberations, often for a brief period of time.

STANDING COMMITTEE---*See* COMMITTEE, STANDING.

STATE THE QUESTION---To place a question before a legislative body for its consideration.

STATUS OF A BILL---The progress of a bill at any given time in the legislative process. For example, a bill may be in committee, on the Notice Calendar, ordered to third reading, or in the other chamber.

STRIKE OUT---The deletion of language from a bill or resolution.

TERM OF OFFICE---The duration of time for which an official is elected at each election. In Vermont, all legislators are elected for two-year terms at the general election held in even-numbered years.

TITLE---A concise statement covering the subject matter of a bill.

UNICAMERAL---A legislature with only one legislative body. At this time, Nebraska is the only unicameral legislature in the United States. *Cf.* BICAMERAL.

VETO---The Governor's disapproval of a bill presented to the Governor for enactment following passage by the Legislature. A vetoed bill is returned to the Legislature, which votes by chamber on whether to override or sustain the Governor's veto.

VETO OVERRIDE---To pass a bill despite the Governor's veto of it, which requires a two-thirds vote of the members present in a chamber. If both chambers override the Governor's veto, the bill is enacted into law.

VETO SUSTAINED---The failure to override a Governor's veto, resulting in a bill not being enacted into law.

VOICE VOTE---An oral expression of the members when a question is submitted for their determination. The members' response is given by those voting "aye," followed by those voting "nay," and the presiding officer announces the officer's determination as to which side prevailed.

VOTE---Formal expression of will or decision by a legislative body.

VOTE, DIVISION---*See* DIVISION.

VOTE, ROLL CALL---*See* ROLL CALL.

WITHDRAW A BILL OR MOTION---The procedure for a member to recall a bill they introduced or a motion they offered.

WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION---A committee report that takes no position on legislation referred to it.

YEAS AND NAYS---A roll call vote.

YIELD---A member's relinquishing of the floor to another member to speak.