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S.39

An act relating to compensation and benefits for members of the Vermont
General Assembly

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

* * * Health Benefits * * *

Sec. 1. 3 V.S.A. § 631 is amended to read:

§ 631. GROUP INSURANCE FOR STATE EMPLOYEES; SALARY
DEDUCTIONS FOR INSURANCE, SAVINGS PLANS, AND
CREDIT UNIONS

(a)(1) The Secretary of Administration may contract on behalf of the State
with any insurance company or nonprofit association doing business in this
State to secure the benefits of franchise or group insurance. Beginning on
July 1, 1978, the terms of coverage under the policy shall be determined under
section 904 of this title, but it may include:

* * *

(2)(A)(i) As used in this section, the term “employees” includes any
class or classes of elected or appointed officials, State’s Attorneys, sheriffs,
employees of State’s Attorneys’ offices whose compensation is administered
through the State of Vermont payroll system, except contractual and temporary
employees, and deputy sheriffs paid by the State of Vermont pursuant to
24 V.S.A. § 290(b). The term “employees” ~~shall~~ does not include ~~members of~~

1 ~~the General Assembly as such~~, any person rendering service on a retainer or
2 fee basis, members of boards or commissions, or persons ~~other than employees~~
3 ~~of the Vermont Historical Society, the Vermont Film Corporation, the~~
4 ~~Vermont State Employees' Credit Union, Vermont State Employees'~~
5 ~~Association, and the Vermont Council on the Arts~~, whose compensation for
6 service is not paid from the State Treasury, or any elected or appointed official
7 ~~unless the~~ except as specifically provided pursuant to this subdivision
8 (a)(2)(A)(i). The term "employees" includes employees of the Vermont
9 Historical Society, the Vermont State Employees' Credit Union, the Vermont
10 State Employees' Association, the Vermont Council on the Arts, and any
11 elected or appointed official who is actively engaged in and devoting
12 substantially full-time to the conduct of the business of his or her the official's
13 public office. The term "employees" also includes members of the General
14 Assembly as set forth in subdivision (iv) of this subdivision (a)(2)(A).

15 * * *

16 (iv) For purposes of group hospital-surgical-medical expense
17 insurance, any employee assistance program offered to State employees, and
18 any flexible spending account program offered to State employees for health
19 care or dependent care expenses, or both, the term "employees" includes
20 members of the General Assembly.

21 (B)(i) The premiums for extending insurance coverage to employees

1 shall be paid in full by the Vermont Historical Society, ~~the Vermont Film~~
2 ~~Corporation~~, the Vermont State Employees' Association, the Vermont State
3 Employees' Credit Union, the Vermont Council on the Arts, or their respective
4 retirees. Nothing herein creates a legal obligation on the part of the State of
5 Vermont to pay any portion of the premiums required to extend insurance
6 coverage to this group of employees.

7 (ii) Members of the General Assembly shall be required to pay the
8 same portion of the premium for group hospital-surgical-medical expense
9 insurance as is required of employees of the Executive Branch.

10 * * *

11 * * * Compensation and Expenses * * *

12 Sec. 2. LEGISLATOR COMPENSATION FOR 2025–2026 BIENNIAL
13 SESSION

14 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of 32 V.S.A. § 1052 to the contrary,
15 members of the General Assembly other than the Speaker of the House and
16 President Pro Tempore of the Senate are entitled to the following weekly
17 salary amounts during the 2025–2026 Biennial Session:

18 (1) for 2025, a weekly salary of \$1,000.00 plus an adjustment consistent
19 with the compensation increase provided to other constitutional officers for
20 fiscal year 2025; and

21 (2) for 2026, a weekly salary of \$1,100.00 plus an adjustment consistent

1 with the compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers for
2 fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

3 (b) Notwithstanding any provision of 32 V.S.A. § 1051 to the contrary, the
4 Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate are entitled to
5 the following weekly salary amounts during the 2025–2026 Biennial Session:

6 (1) for 2025, a weekly salary of \$1,230.00 plus an adjustment consistent
7 with the compensation increase provided to other constitutional officers for
8 fiscal year 2025; and

9 (2) for 2026, a weekly salary of \$1,530.00 plus an adjustment consistent
10 with the compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers for
11 fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

12 (c) Notwithstanding any provision of 32 V.S.A. § 1051 to the contrary, the
13 Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate are entitled to
14 annual compensation for the 2025–2026 Biennial Session as follows:

15 (1) for 2025, an annual salary of \$19,000.00 plus an adjustment
16 consistent with the compensation increase provided to other constitutional
17 officers for fiscal year 2025; and

18 (2) for 2026, an annual salary of \$23,500.00 plus an adjustment
19 consistent with the compensation increases provided to other constitutional
20 officers for fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

21 (d) The weekly salary amounts set forth in subsections (a) and (b) of this

1 section shall apply in all circumstances during the 2025–2026 Biennial Session
2 in which legislator compensation is determined pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1051
3 or 1052, including per diem compensation under 2 V.S.A. § 23, special session
4 compensation, and adjournment compensation.

5 Sec. 3. 32 V.S.A. § 1051 is amended to read:

6 § 1051. SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE AND PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
7 OF THE SENATE; COMPENSATION AND EXPENSE
8 REIMBURSEMENT

9 (a) The Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate
10 shall be entitled to receive annual compensation of ~~\$10,080.00 for the 2005~~
11 \$28,300.00 for the first year of the 2027 Biennial Session and thereafter, to be
12 paid in biweekly payments, provided that, beginning on January 1, 2007, the
13 annual compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter by the cost of living
14 adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most recent collective
15 bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on July 1, 2021, plus an
16 adjustment consistent with the compensation increases provided to other
17 constitutional officers for fiscal years 2025–2027. Beginning on January 1,
18 2028 and annually thereafter on January 1, the annual compensation shall be
19 adjusted consistent with the compensation increases provided to other
20 constitutional officers. The salary of the Speaker and President Pro Tempore
21 shall be paid in biweekly installments.

1 Sec. 4. 32 V.S.A. § 1052 is amended to read:

2 § 1052. MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY; COMPENSATION
3 AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

4 (a) Compensation.

5 (1) Session compensation. Each member of the General Assembly,
6 other than the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the
7 Senate, is entitled to a weekly salary of ~~\$589.00 for the 2005~~ \$1,210.00 for the
8 first year of the 2027 Biennial Session, plus an adjustment consistent with the
9 compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers for fiscal years
10 2025–2027 and thereafter, provided that, beginning on January 1, 2007, the
11 weekly compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter by the cost of living
12 adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most recent collective
13 bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on July 1, 2021. Beginning on
14 January 1, 2028 and annually thereafter on January 1, the weekly
15 compensation shall be adjusted consistent with the compensation increases
16 provided to other constitutional officers. The salary of members shall be paid
17 in biweekly installments.

18 (2) Special session compensation. During a special session, a member is
19 entitled to an amount equal to one-fifth of the annually adjusted weekly
20 compensation set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection, rounded up to the
21 nearest dollar, for each day of a special session ~~on which the House of which~~

1 ~~he or she is a~~ that the House in which the member serves shall sit.

2 (3) Adjournment compensation. During adjournment of the General
3 Assembly, a member is entitled to an amount equal to one-fifth of the annually
4 adjusted weekly compensation set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection
5 (a), rounded up to the nearest dollar, for each week of the adjournment of the
6 General Assembly.

7 (b) Expenses. During any session of the General Assembly, each member
8 is entitled to receive an allowance for or reimbursement of expenses as
9 ~~follows:~~ set forth in this subsection.

10 (1) Mileage reimbursement. ~~Reimbursement~~ Each member shall receive
11 reimbursement in an amount equal to the actual mileage traveled for each day
12 of session in which the member travels between Montpelier and the member's
13 home or from Montpelier or from the member's home to another site on
14 officially sanctioned legislative business. Reimbursement of actual mileage
15 traveled under this subdivision shall be at the rate per mile determined by the
16 federal Office of Government-wide Policy and published in the Federal
17 Register for the year of the session.

18 (2) Meals and lodging allowance. Each member shall receive either a
19 meals allowance or reimbursement of actual meals expenses. Each member
20 shall inform the Office of Legislative Operations of the member's choice of a
21 meals allowance or meals expense reimbursement annually prior to the

1 convening of each regular and adjourned session, and the member's choice
2 shall remain in effect through the remainder of that session unless the member
3 notifies the Office, in writing, that the member needs to change that choice due
4 to a change in circumstances or for another compelling reason.

5 (A) Meals allowance. A member who elects to receive a meals
6 allowance ~~is~~ shall receive an amount equal to the daily amount for meals and
7 lodging determined for Montpelier, Vermont, by the federal Office of
8 Government-wide Policy and published in the Federal Register for the year of
9 the session; for each day the House in which the member serves shall sit.

10 (B) Meals reimbursement. A member who elects to receive
11 reimbursement of expenses shall receive reimbursement equal to the actual
12 amounts expended by the member for meals for each day that the House in
13 which the member serves shall sit, as well as meals for the night preceding the
14 first legislative day of each week during the legislative session. The amount of
15 the daily reimbursement available pursuant to this subdivision shall not exceed
16 the daily amount for meals determined for Montpelier, Vermont, by the federal
17 Office of Government-wide Policy and published in the Federal Register for
18 the year of the session. The member shall provide meal receipts or otherwise
19 substantiate the amounts expended to the Office of Legislative Operations in
20 the form and manner prescribed by the Director of Legislative Operations.

21 (3) Lodging. Each member shall receive either a lodging allowance or

1 reimbursement of actual lodging expenses. Each member shall inform the
2 Office of Legislative Operations of the member's choice of a lodging
3 allowance or lodging expense reimbursement annually prior to the convening
4 of each regular and adjourned session, and the member's choice shall remain in
5 effect through the remainder of that session unless the member notifies the
6 Office, in writing, that the member needs to change that choice due to a change
7 in circumstances or for another compelling reason.

8 (A) Lodging allowance. A member who elects to receive a lodging
9 allowance shall receive an amount equal to the daily amount for lodging
10 determined for Montpelier, Vermont, by the federal Office of Government-
11 wide Policy and published in the Federal Register for the year of the session
12 for each day the House in which the member serves shall sit.

13 (B) Lodging reimbursement. A member who elects to receive
14 reimbursement of expenses shall receive reimbursement equal to the actual
15 amounts expended by the member for lodging for each day that the House in
16 which the member serves shall sit, as well as lodging for the night preceding
17 the first legislative day of each week during the legislative session. The
18 amount of the daily reimbursement available pursuant to this subdivision shall
19 not exceed the daily amount for lodging determined for Montpelier, Vermont,
20 by the federal Office of Government-wide Policy and published in the Federal
21 Register for the year of the session. The member shall provide lodging

1 receipts or otherwise substantiate the amounts expended to the Office of
2 Legislative Operations in the form and manner prescribed by the Director of
3 Legislative Operations.

4 (4) Absences. If a member is absent for reasons other than sickness or
5 legislative business for one or more entire days while the house in which the
6 member sits is in session, the member shall notify the Office of Legislative
7 Operations of that absence, and ~~expenses received shall not include the amount~~
8 ~~that the legislator specifies was not incurred~~ the member shall not be
9 reimbursed for mileage, meals, or lodging expenses incurred during the period
10 of that absence.

11 (c) ~~For attending a meeting of the Joint Fiscal Committee when a member~~
12 ~~is not receiving compensation as a member of the General Assembly, a~~
13 ~~member of the Joint Fiscal Committee shall be entitled to the same per diem~~
14 ~~compensation and reimbursement for necessary expenses as provided members~~
15 ~~of the General Assembly for attendance at sessions of the General Assembly.~~

16 ~~[Repealed.]~~ Members-elect; stipend. Each member-elect of the General
17 Assembly who is not an incumbent shall receive a stipend in an amount equal
18 to one-fifth of the annually adjusted weekly compensation set forth in
19 subdivision (a)(1) of this section, rounded up to the nearest dollar, for each day
20 of attendance at an orientation program for new legislators organized by the
21 General Assembly and its staff.

1 (d) Death of a member. If a member of the General Assembly dies while
2 the General Assembly is in session, the estate of the deceased member shall be
3 entitled to receive compensation for the entire pay period in which the death
4 occurred.

5 * * * Legislative Leave from Employment * * *

6 Sec. 5. 21 V.S.A. § 496 is amended to read:

7 § 496. LEGISLATIVE LEAVE

8 (a) Any person who, in order to serve as a member of the General
9 Assembly, must leave a ~~full-time~~ position in the employ of any employer, shall
10 be entitled to a temporary or partial leave of absence for the purpose of
11 allowing such employee to perform any official duty in connection with ~~his or~~
12 ~~her~~ the person's elected office.

13 (b) An employee who intends to seek election to the General Assembly and
14 to invoke, if elected, ~~his or her~~ the right to a leave of absence pursuant to
15 subsection (a) of this section, shall notify ~~his or her~~ the employee's employer
16 of those intentions in writing within ~~10~~ 14 days after ~~filing the primary election~~
17 ~~nominating petition required by 17 V.S.A. § 2353 or of taking any other action~~
18 ~~required by 17 V.S.A. chapter 49, to place his or her name on a primary or~~
19 ~~general election ballot~~ being elected. An employee who fails to give notice to
20 ~~his or her~~ the employee's employer as required by this section shall be deemed
21 to have waived ~~his or her~~ the right to a leave of absence under subsection (a) of

1 this section.

2 * * *

3 * * * Legislative Service Working Group * * *

4 Sec. 6. LEGISLATIVE SERVICE WORKING GROUP

5 (a) Creation. There is created the Legislative Service Working Group to
6 consider issues related to serving as a member of the Vermont General
7 Assembly.

8 (b) Membership. The Working Group shall be composed of the following
9 members:

10 (1) three current members of the House of Representatives, not all from
11 the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;
12 and

13 (2) three current members of the Senate, not all from the same political
14 party, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees.

15 (c) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall consider and make
16 recommendations on issues involving legislative compensation and benefits,
17 staffing, administrative support, and the length of the legislative session,
18 including:

19 (1) the current compensation and benefits offered to members of the
20 General Assembly, including:

21 (A) whether current salaries and benefits, including those added or

1 increased by this act, are sufficient and, if not, how they should be increased;

2 (B) the impact of current salaries and benefits, including those added
3 or increased by this act, on recruiting and retaining members from diverse
4 backgrounds and life experiences;

5 (C) whether members should be offered additional benefits, including
6 reimbursement of child, dependent, and elder care expenses;

7 (D) whether members should have the option to receive a prorated
8 salary throughout the calendar year instead of receiving their full salary
9 amount during the months that the General Assembly is in session;

10 (E) whether supplemental compensation should be provided to
11 members who hold leadership positions in addition to the Speaker of the House
12 and Senate President Pro Tempore, including caucus leaders and committee
13 chairs; and

14 (F) how the salaries, benefits, and compensation structure in the
15 Vermont General Assembly compare to those of other state legislatures;

16 (2) whether changes to staffing are necessary, such as increasing the
17 number of legislative staff in existing staff offices, expanding the types of
18 legislative staff services available to members, adding caucus staff, and adding
19 personal staff or providing members with an allowance to hire their own
20 personal staff;

21 (3) how to increase the administrative support available to members to

1 increase their effectiveness and ability to respond efficiently to the needs of
2 their constituents; and

3 (4) whether changes should be made to the length or structure of the
4 legislative session.

5 (d) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative,
6 technical, and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Operations, the
7 Office of Legislative Counsel, the Office of Human Resources, and the Joint
8 Fiscal Office.

9 (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2024, the Working Group shall report
10 its findings and recommendations, including any recommendations for
11 legislative action, to the Speaker of the House, the Senate President Pro
12 Tempore, and the House Committee on Government Operations and Military
13 Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations. Drafts of the
14 Working Group's report shall be confidential unless publicly released.

15 (f) Meetings.

16 (1) The Office of Legislative Operations shall call the first meeting of
17 the Working Group to occur on or before July 1, 2023.

18 (2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at the
19 first meeting.

20 (3) A majority of the membership of the Working Group shall constitute
21 a quorum.

- 1 (e) The remaining sections shall take effect on January 1, 2025.