

Journal of the House

Thursday, February 29, 2024

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Jamaal Hankey, life coach and project manager, Essex Junction.

Message from the Senate No. 26

A message was received from the Senate by Ms. Gradel, its Assistant Secretary, as follows:

Madam Speaker:

I am directed to inform the House that:

The Senate has on its part passed Senate bills of the following titles:

S. 199. An act relating to mergers and governance of communications union districts.

S. 278. An act relating to prohibiting a comparative negligence defense in an action for a negligence claim relating to a sexual act or sexual conduct.

In the passage of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

Committee Bill Introduced; Referred to Committee on Ways and Means

H. 867

By the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs,
House bill, entitled

An act relating to miscellaneous amendments to the laws governing alcoholic beverages and the Board of Liquor and Lottery

Was read the first time and, pursuant to House Rule 35(a), affecting the revenue of the State, was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Committee Bill Introduced; Referred to Committee on Ways and Means

H. 868

By the Committee on Transportation,
House bill, entitled

An act relating to the fiscal year 2025 Transportation Program and miscellaneous changes to laws related to transportation

Was read the first time and, pursuant to House Rule 35(a), affecting the revenue of the State, was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Senate Bills Referred

Senate bills of the following titles were severally taken up, read the first time, and referred to committee as follows:

S. 199

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to mergers and governance of communications union districts

To the Committee on Environment and Energy.

S. 278

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to prohibiting a comparative negligence defense in an action for a negligence claim relating to a sexual act or sexual conduct

To the Committee on Judiciary.

Bill Referred to Committee on Ways and Means

H. 706

House bill, entitled

An act relating to banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides

Appearing on the Notice Calendar, and pursuant to House Rule 35(a), affecting the revenue of the State, was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Joint Resolution Placed on Calendar

J.R.S. 47

By Senator McCormack,

J.R.S. 47. Joint resolution providing for a Joint Assembly to vote on the retention of two Superior Judges and one Magistrate.

Whereas, declarations have been submitted by the following two Superior Judges that they be retained for another six-year term, Judge John R. Treadwell, and Judge Lisa A. Warren and one Magistrate that he be retained for another six year term, Magistrate Barry E. Peterson, and

Whereas, the procedures of the Joint Committee on Judicial Retention require at least one public hearing and the review of information provided by each candidate and the comments of members of the Vermont bar and the public, and

Whereas, Subsection 608(b) of Title 4, requires the committee to complete its evaluation of judicial performance of the candidates seeking to be retained in office by March 7, 2024, and subsection 10(b) of Title 2 requires a vote in Joint Assembly to be held on March 14, 2024, and

Whereas, subsection 608(g) of Title 4 permits the General Assembly to defer action on the retention of judges to a subsequent Joint Assembly when the Committee is not able to make a timely recommendation, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the two Houses meet in Joint Assembly on Tuesday, March 26, 2024, at ten o'clock and thirty minutes in the forenoon to vote on the retention of two Superior Judges and one Magistrate.

Was read by title and placed on the Action Calendar on the next legislative day pursuant to House Rule 52.

Ceremonial Reading

H.C.R. 162

House concurrent resolution honoring Sergeant at Arms Janet Miller for her stellar public service for the General Assembly

Offered by: All Members of the House

Offered by: All Members of the Senate

Whereas, at the State House, the green-jacketed Sergeant at Arms is responsible for overseeing security through the Capitol Police and coordinating the schedule of myriad nonofficial events ranging from Farmers Night to the annual convening of Girls State and Boys State, as well as determining which aspiring eighth graders are invited to serve as legislative pages, and

Whereas, Janet Miller earned an associate degree in graphic art from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, and her innate creativity has served her well, and

Whereas, in 1999, after working in the hospitality industry at the Inn at Montpelier, she joined the support staff of the former Legislative Council and, in 2012, was promoted to a deputy directorship, and

Whereas, in 2015, Janet Miller's proven record of excellence at the Legislative Council persuaded members of the General Assembly to elect her Sergeant at Arms, and her electoral victories in 2017, 2019, 2021, and 2023 confirmed the wisdom of their original decision, and

Whereas, in March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck Vermont, the General Assembly pivoted to a virtual legislative world, and Janet Miller offered support and guidance, and, equally important, as the Legislative Branch cautiously returned to in-person meetings in the summer of 2021, Janet Miller became an ad hoc public health warden, rearranging meeting spaces, arranging COVID-19 testing opportunities, and posting room capacity, vaccination, and testing information throughout the State House, and

Whereas, Janet Miller also became immersed in construction minutiae, with a major HVAC project underway and continuing discussions of possible additions to the State House, and

Whereas, after being elected five times as Sergeant at Arms, Janet Miller has announced the conclusion of her tenure, effective March 1, 2024, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly honors Sergeant at Arms Janet Miller for her stellar public service for the General Assembly, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Janet Miller.

Having been adopted in concurrence on Tuesday, February 27, 2024 in accord with Joint Rule 16b, was read.

Third Reading; Bills Passed

House bills of the following titles were severally taken up, read the third time, and passed:

H. 629

House bill, entitled

An act relating to changes to property tax abatement and tax sales

H. 694

House bill, entitled

An act relating to sexual exploitation

Bill Committed Pending Second Reading

H. 128

House bill, entitled

An act relating to removing regulatory barriers for working lands businesses

Was taken up and pending second reading, **Rep. Durfee of Shaftsbury** moved that the bill be committed to the Committee on Environment and Energy, which was agreed to.

Adjournment

At three o'clock and twenty-eight minutes in the afternoon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until tomorrow at nine o'clock and thirty minutes in the forenoon.