

1 An act relating to the County and Regional Governance Study Committee

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

3 Sec. 1. COUNTY AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE STUDY

4 COMMITTEE; REPORT

5 (a) Legislative intent and creation of Committee.

6 (1) Legislative intent. It is the intent of the General Assembly that
7 existing direct coordination and communication between the State and
8 Vermont municipalities should be retained or strengthened. County or regional
9 governance should enhance the work of local and State governments and not
10 become a procedural barrier between the State and municipalities.

11 (2) Creation of Committee. There is created the County and Regional
12 Governance Study Committee to address local government capacity
13 challenges, enhance and optimize public safety, regional collaboration and
14 planning, efficient, equitable, and transparent public resource allocation, and
15 effective regional public services for individuals and municipalities.

16 (b) Membership. The Committee shall be, to the extent possible, composed
17 of members from geographically diverse regions of the State. The Committee
18 shall elect its chair from among its members. The Committee shall be
19 composed of the following members:

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

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

3 (c) Powers and duties.

4 (1) The Committee shall study and make recommendations to the
5 General Assembly on how to improve the structure and organization of county
6 and regional government, including:

7 (A) [coordination](#) and optimization of [regional government provided](#)
8 [by State, regional, and local agencies, including for public safety, emergency](#)
9 [management, and public health purposes;](#)

10 (B) enhancement of regional collaboration and planning [and](#)
11 [implementation;](#)

12 (C) [coordination, increased transparency, potential efficiencies, and](#)
13 [service improvements of nongovernmental agencies providing regional public](#)
14 [services, including but not limited to designated mental health agencies and](#)
15 [public transit providers;](#)

16 (D) efficient, equitable, and transparent allocation of public
17 resources;

18 (E) promotion of effective regional public services for individuals
19 and municipalities;

20 (F) [review](#) the role and [authority](#) of elected county officials and their
21 departments;

1 (G) reduction of duplicated or conflicting public services and
2 promotion of opportunities for intermunicipal collaboration;

3 (H) balance of availability and cost of services across municipalities
4 in each county;

5 (I) review of mechanisms of county and regional government
6 structures in other states;

7 (J) impact of climate change and resiliency on the maintenance of
8 public infrastructure, delivery of regional government services, and
9 coordination of regional emergency planning; and

10 (K) the role of Department of Public Safety and Vermont Emergency
11 Management in responding to all hazards events.

12 (2) The Committee may, through the Joint Fiscal Office, contract with
13 one or more consultants to assist with research, preparation of the report, and
14 any other assistance with the Committee's work deemed necessary by the
15 Committee.

16 (d) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative, technical,
17 and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Operations, the Office of
18 Legislative Counsel, and the Joint Fiscal Office.

19 (e) Report. On or before November 1, 2027, the Committee shall report to
20 the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the

1 Senate Committee on Government Operations with its findings and any
2 recommendations for legislative action.

3 (f) Meetings.

4 (1) The Chair of the Senate Committee on Government Operations shall
5 call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on or before September 1,
6 2024.

7 (2) [\[Repealed.\]](#)

8 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

9 (4) The Committee shall cease to exist on [November 2, 2027](#).

10 (g) Compensation and reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during
11 adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee
12 serving in the member's capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem
13 compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for
14 not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies
15 appropriated to the General Assembly.

16 Sec. 2. COUNTY AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE TECHNICAL

17 ADVICE

18 (a) On or before September 1, 2024, the Executive Director of the Vermont
19 Bond Bank, shall convene the first meeting of a County and Regional
20 Governance Technical Advisory Group. The Technical Advisory Group shall
21 analyze the subject matter being considered by the County and Regional

1 Governance Study Committee and advise, assist, and provide
2 recommendations to the Study Committee, specifically on the structure and
3 organization of county and regional government. The Vermont Bond Bank
4 shall participate in order to support improvements to local capacity.

5 (b) The following individuals and entities shall be invited to participate in
6 the meeting or meetings described in this section:

7 (1) the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs;

8 (2) the State Court Administrator;

9 (3) the Vermont Association of County Judges;

10 (4) the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies;

11 (5) the Vermont Municipal Clerks' and Treasurers' Association;

12 (6) the Vermont League of Cities and Towns;

13 (7) the Vermont Regional Development Corporations;

14 (8) the Vermont School Boards Association;

15 (9) the Vermont Town and City Management Association; and

16 (10) other relevant stakeholders identified by the Technical Advisory
17 Group.

18 (c) The Study Committee may at any time request advice from the
19 Technical Advisory Group regarding issues relating to the structure and
20 organization of county and regional government, which shall be provided by
21 the Technical Advisory Group.

1 Sec. 3. FEDERAL DISASTER FUNDING FOR COUNTY AND
2 REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS REPORT

3 On or before September 15, 2024, the Secretary of Administration, or
4 designee, shall report to the County and Regional Governance Study
5 Committee on federal funding opportunities resulting from the disaster
6 declaration for the major flooding events of 2023 in the State, including the
7 received federal funds, the status of pending applications for funding, and
8 potential avenues for additional funds. The Secretary, or designee, shall
9 provide an analysis of the impact of Vermont's lack of robust county or
10 regional governance on the receipt of federal emergency funding.

11 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

12 This act shall take effect on passage.