

1 H.489

2 Introduced by Representative Moran of Wardsboro

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Study committee; budget; public participation pilot project

6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create a  
7 public participation in budget development pilot project study committee.

8 An act relating to a study committee concerning public participation in the  
9 budget process

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

11 Sec. 1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BUDGET DEVELOPMENT PILOT  
12 PROJECT STUDY COMMITTEE

13 (a) Statement of purpose. The State of Vermont is committed, according to  
14 32 V.S.A. § 306a, to enable direct and meaningful public participation in the  
15 development of the State's budget and spending and revenue policy. The  
16 budget process shall begin with direct public participation that informs budget  
17 work in both the Executive and Legislative Branches. The participating public  
18 shall review and recommend budget goals as well as specific spending and  
19 revenue initiatives, and this process may include:

1           (1) regional community meetings to develop proposals at which  
2           delegates will be selected to work together to develop statewide  
3           recommendations from the regional proposals;

4           (2) presentation of recommendations to the Governor and General  
5           Assembly; and

6           (3) monitoring the extent that the recommendations are incorporated in  
7           the budget.

8           (b) Creation of committee. There is created a Public Participation in  
9           Budget Development Pilot Project Study Committee.

10          (c) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of seven members.  
11          Four members shall be members of the General Assembly. Two members  
12          shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, not from  
13          the same political party. Two members shall be appointed by the Committee  
14          of Committees of the Senate, not from the same political party. Three  
15          members shall be appointed by the Governor, and these members shall have  
16          experience in strengthening public participation and civic engagement.

17          (d) Powers and duties. The Committee shall:

18               (1) develop a process of public participation in the development of the  
19               budget that includes community meetings in two planning regions of the State.  
20               The purpose of these meetings shall be to recommend budget goals and review,  
21               propose, and prioritize state spending and revenue initiatives;

- 1           (2) hold a minimum of one community meeting in each region. This  
2           meeting will be facilitated by the Vermont Council on Rural Development in  
3           the first year, and the community meeting will appoint a facilitator for the  
4           subsequent year. One delegate for each region shall be appointed by the  
5           community meeting to reconcile budget and revenue proposals between the  
6           regions by August 1 of each year and present proposals to the Governor and  
7           General Assembly;
- 8           (3) request revenue estimates, needs assessments, and other budget  
9           information from the Governor and other public entities as needed;
- 10           (4) develop a method for monitoring the consideration of public  
11           proposals in the budget process and final budget;
- 12           (5) develop an outreach strategy to reduce barriers to participation in  
13           this process and facilitate broad access to information and meetings;
- 14           (6) ensure that community meetings are inclusive and adequately  
15           supported to enable the participation of people from marginalized and  
16           vulnerable communities;
- 17           (7) develop a framework for incorporating the principles of universality,  
18           equity, and dignity, as expressed in 32 V.S.A. § 306a, into the facilitation of  
19           the meetings, as well as into the proposal of budget measures to account for the  
20           scope and severity of need.

1           (e) Reports. The Pilot Project Committee shall produce two reports:

2           (1) By January 15, 2014, the Committee shall report to the General  
3           Assembly on the status of the public participation process, and this report shall  
4           include:

5                   (A) an explanation of the methodology and processes developed,  
6                   including measures taken for facilitating the incorporation of public proposals  
7                   in the Governor's budget proposal;

8                   (B) an assessment of barriers to participation and barriers to the  
9                   uptake of public proposals;

10                   (C) an analytical framework for incorporating the principles of  
11                   universality, equity, and dignity, as expressed in 32 V.S.A. § 306a, in the  
12                   participation process; and

13                   (D) guidance for preparing and publishing an accessible and  
14                   easy-to-understand version of the budget and related information.

15           (2) By January 15, 2014, the Committee shall report to the General  
16           Assembly on the status of the public participation process, and this report shall  
17           include:

18                   (A) an evaluation of the pilot projects;

19                   (B) proposals for expanding or revising the methodology and  
20                   frameworks outlined in the first report;

21                   (C) a plan of action for continuing the pilots on a permanent basis  
22                   and expanding them to all regions; and

1           (D) a cost estimate for establishing and maintaining a continuous  
2 participation process in all regions.

3           (f) Term; number of meetings; reimbursement. The Committee shall exist  
4 for two years and shall cease to exist on January 15, 2015. The Committee  
5 shall meet not more than a total of 12 times. For attendance at meetings during  
6 adjournment of the General Assembly, legislative members of the Committee  
7 shall be entitled to compensation and reimbursement for expenses as provided  
8 in 2 V.S.A. § 406; and other members of the Committee who are not  
9 employees of the State of Vermont shall be reimbursed at the per diem rate set  
10 in 32 V.S.A. § 1010.

11           (g) Appropriation. The sum of \$8,000.00 is appropriated from the General  
12 Fund in fiscal year 2014 for per diem and expenses under this section.

13       Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

14           This act shall take effect on July 1, 2013.