

Secretary of State's Office Legislative Overview for Government Operations (1/5/2016)

As VT's 38th SOS, and head of an agency touching so many VTers lives every single day, I am honored to be able to continue working toward:

- open, transparent government and
- good government solutions that are
 - well-designed,
 - efficient, and
 - customer friendly
 - while still protecting the VTers we serve.

As you know, we have four divisions here at the SoS Office:

- **OPR** – Protecting the public's health and safety through professional regulation and leading the way with efficient and effective licensing and enforcement systems
- **VSARA** – Preserving/protecting our state's most valued history, public records, and the access to those public records by working collaboratively with the rest of state gov't
- **Elections** – Safeguarding the integrity and accuracy of our elections while increasing voter participation and creating more effective election administration
- **Corporations** – Ensuring proper registration and public protection while facilitating business and commerce in VT
- **Administration/Business Office** – A fifth "division" of our office making sure we live within our means, provide true accounting of our budgets, and have the resources needed to provide services

In addition to these divisions, we have many other programs, to name a few...

- **Municipal** – Fielding inquiries every day from muni officials and from VT citizens, providing much needed guidance on how to operate within the law (mention Jenny, focus on muni and publication and website updates coming soon)
- **Public records / Open meetings** – Increasing transparency in gov't by providing for free, open examination of records consistent with Chapter I, Article 6 of the VT Constitution and the public's right to observe and participate in public meetings
- **Civics Education** – Encouraging our youth and adults to engage in civics (mention Liz?)
- **Safe at Home** – Providing an address confidentiality for victims of DV, sexual assault, and stalking (~100 participants at any given time)
- **Temporary Officiant Program** – Allowing individuals to register with our office to perform a single marriage (~1200 / yr)

- **APA Rules and Legislative Clerk** – The repository for all acts and resolves passed by the legislature and the processing gatekeeper ensuring that all administrative rules filings comply with public notice and hearing requirements
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Overview of 2015

- Continued our focus on improving customer service, productivity, and efficiency and providing good government solutions
 - Maintaining and improving access to information for transparency, including the 2015 Transparency Tour (now more than 40 presentations across the state since 2011)
 - New Election Management Platform completed – lobbyist, camp fi, MVP, OLVR, elections administration – election night reporting
 - This continues our string of successful IT projects - OPR, Corps, Website, Elections which make for better service, more accurate and accessible data, and bridging the trust gap we see too often between the people we serve and their government
 - Staff updates:
 - **Chris Winters** - one year as Deputy Secretary
 - **Colin Benjamin** - one year as Director of OPR
 - **Marlene Betit** - named Director of Corporations division
 - **Jenny Prosser** - General Counsel and Municipal Assistance
 - OPR added **3 valuable positions**: asst. director, research & statistics analyst, additional enforcement position (thank you Gov Ops for last year's support)
 - **One RIF** in Corps Division
 - VSARA hired its first ever chief records officer and first ever digital archivist
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2016 Goals... (specific division goals listed further below)

- Continued emphasis on efficiency and good government solutions
- Carrying out our statutory mandates/mission by administering smart gov't programs - but only where necessary and only to the extent necessary to accomplish that mission
- Streamline processes, right-size our regulatory programs and focus on excellent customer service – eliminating the red tape wherever we can
- We assist the Legislature, the Administration and other state agencies by unifying similar state services, eliminating redundancies and streamlining processes
- And provide a renewed focus on core missions and on customer service
- We must share resources and best practices

- **Licensing and business registration are two areas where this is a possibility right away (OPR Licensing harmonization & NGLP, a major part of this year's Legislative agenda)**
- **Corps Biz Portal another example of interagency collaboration benefitting the agencies involved and, more importantly, the VT businesses we serve**
- **Additionally, we have more specific goals for each division, a few of which I will briefly cover here**

OPR summary and mission

- **OPR Serves 46 professions and ~60,000 licensees with a staff of 35, including 3 new**
- **Protects the public from unethical, incompetent and unprofessional behavior by licensed practitioners in professions/occupations regulated by providing administrative, investigative, and legal assistance to the regulatory programs for these professions**
- **Sets and enforces standards for licensure and for practice once licensed**
- **Ensures equity in licensing, regulation & discipline**
- **Fairly and responsibly administers the rules and statutes pertaining to these professions/occupations**
- **Serves the public, employers and licensees in all aspects of our lives every day, from accountants to cosmetologists to nurses to veterinarians.**

2015 Accomplishments

- **Continued improvements in technology allowed for increased online renewals for every profession – at ~98%**
- **> 40 professions and > 100 license types are now online for initial applications, reducing processing times dramatically.**
 - **30% processed the same day,**
 - **75% in 3 days or less – these can be complicated applications with lots of requirements and built in lengthy process where hours of experience and multiple exams are required**
- **5 years ago average processing times were 3 times longer (58 days vs 18 days) (numbers include the complex professions)**
- **Reformed the hearing and enforcement process to improve the due process, ensure fair outcomes, and increase efficiency.**
 - **Case processing times dropping due to streamlined process**

- Improved metrics/benchmarks - with the addition of a research & statistics analyst
 - Began planning for the next generation licensing platform:
 - Created “business process manager” from existing vacancy – focus on process
 - Extensive business analysis and requirements gathering
 - Extensive requirements and wish list in an RFP
 - Currently in negotiations for work to begin next month
 - If all goes well, this will take OPR to the next level of service and efficiency and will position OPR to more easily onboard new professions with minimal reliance on the vendor
 - Other items of note:
 - Sunrise review for Massage Therapy
 - Evaluation of ADAC program
 - Onboarding of Applied Behavior Analysts
 - Improved pharmacy inspection program
 - Workforce data collection at renewal time
 - shared with health care workforce planning
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2016 Goals

- Next Generation Licensing Platform initiated with first several professions complete
 - Staff trained for self-supporting onboarding new professions and system configuration
 - Continue to implement paperless renewal and initial licensure at the next level of customer service allowed by the NGLP – saving money, improving efficiency equally
 - Continue to develop workload metrics reports to improve performance measurements
 - Continue reducing application and case processing times
 - Implement new professions (ABA, forester, dental therapists, ADAC, AOE duplicate professions)
 - Position OPR to take on additional professions from other agencies where it makes sense
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Legislation 2016

- OPR Bill – sunset provisions, ADAC transfer, potential DEC transfer
- Massage therapy sunrise
- Dental Therapists still pending

- Report on use of the title “social worker”
- Foresters
- SLP and Audiologist separation from AOE (Senate bill)
- Explore reporting of other state agency licensing
- Notaries – having conversations with the side judges to find a solution, still need to update standards for notaries regardless

VSARA summary and mission

- To provide, protect, promote, and preserve Vermont public records, in collaboration with other public agencies, for the benefit of the public
- Envision that VT public records, the cornerstone of gov’t transparency and a knowledgeable and informed VT, are recognized and managed as public assets
- Serving VT citizens, companies, organizations and media as well as those from other states and countries
- Also working with public agencies, public employees at state and local levels to help them manage their records
- Currently 15 staff members: the state archivist, who directs VSARA; 4 members in the administrative services unit; 3 record center staff; 4 record analysts; and 3 archivists.

2015 Accomplishments

- Processed and indexed almost 14,000 notary appointments received from counties
- Hired the state’s first Chief Records Officer and first Digital Records Analyst/Archivist
- Renewed collaboration with the Department of Information and Innovation (DII) to encourage the State to adopt IT systems and other technologies that will support agencies and their efforts to effectively manage their records and information
- Expanded records management training and consultations for state and local employees
- Enhanced public programming by initiating and expanding upon Archives Month activities
- Updated and streamlined procedures related to records processing and cataloging
- Finalized renovation plans for the State Records Center
- Implemented the state’s first digital archives for permanent, archival digital records

2016 Goals:

- **Streamline statutory filings within the Secretary of State's Office and recommend changes to those that are outdated or not appropriately assigned**
 - **Support H.206, An act related to the regulation of notaries public**
 - **Better define expectations for agency records management programs and advocate for the hiring of more agency records managers**
 - **Participate in project pilots and issue State Information Management Standards related to Office 365 in partnership with DII/Agency of Administration**
 - **Reengineer the State Records Management Program to include audits of agency records management programs and compliance measures**
 - **Incorporate processes for preserving and making accessible digital records into existing procedures**
 - **Process and prepare for the release of Governor Douglas' closed records in January 2017 and finalize transfer protocol for Governor Shumlin's records (also January 2017)**
 - **Release beta version of online access to records in the digital archives**
 - **Completion of planned renovations to the State Records Center and related staff areas**
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Legislation 2016

- **Libraries cleanup (positions)**
 - **Vital records**
 - **Orphan programs and statutory filings**
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ELECTIONS summary and mission

- **To preserve the integrity of campaigns and elections**
 - **To provide a customer friendly environment to educate and train citizens, voters, candidates, lobbyists and public officials by:**
 - **administering federal and state law relating to elections**
 - **promoting voter registration**
 - **overseeing and assisting in the conduct of elections**
 - **providing for campaign finance disclosure**
 - **lobbyist disclosure**
 - **Staff of 5 administering all of the above**
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2015 Accomplishments:

- **Design, testing and launch of a new Elections Management System (EMS), Online Voter Registration (OVR) and My Voter Page (MVP)**
- **All modules have received extremely positive feedback from users and members of the public and no state has accomplished as many new systems in such a short time**
 - **instant publishing capabilities makes info public faster and easier than ever before**
 - **allows users the ability to create a profile to store information and autofill text that saves time and makes the systems user friendly.**
- **Completed the training and support of all town clerks – significant achievement to manage this amount of change for 246 clerks and install an extensive new election management system**
- **1200 voter registrations since implementation 3 months ago**
- **Continued implementation of a new Campaign Finance Information System**
 - **voluntary during the 2014 campaign cycle.**
 - **mandatory in January 2015 for the 2015-16 reporting period.**
- **Continued implementation of new Lobbyist Info System, registrations and renewals**
- **Support to municipalities, education and outreach with VLCT, including:**
 - **Town meeting day and local elections support, education and training:**
 - **publication of the 2015-2016 Elections calendar,**
 - **timely elections bulletins,**
 - **responding to specific requests for information and advice relating to elections, campaign finance, lobbyist disclosure and muni questions Jenny assist)**
 - **joint trainings with VSBA and VLCT, including on Act 46**

2016 Goals:

- **Successful implementation of new EMS**
- **Successful town meeting, presidential primary, statewide primary, and general elections**
- **Continued support/education for muni officials and VTers about election issues, including collaboration with VLCT, VSBA and AOE on school dist. mergers & ACT 46 implementation**
- **Voter registration initiatives, increasing voter access (EDR, automatic)**
- **I look forward to continuing to work with the towns toward successfully administered elections and preparing for election day registration in 2017**

Legislation 2016

- Report on EDR
- Explore automatic voter registration (H458, working with DMV)

CORPORATIONS mission and summary

- Strive to provide a business friendly environment and facilitate doing business in Vermont through the business registration of corps, partnerships, LLCs, UCC filings, trademark and trade name registrations
- Serving businesses and the general public with a staff of 5 employees

2015 Accomplishments:

- Almost 100,000 unique transactions per year
- Collecting approximately \$ 5.5 million in annual receipts
- New LLC overhaul law implemented
- New Corps System cont'd from last year
 - ~95% online, expecting user increase with better familiarity & web savvy
 - Business registration, annual reports, changes to corporate docs, liens, and renewals all to be handled on-line
 - Previously: 30-40,000 annual reports in the mail and 8-10 weeks to process
 - Today: done in seconds online, in real time
 - Previously: business registration in 10-12 days
 - Today: same day and in many cases within the hour (UCC filings also)
- THE ONE-STOP BIZPORTAL – collaboration with Tax and Labor
 - All new businesses enter their information only once and multiple agencies are able to share that data for separate functions in tax and labor
 - A single login and inbox per business means that all of your business related compliance needs with the state are now in one place
 - The Vermont Dep't of Tax and Labor experience very positive - user friendly and much more efficient than paper filing
 - Good for the agency, good for the customer
 - Press conference and demo coming soon

2016 goals

- Phase II of the One Stop Business Portal – how else can we help make it easier to do business in Vermont while making it easier for the agencies as well?
 - Revise entity registrations for consistency with the updated LLC laws
 - Records management cleanup – increase access to agency records, improve internal efficiency in responding to requests
 - Continue to assist customers with online filings and comfort with the system
 - Continue to increase efficiency and reduce processing times
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Municipal – Receive inquiries every day - municipal officials, VT citizens & media

- Deputy was the main point of contact in 2015, General Counsel now taking these calls and focused on improving training and education for 2016
- Will be updating much of the website and many of the publications in the coming year
- Opinions newsletter will continue – we are moving the newsletter online for cost saving purposes

Public records and open meetings

- VT law has better clarity and accountability every year as case law evolves, public and agencies are more educated about its requirements
- Have made ~40 Transparency Tour presentations across VT, 12 more this Fall
- Looking forward to working with this committee as it moves forward with the OML bill in the Senate (S.114)

Ethics

- Glad it is being taken up
 - Will be asking you to consider including municipal officials, campaign finance enforcement, and determination of open meeting and public record questions
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In closing

- There are multiple opportunities across state government to eliminate duplication, to share resources, and improve upon older models of regulation.
- We must continue to break down the silos across state government, cut the red tape, find those efficiencies, and do more with less
- By improving service and making responsible reforms we instill confidence and trust, improve compliance, and provide stability and predictability for those we regulate

- **Structural, sustainable changes requires hard work, focus and attention to detail**
- **While the effort invested up front might not pay immediate dividends, it will result in a much bigger payoff in the long run in terms of efficiency, customer service, public protection and fiscal responsibility**
- **With your support, I think we can really make a difference and craft good government solutions that we can all proudly stand behind**
- **Thank you again for the hard work your committees do every year to help us help the Vermonters served by the Secretary of State's Office - I appreciate your attention to making government work as efficiently as possible.**