

Journal of the Senate

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2015

The Senate was called to order by the President.

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by the Reverend Stephen Edington of Montpelier.

Pledge of Allegiance

The President then led the members of the Senate in the pledge of allegiance.

Joint Senate Resolution Adopted on the Part of the Senate

Joint Senate resolution of the following title was offered, read and adopted on the part of the Senate, and is as follows:

By Senators Baruth and Benning,

J.R.S. 11. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, January 30, 2015, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, February 3, 2015.

Joint Resolution Referred

J.R.H. 1.

Joint resolution originating in the House of the following title was read the first time and is as follows:

Joint resolution expressing support for the Public Service Board's establishment of FairPoint Communications service investigation docket and urging the management of FairPoint Communications to settle the current employee strike in order to restore reliable telecommunications services in Vermont.

Whereas, since 2008, FairPoint Communications (FairPoint) has been Vermont's primary provider of landline telecommunications services, and

Whereas, although FairPoint promised to add hundreds of new jobs in the three northern New England states, the company's post-2009 bankruptcy workforce is now 20 percent smaller than in 2008, and

Whereas, in August 2014, FairPoint made what the company described as its last offer to its unionized employees for a new contract, and

Whereas, the proposal would have resulted in reduced benefits, but the unionized employees remained at work for two months and offered FairPoint \$200 million in concessions, and Whereas, after their best efforts and much frustration, in October 2014 the employees' two unions, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2326 and Communications Workers of America Local 1400, authorized a strike against FairPoint, and

Whereas, since the strike started, consumer complaints have risen approximately 500 percent resulting in much personal and commercial inconvenience, and

Whereas, on November 28, 2014, the State's E-911 system missed 83 calls in part due to FairPoint's operational problems, and

Whereas, at the request of the Department of Public Service, the Public Service Board, on December 9, 2014, established Docket 8390 to investigate the service problems FairPoint has encountered, and

Whereas, Governor Peter Shumlin, the congressional delegation, and the leadership of the General Assembly's Working Vermonters Caucus have written letters to FairPoint's CEO Paul Sunu calling on FairPoint to return in good faith to the negotiating table, and the Caucus' letter indicated that failure to reach a fair and timely settlement would result in General Assembly members' examination of FairPoint's "financial strength and managerial competence to properly serve the people of Vermont," and

Whereas, on January 4, 2015, in Washington, D.C., the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service convened a meeting between the parties at which the Service assumed a more proactive role than in a prior session, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly expresses support for the Public Service Board's establishment of a FairPoint Communications service investigation docket and urges the management of FairPoint Communications to settle the current employee strike in order to restore reliable telecommunications services in Vermont, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to FairPoint Communications CEO Paul Sunu, FairPoint Vermont President Beth Fastiggi, Governor Peter Shumlin, the Public Service Department, and the Public Service Board.

Thereupon, in the discretion of the President, under Rule 51, the joint resolution was treated as a bill and referred to the Committee on Finance.

Joint Resolution Placed on Calendar

J.R.H. 2.

Joint resolution originating in the House of the following title was read the first time and is as follows:

Joint resolution supporting a woman's right to decide her own reproductive choices, commemorating the 42nd anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, and the 50th anniversary of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England.

Whereas, on January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), established that the U.S. Constitution protects a woman's right to privacy and limits government interference with medical decisions, and

Whereas, the General Assembly believes that the decision in Roe v. Wade ensures that abortion remains a safe and legal procedure for a woman to consider, if and when she needs it, and

Whereas, as the State of Vermont pursues major health care reform, it should be a public policy goal to enhance the health of all citizens, including women of all ages, and to strengthen individuals and families by encouraging and promoting access to comprehensive family planning services and to prenatal support services that help ensure planned pregnancies remain healthy throughout their entire term, and

Whereas, the General Assembly believes that abortion is a deeply personal and often complex decision for a woman, and therefore whether to choose adoption, end a pregnancy, or raise a child must be left to the woman, her family, and her faith, with the counsel of her doctor or health care provider, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That on the 42nd anniversary of Roe v. Wade and the 50th anniversary of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, the General Assembly urges Congress and other state legislatures to preserve the rights protected in Roe v. Wade, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly recognizes the critical importance of continued access to safe and legal abortion, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly reaffirms the right of every Vermont woman to privacy, autonomy, and safety in making personal decisions regarding reproduction and family planning, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly acknowledges and celebrates Planned Parenthood of Northern New England's 50 years of providing high quality health services to Vermonters and advocating for women's health, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Congressional Delegation.

Thereupon, in the discretion of the President, under Rule 51, the joint resolution was placed on the Calendar for action tomorrow.

Bills Introduced

Senate bills of the following titles were severally introduced, read the first time and referred:

S. 40.

By Senator Pollina,

An act relating to the creation of a Vulnerable Adult Fatality Review Team.

To the Committee on Health & Welfare.

S. 41.

By Senator Ashe,

An act relating to developing a strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of individual tax expenditures.

To the Committee on Finance.

S. 42.

By Senators Lyons and Ayer,

An act relating to the substance abuse system of care.

To the Committee on Health & Welfare.

S. 43.

By Senator Rodgers,

An act relating to the list of delinquent taxpayers.

To the Committee on Finance.

Adjournment

On motion of Senator Campbell, the Senate adjourned until one o'clock in the afternoon on Wednesday, January 28, 2015.