

Journal of the Senate

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2016

In the absence of the President (who was Acting Governor in the absence of the Governor) the Senate was called to order by the President *pro tempore*.

Devotional Exercises

A moment of silence was observed in lieu of devotions.

Message from the House No. 4

A message was received from the House of Representatives by Mr. Jeremy Weiss, its Second Assistant Clerk, as follows:

Mr. President:

I am directed to inform the Senate that:

The House has considered joint resolution originating in the Senate of the following title:

J.R.S. 34. Joint resolution relating to weekend resolution.

And has adopted the same in concurrence.

Bill Referred to Committee on Finance

S. 233.

Senate bill of the following title, appearing on the Calendar for notice, and affecting the revenue of the state, under the rule was referred to the Committee on Finance:

An act relating to amending Act 46.

Joint Resolution Referred

J.R.S. 35.

Joint Senate resolution of the following title was offered, read the first time and is as follows:

By Senators Sears, Ashe, Flory, Lyons, and Snelling,

J.R.S. 35. Joint resolution urging Vermont's participation in the Stepping Up initiative to reduce the number of incarcerated Vermonters with a mental illness.

Whereas, the Department of Corrections (DOC), in accordance with its Vermont System of Care Plan, uses the term “serious functional impairment” (SFI) to include inmates who have a serious mental illness, and

Whereas, the services that inmates with an SFI designation require from the DOC are greater than those of other inmates, and

Whereas, inmates with an SFI designation may remain in correctional facilities longer and exhibit higher recidivism rates than other inmates, and

Whereas, upon release, inmates that had an SFI designation may need specialized mental health care services, and

Whereas, aside from those inmates with an SFI designation, the DOC reports that approximately 40 percent of the male inmate population and 80 percent of the female inmate population have been treated for a diagnosed mental illness, and

Whereas, these other inmates place an extra service demand on Vermont’s correctional and mental health systems, even though diagnosticians would not necessarily characterize these inmates’ mental illness as serious, and

Whereas, the National Association of Counties, the Council of State Governments Justice Center, and the American Psychiatric Foundation have developed a national initiative called Stepping Up to reduce the number of incarcerated persons who have a mental illness, and

Whereas, the Stepping Up initiative encourages a collaborative and data-driven approach to reducing safely the number of inmates who have a mental illness, and this project merits the State of Vermont’s participation, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly urges the Department of Corrections, in partnership with the Department of Mental Health, to participate in the Stepping Up initiative, including:

1) reviewing State policies that can support Stepping Up, including investments in mental health and corrections that can advance local collaborative efforts;

2) facilitating connections to health care and community-based treatment services;

3) sharing lessons learned and promising practices throughout the Vermont correctional and mental health care systems; and

4) incorporating the goals of Stepping Up into the objectives of existing correctional and mental health planning and programs, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Commissioner of Corrections and the Commissioner of Mental Health.

Thereupon, the President, in his discretion, treated the joint resolution as a bill and referred it to the Committee on Institutions.

Bill Passed

S. 155.

Senate bill of the following title was read the third time and passed:

An act relating to privacy protection.

Adjournment

On motion of Senator Baruth, the Senate adjourned until eleven o'clock and thirty minutes in the morning.