



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL,
HOUSING AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

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MEMORANDUM

To: Rep. Mitzi Johnson, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations

From: Rep. Helen Head, Chair, House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs

Date: January 15, 2016

Subject: Provisions in the Governor's Proposed FY 2016 Budget Adjustment Act

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Thank you for the opportunity to review the provisions of the Governor's proposed FY 2016 Budget Adjustment bill that fall under the jurisdiction of the Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs. After testimony and careful consideration of these provisions, the Committee voted to adopt the following recommendations:

Sec. B.216, Military Department:

The Committee heard testimony from Major General Steven Cray, the Vermont Adjutant and Inspector General. The Governor's Budget Adjustment bill requests a total of \$88,484.00 in additional funding for the Military Department, including \$39,484.00 for the Armed Services Scholarship Fund and \$49,000.00 to support the federal caps on the military leave reimbursement.

The Adjutant and Inspector General testified that due to a misunderstanding in the FY 2016 budget process, funds for the Scholarship Fund were deducted from the operating budget for the Office of Veterans' Affairs, resulting in a roughly 20 percent budgetary shortfall that will significantly impair the Office's ability to meet its programmatic requirements. While the problem has been corrected for the FY 2017 budget submission, additional funds are required in FY 2016 to address the shortfall.

The Adjutant and Inspector General also testified that the federal grant for the State firefighters located at Burlington International Airport authorizes reimbursement for up to 168 hours of military leave. However, because the VSEA contract charges military leave by the duty day, and a firefighters' duty day is 20.75 hours, if one of the 21 State firefighters that is also a member of the Vermont National Guard utilizes the typical 12-13 days of military leave, he or she will accrue up to 269.75 hours requiring reimbursement. As a result, at the end of federal FY 2015

(September 30, 2015), the leave cap was exceeded by \$51,945.83, of which the Military was able to absorb \$2,945.83, leaving a shortfall of \$49,000.00 in the Air Service General Fund. Because this funding receives a 3:1 federal dollar match, the resulting budget impact is \$196,000.00. A change to the VSEA contract that could prevent a reoccurrence of this issue in the future is currently being negotiated.

Therefore, the Committee voted 6–0, with two members not present, to recommend adoption of the section of the proposed bill setting forth the proposed adjustment to the Military Air Service Contract for FY 2016.

Sec. 55. (amending 2015 Acts and Resolves, No. 58, Sec. C.108(a)(1))

The Committee heard testimony from Commissioner Kenneth Schatz, Chief Financial Officer Brian Evans, and Deputy Commissioner Sean Brown from the Department for Children and Families; Erhard Mahnke, the Executive Director of the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition; Linda Ryan from Samaritan House; Sara Kobylenski from the Upper Valley Haven; and Representative Matthew Trieber from the House Committee on Appropriations. The Governor's Budget Adjustment bill is proposing to amend 2015 Acts and Resolves, No. 58, Sec. C.108(a)(1), to authorize the Department for Children and Families to transfer any remaining funds from those appropriated for low-income home energy assistance to the Department's General Assistance Program for use in providing temporary housing assistance.

The Department testified that the anticipated transfer of approximately \$1,642,500 will be used to fund the use of motels for emergency housing and community housing alternatives throughout the State to address statewide emergency housing needs. The Department also expressed that the results of the General Assistance Program's alternative community housing projects indicate that increased investment in these projects may reduce the need for the use of motels for emergency housing.

In light of the foregoing, the Committee voted 6–0, with two members not present, to recommend the adoption of the section authorizing the Department for Children and Families to transfer any remaining funds from the \$5,000,000.00 appropriation for low-income home energy assistance to the General Assistance Program for temporary housing.

However, the Committee expresses its concern that even with the transfer of additional funding, the amount appropriated may be insufficient to address the need for temporary housing in Vermont. With this in mind, the Committee requests that future budget requests are accompanied by detailed information regarding how the appropriations will achieve the State's goal of eliminating family homelessness by 2020 and performance measures and indicators that demonstrate how the various programs for which funding is requested are achieving that goal and the general alleviation of homelessness throughout Vermont.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review these provisions and provide input as you consider the Governor's proposed FY 2016 Budget Adjustment bill.

x


Rep. Helen Head, Chair

House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs