



FACT SHEET
PROPOSED INCREASE TO MARRIAGE LICENSE FEES
H. 872 (SEC. 35)

THE NEED: This increase supports existing funding to prevent domestic violence while addressing root causes through economic and legal support, as well as stronger investigation practices. *The Vermont Judiciary reports that between 2010 and 2014, the number of DV felonies filed in Vermont increased by an average of 30%.*

HISTORY: In 2008, the legislature passed Act 174, the omnibus DV bill. Two key provisions required: 1) greater funding for DV prevention programs and services to break the inter-generational cycle; and 2) a DV Training Coordinator at the VT Police Academy. *Act 174 added a \$10 to the surcharge on criminal and civil fines and \$20 to the marriage license fee to pay for these initiatives.*

CURRENT PICTURE: Since FY 2009, the Center has funded the VT Network for prevention programs and economic and legal supports for victims of domestic and sexual violence. Currently, the VT Network receives:

- \$397,000 for direct services and prevention programs
- \$150,000 for economic support to victims (emergency needs)
- \$179,195 for legal services needs of victims
- \$20,000 to Deaf Vermonters Advocacy Services for direct services
- \$20,000 to Safe Space (a program of the Pride Center) for direct services
- \$17,640 to VT Council on Domestic Violence

In FY 2009, the DV Trainer position at the Academy cost \$76,805 and has increased per step requirements. The Center now only pays for a half-time position due to pressure on the Special Fund, or \$51,574 in FY 2016. In total, both initiatives cost **\$837,910**.

Meanwhile, Special Fund revenue has declined over the past three years. **The FY 2016 6-month projection is \$783,186, with a total end-of-year deficit of \$39,796 projected.**

PROPOSAL: \$15 fee increase (\$45 to \$60) on every marriage license issued.

Based on the average number of marriage licenses issued by the state for the period 2010-2015, a \$15 increase should bring in **\$80,760 in additional revenue**. In 2015, Vermont issued a total of 4,846 marriage licenses.

Marriage license fees tend to be higher in low population rural states. For example, Kansas is \$85, North Dakota is \$65 and Arkansas is \$60. New Hampshire is \$50.