

H.908

An act relating to the Administrative Procedure Act

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. PURPOSE

The General Assembly adopts the changes in this act to:

- (1) improve public participation in rulemaking and public access to the rulemaking process and to adopted rules;
- (2) increase the efficiency of the rulemaking process; and
- (3) ensure that rules are authorized, necessary, and reasonable and are subject to a thorough regulatory analysis.

Sec. 2. 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 25. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

Subchapter 1. General Provisions

§ 800. PURPOSE

The General Assembly intends that:

- (1) ~~agencies~~ Agencies maximize the involvement of the public in the development of rules;
- (2) ~~agency~~ Agency inclusion of public participation in the ~~rule-making processes~~ rulemaking process should be consistent;
- (3) Agencies write rules so that they are clear and accessible to the public.

(4) When an agency adopts rules, it subjects the rules to thorough regulatory analysis.

(5) the The General Assembly should articulate, as clearly as possible, the intent of any legislation ~~which~~ that delegates ~~rule-making~~ rulemaking authority;

~~(4)(6) when~~ When an agency adopts policy ~~or~~, procedures, or guidance, it ~~should~~ shall not do so to supplant or avoid the adoption of rules.

#### § 801. SHORT TITLE AND DEFINITIONS

(a) This chapter may be cited as the “Vermont Administrative Procedure Act.”

(b) As used in this chapter:

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(7) “Practice” means a substantive or procedural requirement of an agency, affecting one or more persons who are not employees of the agency, ~~which~~ that is used by the agency in the discharge of its powers and duties. The term includes all such requirements, regardless of whether they are stated in writing.

(8) “Procedure” means a practice ~~which~~ that has been adopted in ~~the manner provided in section 835 of this title~~ writing, either at the election of the agency or as the result of a request under subsection 831(b) of this title. The term includes any practice of any agency that has been adopted in writing, whether or not labeled as a procedure, except for a rule adopted under sections

836 through 844 of this title or a written document issued in a contested case that imposes substantive or procedural requirements on the parties to the case.

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(13) “Arbitrary,” when applied to an agency rule or action, means that one or more of the following apply:

(A) There is no factual basis for the decision made by the agency.

(B) The decision made by the agency is not rationally connected to the factual basis asserted for the decision.

(C) The decision made by the agency would not make sense to a reasonable person.

(14) “Guidance document” means a written record of general applicability that has not been adopted in accordance with sections 836 through 844 of this title but states an agency’s current approach to or interpretation of law or describes how and when an agency will exercise discretionary functions.

(15) “Index” means a searchable list of entries that contains subjects and titles with page numbers, hyperlinks, or other connections that link each entry to the text or document to which it refers.

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§ 806. PROCEDURE TO REQUEST ADOPTION OF RULES OR  
PROCEDURES; GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

(a) A person may submit a written request to an agency asking the agency to adopt, amend, or repeal a procedure or rule. Within 30 days ~~of~~ after receiving the request, the agency shall initiate ~~rule-making~~ rulemaking proceedings; shall adopt a, amend, or repeal the procedure; or shall deny the request, giving its reasons in writing.

(b) A person may submit a written request to an agency asking the agency to adopt a guidance document as a rule or to amend or repeal the guidance document. Within 30 days after receiving the request, the agency shall initiate rulemaking proceedings; shall amend or repeal the guidance document; or shall deny the request, giving its reasons in writing.

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Subchapter 2. Contested Cases

§ 809. CONTESTED CASES; NOTICE; HEARING; RECORDS

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(i) When a board or commission member who hears all or a substantial part of a case retires from office or completes his or her term before the case is completed, he or she may remain a member of the board or commission for the purpose of deciding and concluding the case. If the member who retires or completes his or her term is a chair, the member may also remain a member for the purpose of certifying questions of law if an appeal is taken, when such is

required by law. For this service, the member may be compensated in the manner provided for active members.

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Subchapter 3. Rulemaking; Procedures; Guidance Documents

§ 817. LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

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§ 818. SECRETARY OF STATE; CENTRALIZED RULE SYSTEM

(a) The Secretary of State shall establish and maintain a centralized rule system that is open and available to the public. The system shall include all rules in effect or proposed as of July 1, 2019 and all rules proposed and adopted by agencies of the State after that date.

(b) The Secretary shall design the centralized rule system to:

(1) facilitate public notice of and access to the rulemaking process;

(2) provide the public with greater access to current and previous versions of adopted rules; and

(3) promote more efficient and transparent filing by State agencies of rulemaking documents and review by the committees established in this chapter.

(c) At a minimum, the records included in the system shall include all documents submitted to the Secretary of State under this subchapter.

(d) The centralized rule system may be digital, may be available online, and may be designed to support such other functions as the Secretary of State

determines are consistent with the goals of this section and section 800 of this title.

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§ 831. REQUIRED POLICY STATEMENTS AND RULES

(a) Where due process or a statute directs an agency to adopt rules, the agency shall initiate rulemaking and adopt rules in the manner provided by sections 836-844 of this title.

(b) An agency shall adopt a procedure describing an existing practice when so requested by an interested person.

(c) An agency shall initiate rulemaking to adopt as a rule an existing practice ~~or~~, procedure, or guidance document when so requested by 25 or more persons or by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules. An agency shall not be required to initiate rulemaking with respect to any practice ~~or~~, procedure, or guidance document, except as provided by this subsection.

(d) An agency required to hold hearings on contested cases as required by section 809 of this title shall adopt rules of procedure in the manner provided in this chapter.

(e) Within 30 days after an agency discovers that the text of a final proposed rule as submitted to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules deviates from the text that the agency intended to submit to the Committee, the agency shall initiate rulemaking to correct the rule if the period for final adoption of the rule under subsection 843(c) of this title has elapsed.

~~(f)~~ Except as provided in subsections (a)-(d)~~(e)~~ of this section, an agency shall not be required to initiate rulemaking or to adopt a procedure or a rule.

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§ 832a. ~~RULES AFFECTING SMALL BUSINESSES~~

~~(a) Where a rule provides for the regulation of a small business, an agency shall consider ways by which a small business can reduce the cost and burden of compliance by specifying less numerous, detailed or frequent reporting requirements, or alternative methods of compliance.~~

~~(b) An agency shall also consider creative, innovative, or flexible methods of compliance with the rule when the agency finds, in writing, such action would not:~~

~~(1) significantly reduce the effectiveness of the rule in achieving the objectives or purposes of the statutes being implemented or interpreted; or~~

~~(2) be inconsistent with the language or purpose of statutes that are implemented or interpreted by the rule; or~~

~~(3) increase the risk to the health, safety, or welfare of the public or to the beneficiaries of the regulation, or compromise the environmental standards of the State.~~

~~(c) This section shall not apply where the regulation is incidental to:~~

~~(1) a purchase of goods or services by the State or an agency thereof; or~~

~~(2) the payment for goods or services by the State or an agency thereof~~

~~for the benefit of a third party. [Repealed.]~~

§ 832b. ~~ADMINISTRATIVE RULES AFFECTING SCHOOL DISTRICTS~~

~~If a rule affects or provides for the regulation of public education and public schools, the agency proposing the rule shall evaluate the cost implications to local school districts and school taxpayers, clearly state the associated costs, and report them in a local school cost impact statement to be filed with the economic impact statement on the rule required by subsection 838(c) of this title. An agency proposing a rule affecting school districts shall also consider and include in the local school cost impact statement an evaluation of alternatives to the rule, including no rule on the subject which would reduce or ameliorate costs to local school districts while achieving the objectives or purposes of the proposed rule. The Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules may object to any proposed rule if a local school cost impact statement is not filed with the proposed rule, or the Committee finds the statement to be inadequate, in the same manner in which the Committee may object to an economic impact statement under section 842 of this title. [Repealed.]~~

§ 833. STYLE OF RULES

(a) Rules and procedures shall be written in a clear and coherent manner using words with common and everyday meanings, consistent with the text of the rule or procedure.

(b)(1) When an agency proposes to amend an existing rule, it shall replace terms identified as potentially disrespectful by the study produced in accordance with 2012 Acts and Resolves No. 24, Sec. 1 with respectful



language recommended therein or used in the Vermont Statutes Annotated, where appropriate.

(2) All new rules adopted by agencies shall use, to the fullest extent possible, respectful language consistent with the Vermont Statutes Annotated and the respectful language study produced in accordance with 2012 Acts and Resolves No. 24, Sec. 1, where appropriate.

(c) The Secretary of State may issue a guidance document suggesting how agencies may draft rules and procedures in accordance with this section. The guidance document may include suggestions on style, numbering, and drafting the content of the filings required under this subchapter.

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§ 835. ~~COMPILATION OF PROCEDURES~~ AND GUIDANCE

DOCUMENTS

(a) Compilation; index. Procedures and guidance documents shall be maintained by the agency in an official current compilation that ~~is indexed by subject~~ includes an index. Each addition, change, or deletion to the official compilation shall also be dated, indexed, and recorded. ~~The compilation shall be a public record.~~ The agency shall publish the compilation and index on its Internet website and make all procedures and guidance documents available to the public. The agency shall not rely on a procedure or guidance document or cite it against any party to a proceeding, unless the procedure or guidance

document is included in a compilation maintained and published in accordance with this subsection.

(b) Use in proceedings. A procedure or guidance document shall not have the force of law.

(1) An agency that proposes to rely on a procedure or guidance document to the detriment of a person in any contested case or other administrative proceeding shall afford the person an adequate opportunity to contest the legality or wisdom of a position taken in the document. The agency shall not use the document to foreclose consideration of issues raised in the document.

(2) This subsection shall not apply to a procedure if a statute that specifically enables the procedure states that it has the force of law.

(c) Advocacy at variance with document. If an agency proposes to act or advocate in a contested case or other proceeding at variance with a position expressed in a procedure or guidance document of the agency, it shall provide a reasonable explanation for the variance. If an affected person in an adjudication may have relied reasonably on the agency's position, the explanation must include a reasonable justification for the agency's conclusion that the need for the variance outweighs the affected person's reliance interest.

(d) Nonbinding on decision maker. A procedure or guidance document may be considered by a hearing officer or final decision maker in a contested case, but it does not bind the officer or the decision maker.

§ 836. PROCEDURE FOR ADOPTION OF RULES

(a) Except for emergency rules, rules shall be adopted by taking the following steps:

- (1) prefiling, when required;
- (2) filing the proposed rule;
- (3) publishing the proposed rule;
- (4) holding a public hearing and receiving comments;
- (5) filing the final proposal;
- (6) responding to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules

when required; and

- (7) filing the adopted rule.

(b) During the rulemaking process, the agency proposing the rule shall post on its website information concerning the proposal.

(1) The agency shall post the information on a separate page that is readily accessible from a prominent link on its main web page and that lists proposed rules by title and topic.

(2) For each rulemaking, the posted information shall include:

(A) The proposed rule as filed under section 838 of this title.

(B) The date by which comments may be submitted on the proposed rule and the address for such submission.

(C) The date and location of any public hearing.

(D) Each comment submitted to the agency on the proposed rule.

The agency shall redact sensitive personal information from the posted comments. As used in this subdivision (D), “sensitive personal information” means each of the items listed in 9 V.S.A. § 2430(5)(A)(i)–(iv) and does not include the name, affiliation, and contact information of the commenter.

(E) The final proposed rule as filed under section 841 of this title.

(F) Each document submitted by the agency to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules.

(3) The agency shall maintain the information required by this subsection on its website until the earliest of the following dates: filing of a final adopted rule under section 843 of this title; withdrawal of the proposed rule; or expiration of the period for final adoption under subsection 843(c) of this title.

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#### § 838. FILING OF PROPOSED RULES

(a) Filing; information. Proposed rules shall be filed with the Secretary of State. ~~The filing shall include in a format determined by the Secretary that~~ includes the following information:

(1) ~~a cover sheet;~~ The name of the agency and the subject or title of the rule.

(2) ~~an~~ An analysis of economic impact statement;

(3) ~~an incorporation~~ An analysis of environmental impact.

~~(4) An explanation of all material incorporated by reference statement, if the proposed rule includes an incorporation by reference; any.~~

~~(4) an adopting page;~~

~~(5) the The text of the proposed rule;~~

~~(6) an An annotated text showing changes from existing rules;. The annotated text of the rule shall include markings to indicate clearly changed wording from any existing rule.~~

~~(7) an An explanation of the strategy for maximizing public input on the proposed rule as prescribed by the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules; and.~~

~~(8) a A brief summary of the scientific information upon which the proposed rule is based to the extent the proposed rule depends on scientific information for its validity. The summary shall refer to the scientific studies on which the proposed rule is based and shall explain the procedure for obtaining such studies from the agency.~~

~~(b) The cover sheet shall be on a form prepared by the Secretary of State containing at least the following information:~~

~~(1) the name of the agency;~~

~~(2) the title or subject of the rule;~~

~~(3)(9) a A concise summary in plain language explaining the effect of the rule; and its effect.~~

~~(4)~~(10) ~~the~~ The specific statutory authority for the rule, and, if none exists, the general statutory authority for the rule;

~~(5)~~(11) ~~an~~ An explanation of why the rule is necessary;

~~(6)~~(12) ~~an~~ An explanation of the people, enterprises, and government entities affected by the rule;

~~(7)~~ a brief summary of the economic impact of the rule;

~~(8)~~(13) ~~the~~ The name, address, and telephone number of an individual in the agency able to answer questions and receive comments on the proposal;

~~(9)~~(14) a A proposed schedule for completing the requirements of this chapter, including, if there is a hearing scheduled, the date, time, and place of that hearing and a deadline for receiving comments;

~~(10)~~(15) ~~whether~~ Whether the rule contains an exemption from inspection and copying of public records, or otherwise contains a Public Records Act exemption by designating information as confidential or limiting its public release and, if so, the asserted statutory authority for the exemption and a brief summary of the reason for the exemption; ~~and~~.

~~(11)~~(16) a A signed and dated statement by the adopting authority approving the contents of the filing.

~~(e)~~(b) Economic impact analysis; rules affecting small businesses and school districts.

(1) General requirements. The economic impact ~~statement~~ analysis shall analyze the anticipated costs and benefits to be expected from adoption of

the rule. Specifically, each economic impact ~~statement~~ analysis shall, for each requirement in the rule:

(A) ~~List categories~~ list each category of people, enterprises, and government entities potentially affected and estimate for each the costs and benefits anticipated; and

(B) ~~Compare~~ compare the economic impact of the rule with the economic impact of other alternatives to the rule, including having no rule on the subject or a rule having separate requirements for small ~~business~~ businesses.

(C) ~~Include a flexibility statement. The flexibility statement shall compare the burden imposed on small businesses by compliance with the rule to the burden which would be imposed by alternatives considered under section 832a of this title.~~

(D) ~~Include a greenhouse gas impact statement. The greenhouse gas impact statement shall explain how the rule has been crafted to reduce the extent to which greenhouse gases are emitted. The Secretary of Administration, in conjunction with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Food and Markets, of Natural Resources, and of Transportation, and the Commissioner of Public Service shall provide a checklist which shall be used in the adoption of rules to assure the full consideration of greenhouse gas impacts, direct and indirect.~~

(2) Small businesses. When a rule provides for the regulation of a small business, the economic impact analysis shall include a specific and clearly demarcated evaluation of ways by which a small business can reduce the cost and burden of compliance by specifying less numerous, detailed, or frequent reporting requirements or alternative methods of compliance.

(A) An agency shall also include in this evaluation its consideration of creative, innovative, or flexible methods of compliance with the rule when the agency finds, in writing, that these methods of compliance would not:

(i) significantly reduce the effectiveness of the rule in achieving the objectives or purposes of the statutes being implemented or interpreted; or

(ii) be inconsistent with the language or purpose of statutes that are implemented or interpreted by the rule; or

(iii) increase the risk to the health, safety, or welfare of the public or to the beneficiaries of the regulation or compromise the environmental standards of the State.

(B) This subdivision (2) shall not apply when the regulation is incidental to:

(i) a purchase of goods or services by the State or an agency thereof; or

(ii) the payment for goods or services by the State or an agency thereof for the benefit of a third party.



(3) School districts. If a rule affects or provides for the regulation of public education and public schools, the economic impact analysis shall include a specific and clearly demarcated evaluation of the cost implications to local school districts and school taxpayers and shall clearly state the associated costs. This evaluation also shall include consideration of alternatives to the rule, including having no rule on the subject, that would reduce or ameliorate costs to local school districts while achieving the objectives or purposes of the proposed rule.

(4) Most appropriate method. In addition, each economic impact ~~statement~~ analysis shall conclude that the rule is the most appropriate method of achieving the regulatory purpose ~~and, with respect to small businesses, contain any findings required by section 832a of this title.~~ Only employees of the agency and information either already available to the agency or available at reasonable cost ~~shall~~ need be used in preparing economic impact ~~statements~~ analyses.

(c) Environmental impact analysis. The environmental impact analysis shall:

(1) Analyze the anticipated environmental impacts, whether positive or negative, from adoption of the rule. Examples of environmental impacts include the emission of greenhouse gases; the discharge of pollutants to water; and effects on the ability of the environment to provide benefits such as food and fresh water, regulation of climate and water flow, and recreation.

(2) Compare the environmental impact of the rule with the environmental impact of other alternatives to the rule, including having no rule on the subject.

(d) Incorporation by reference.

(1) A rule may incorporate by reference all or any part of a code, standard, or rule that has been adopted by an agency of the United States, this State, or another state or by a nationally recognized organization or association, if:

(A) repeating verbatim the text of the code, standard, or rule in the rule would be unduly cumbersome, expensive, or otherwise inexpedient; and

(B) the reference in the rule fully identifies the incorporated code, standard, or rule by citation, date, and place where copies are available.

(2) Materials incorporated by reference shall be readily available to the public. As used in this subsection, “readily available” means:

(A) Each filing states where copies of the incorporated code, standard, or rule are available in written or electronic form from the agency adopting the rule or the agency of the United States, this State, another state, or the organization or association originally issuing the code, standard, or rule.

(B) A copy of the code, standard, or rule is readily available for public inspection and copying at the principal office of the agency in the manner set forth in 1 V.S.A. § 316.

(C) The incorporated code, standard, or rule is made available for free public access online unless the agency is prevented from providing such access by law or the size of the incorporated material.

~~(d) Any required incorporation by reference statement shall include a separately signed statement by the adopting authority:~~

~~(1) certifying that the text of the matter incorporated has been reviewed by the agency, with the name of the reviewing official;~~

~~(2) explaining how the text of the matter incorporated can be obtained by the public, and at what cost;~~

~~(3) explaining any modifications to the matter incorporated;~~

~~(4) discussing the comparative desirability of reproducing the incorporated matter in full in the text of the rule; and~~

~~(5) certifying that the agency has the capability and the intent to enforce the rule.~~

~~(e) The adopting page shall be on a form prepared by the Secretary of State and shall contain the name of the agency, the subject of the proposed rule, an explanation of the effect of the proposal on existing rules, and any internal reference number assigned by the agency.~~

~~(f) The annotated text of the rule shall include markings to clearly indicate changed wording from any existing rule.~~

~~(g) The brief summary of scientific information shall refer to scientific studies upon which the proposed rule is based and shall explain the procedure for obtaining such studies from the agency.~~

§ 839. PUBLICATION OF PROPOSED RULES

(a) Online. The Secretary of State shall publish online notice of a proposed rule within two weeks ~~of~~ after receipt of the proposed rule. Notice shall include the following information:

- (1) the name of the agency;
- (2) the title or subject of the rule;
- (3) a concise summary in plain language of the effect of the rule;
- (4) an explanation of the people, enterprises, and governmental entities affected by the rule;
- (5) a brief summary of the economic impact;
- (6) the name, telephone number, and address of an agency official able to answer questions and receive comments on the proposal;
- (7) the date, time, and place of the hearing or hearings; and
- (8) the deadline for receiving comments.

(b) Editing of notices. The Secretary of State may edit all notices for clarity, brevity, and format and shall include a brief statement explaining how members of the public can participate in the rulemaking process.

(c) Newspaper publication. The Secretary of State shall arrange for one formal publication, in a consolidated advertisement in newspapers having

general circulation in different parts of the State as newspapers of record approved by the Secretary of State, of information relating to all proposed rules that includes the following information:

(1) the name of the agency and its Internet address;

(2) the title or subject and a concise summary of the rule and the Internet address at which the rule may be viewed; and

(3) the office name, office telephone number, and office mailing address of an agency official able to answer questions and receive comments on the proposal.

(d) Reimbursement. The Secretary of State shall be reimbursed by agencies making publication in accordance with subsection (c) of this section so that all costs are prorated among agencies publishing at the same time.

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#### § 841. FINAL PROPOSAL

(a) After considering public comment as required in section 840 of this title, an agency shall file a final proposal with the Secretary of State and with the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules. The Committee may require that the agency include an electronic copy of the final proposal with its filing.

(b) The filing of the final proposal shall include all information required to be filed with the original proposal, suitably amended to reflect any changes

made in the rule and the fact that public hearing and comment ~~has~~ have been completed.

(1) With the final proposal, the agency shall include a statement that succinctly and separately addresses each of the following:

(A) how the proposed rule is within the authority of the agency;

(B) why the proposed rule is not contrary to the intent of the

Legislature;

(C) why the proposed rule is not arbitrary;

(D) the strategy for maximizing public input that was prescribed by the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules and the actions taken by the agency that demonstrate compliance with that strategy;

(E) the sufficiency of the economic impact analysis; and

(F) the sufficiency of the environmental impact analysis.

(2) ~~Where~~ When an agency decides in a final proposal to overrule substantial arguments and considerations raised for or against the original proposal or to reject suggestions with respect to separate requirements for small businesses, the final proposal shall include a description of the reasons for the agency's decision.

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#### § 842. REVIEW BY LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

(a) ~~Within 30 days of the date a rule is first placed on the Committee's agenda but no later than~~ 45 days after the filing of a final proposal unless the

agency consents to an extension of this review period, the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules, by majority vote of the entire Committee, may object under subsection (b), ~~(c)~~, ~~or (d)~~ of this section, and recommend that the agency amend or withdraw the proposal. The agency shall be notified promptly of the objections. Failure to give timely notice shall be deemed approval. The agency shall within 14 days ~~of~~ after receiving notice respond in writing to the Committee and send a copy to the Secretary of State. In its response, the agency may include revisions to the proposed rule or filing documents that seek to cure defects noted by the Committee. After receipt of this response, the Committee may withdraw or modify its objections.

(b) The Committee may object under this subsection if:

(1) a proposed rule is beyond the authority of the agency;

(2) a proposed rule is contrary to the intent of the Legislature;

(3) a proposed rule is arbitrary; ~~or~~

(4) the agency did not adhere to the strategy for maximizing public input prescribed by the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules;

(5) a proposed rule is not written in a satisfactory style in accordance with section 833 of this title;

(6) the economic impact analysis fails to recognize a substantial economic impact of the proposed rule, fails to include an evaluation and statement of costs to local school districts required under section 838 of this

title, or fails to recognize a substantial economic impact of the rule to such districts; or

(7) the environmental impact analysis fails to recognize a substantial environmental impact of the proposed rule.

(c) When objection is made under this ~~subsection~~ section, and the objection is not withdrawn after the agency responds, on majority vote of the entire Committee, it may file the objection in certified form with the Secretary of State. The objection shall contain a concise statement of the Committee's reasons for its action. The Secretary shall affix to each objection a certification of its filing and as soon as practicable transmit a copy to the agency. After a Committee objection is filed with the Secretary under this subsection, or on the same grounds under subsection 817(d) of this title, to the extent that the objection covers a rule or portion of a rule, the burden of proof thereafter shall be on the agency in any action for judicial review or for enforcement of the rule to establish that the part objected to is within the authority delegated to the agency, is consistent with the intent of the Legislature, is not arbitrary, and is written in a satisfactory style in accordance with section 833 of this title, and that the agency did adhere to the strategy for maximizing public input prescribed by the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules and its economic and environmental impact analyses did not fail to recognize a substantial economic or environmental impact. If the agency fails to meet its burden of proof, the ~~Court~~ court shall declare the whole or portion of the rule



objected to invalid. The failure of the Committee to object to a rule is not an implied legislative authorization of its substantive or procedural lawfulness.

~~(c) The Committee may object under this subsection if a proposed rule is not written in a satisfactory style according to section 833 of this title.~~

~~(d) The Committee may object under this subsection if the economic impact statement fails to recognize a substantial economic impact of the proposed rule that the Committee describes in its notice of objection. The Committee may object one time under this subsection and return the proposed rule to the agency as unacceptable for filing. The agency may then cure the defect and adopt the rule, or it may adopt the rule without change.~~

~~(e) When an objection is made under subsection (b) of this section and has been certified by the Secretary of State, notice of the objection shall be included on all copies of the rule distributed to the public.~~

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#### § 843. FILING OF ADOPTED RULES

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(c) Adoption shall be complete upon proper filing with the Secretary of State and with the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules. An agency shall have eight months from the date of initial filing with the Secretary of State to adopt a rule unless extended by action or request of the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules. The Secretary of State shall refuse to accept a final filing after that date, except that:

(1) Within 30 days after discovering that the text of a final adopted rule deviates from the text of a final proposed rule as approved by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules, an agency shall correct the adopted rule to conform to the final proposed rule as so approved and shall refile the adopted rule in the manner set forth in this section, along with documentation demonstrating that the refiled adopted rule conforms to the final proposed rule as approved.

(2) An agency may refile a final adopted rule in the manner set forth in this section solely for the purpose of correcting one or more typographic errors that do not change the substance or effect of the rule.

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#### § 844. EMERGENCY RULES

(a) Where an agency believes that there exists an imminent peril to public health, safety, or welfare, it may adopt an emergency rule. The rule may be adopted without having been prefiled or filed in proposed or final proposed form, and may be adopted after whatever notice and hearing ~~that~~ the agency finds to be practicable under the circumstances. The agency shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that emergency rules are known to persons who may be affected by them.

(b) Emergency rules adopted under this section shall not remain in effect for more than ~~120~~ 180 days. An agency may propose a permanent rule on the same subject at the same time that it adopts an emergency rule.

(c) Emergency rules adopted under this section shall be filed with the Secretary of State and with the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules. The Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules shall distribute copies of emergency rules to the appropriate standing committees.

(d) Emergency rules adopted under this section shall include:

(1) as much of the information required for the filing of a proposed rule as is practicable under the circumstances; and

(2) a signed and dated statement by the adopting authority explaining the nature of the imminent peril to the public health, safety, or welfare and approving of the contents of the rules.

(e)(1) On a majority vote of the entire Committee, the Committee may object under this subsection if an emergency rule is:

(A) beyond the authority of the agency;

(B) contrary to the intent of the Legislature;

(C) arbitrary; or

(D) not necessitated by an imminent peril to public health, safety, or welfare sufficient to justify adoption of an emergency rule.

(2) When objection is made under this subsection, on majority vote of the entire Committee, the Committee may file the objection in certified form with the Secretary of State. The objection shall contain a concise statement of the Committee's reasons for its action. The Secretary shall affix to each objection a certification of its filing and as soon as practicable transmit a copy

to the agency. After a Committee objection is filed with the Secretary under this subsection, to the extent that the objection covers a rule or portion of a rule, the burden of proof thereafter shall be on the agency in any action for judicial review or for enforcement of the rule to establish that the part objected to is within the authority delegated to the agency, is consistent with the intent of the Legislature, is not arbitrary, and is justified by an imminent peril to the public health, safety, or welfare. If the agency fails to meet its burden of proof, the ~~Court~~ court shall declare the whole or portion of the rule objected to invalid. The failure of the Committee to object to a rule is not an implied legislative authorization of its substantive or procedural lawfulness.

(3) When the Committee makes an objection to an emergency rule under this subsection, the agency may withdraw the rule to which an objection was made. Prior to withdrawal, the agency shall give notice to the Committee of its intent to withdraw the rule. A rule shall be withdrawn upon the filing of a notice of withdrawal with the Secretary of State and the Committee. If the emergency rule amended an existing rule, upon withdrawal of the emergency rule, the existing rule shall revert to its original form, as though the emergency rule had never been adopted.

(f) In response to an expressed concern of the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules, an agency may make a germane change to an emergency rule that is approved by the Committee. A change under this subsection shall

not be considered a newly adopted emergency rule and shall not extend the period during which the emergency rule remains in effect.

§ 845. EFFECT OF RULES

(a) Rules shall be valid and binding on persons they affect, and shall have the force of law unless amended or revised or unless a court of competent jurisdiction determines otherwise. Except as provided by subsections 842~~(b)~~(c) and 844(e) of this title, rules shall be prima facie evidence of the proper interpretation of the matter ~~that~~ to which they refer ~~to~~.

(b) No agency shall grant ~~routine~~ waivers of or variances from any provisions of its rules without either amending the rules; or providing by rule for a process and specific criteria under which the agency may grant a waiver or variance ~~procedure~~ in writing. The duration of the waiver or variance may be temporary if the rule so provides.

\* \* \*

§ 847. AVAILABILITY OF ADOPTED RULES; RULES BY SECRETARY  
OF STATE

(a) Availability from agency. An agency shall make each rule it has finally adopted available to the public online and for physical inspection and copying. Online, the agency shall post its adopted rules on a separate web page that is readily accessible from a prominent link on its main web page, that lists proposed rules by title and topic, and that is searchable.

(b) Register; code.

(1) The Secretary of State (Secretary) shall keep open to public inspection a permanent register of rules. The Secretary may satisfy this requirement by incorporating the register into the centralized rule system created pursuant to section 818 of this title.

(2) The Secretary also shall publish a code of administrative rules that contains the rules adopted under this chapter. The requirement to publish a code shall be considered satisfied if a commercial publisher offers such a code in print at a competitive price and at no charge online. However, if the Secretary establishes the centralized rule system under section 818 of this title as a digital system, then the system shall include the online publication of this code.

~~(b) The Secretary of State shall publish not less than quarterly a bulletin setting forth the text of all rules filed since the immediately preceding publication and any objections filed under subsection 842(b) or 844(e) of this title.~~

~~(e) The bulletin may omit any rule if either:~~

~~(1) a commercial publisher offers a comparable publication at a competitive price; or~~

~~(2) all three of the following apply:~~

~~(A) its publication would be unduly cumbersome or expensive; and~~

~~(B) the rule is made available on application to the adopting agency; and~~

~~(C) the bulletin contains a notice stating the general subject matter of the omitted rule and stating how a copy of the rule and any objection filed under subsection 842(b) or 844(e) of this title may be obtained.~~

~~(d) Bulletins shall be made available upon request to agencies and officials of this State free of charge and to other persons at prices fixed by the Secretary of State to cover mailing and publication costs.~~

~~(e)(c) Rules for administration. The Secretary of State shall adopt rules for the effective administration of this chapter. These rules shall be applicable to every agency and shall include uniform procedural requirements, style, appropriate forms, and a system for compiling and indexing rules.~~

§ 848. RULES REPEAL; ~~OPERATION OF LAW~~ AMENDMENT OF AUTHORITY; NOTICE BY AGENCY

(a) Repeal by operation of law. A rule shall be repealed without formal proceedings under this chapter if:

(1) the agency that adopted the rule is abolished and its authority, specifically including its authority to implement its existing rules, has not been transferred to another agency; ~~or~~

(2) a court of competent jurisdiction has declared the rule to be invalid; or

(3) the statutory authority for the rule, as stated by the agency under subdivision 838(b)(4) of this title, is repealed by the General Assembly or declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction.

(b) Notice to Secretary of State; deletion. When a rule is repealed by operation of law under this section, the agency that adopted the rule shall notify the Secretary of State in such manner as the Secretary may prescribe by rule or procedure, and the Secretary of State shall delete the rule from the published code of administrative rules.

(c) Repeal for nonpublication.

(1) On July 1, 2018, a rule shall be repealed without formal proceedings under this chapter if:

(A) as of July 1, 2016, the rule was in effect but not published in the code of administrative rules; and

(B) the rule is not published in such code before July 1, 2018.

(2) An agency seeking to publish a rule described in subdivision (1) of this subsection may submit a digital copy of the rule to the Secretary of State with proof acceptable to the Secretary that as of July 1, 2016 the rule was adopted and in effect under this chapter and the digital copy consists of the text of such rule without change.

(d) Amendment of authority for rule.

(1) If the statutory authority for a rule, as stated by the agency under subdivision 838(b)(4) of this title, is amended by the General Assembly, and



the amendment does not transfer authority from the adopting agency to another agency, the agency within 30 days following the effective date of the statutory amendment shall review the rule and make a written determination as to whether ~~such~~ the statutory amendment repeals the authority upon which the rule is based, or requires revision of the rule and shall, ~~within 60 days of the effective date of the statutory amendment, inform in writing~~ submit a copy of this written determination to the Secretary of State and the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules ~~whether repeal or revision of the rule is required by the statutory amendment,~~ in such manner as the Secretary may prescribe by rule or procedure.

(2) If the statutory authority for a rule, as stated by the agency under subdivision 838(b)(4) of this title, is transferred by act of the General Assembly to another agency, the agency to which the authority is transferred shall provide notice of the transfer, in such manner as the Secretary of State may prescribe by rule or procedure, within 30 days following the effective date of the statutory amendment, to the Secretary and the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules.

~~§ 849. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS; RETIRING MEMBERS~~

~~When a board or commission member, who hears all or a substantial part of a case, retires from office or completes his or her term before the case is completed, he or she may remain a member of the board or commission for the purpose of deciding and concluding the case. If the member who retires or~~

~~completes his or her term as a chair, he or she may also remain a member for the purpose of certifying questions of law if appeal is taken, where such is required by law. For this service, the member may be compensated in the manner provided for active members. [Repealed.]~~

### Sec. 3. REDESIGNATION

Within 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 (administrative procedure):

- (1) §§ 800–808 shall be within subchapter 1.
- (2) §§ 809–816 shall be within subchapter 2.
- (3) §§ 817–849 shall be within subchapter 3.

### Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018, except that in Sec. 2, 3 V.S.A. §§ 818 and 847(b) and (c) shall take effect on July 1, 2019.