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Secretary of State Jim Condos Overview **Legislative Priorities for Senate Government Operations**

1/10/17

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I will outline the Legislative priorities for the Secretary of State's Office in 2017. As a former member and chair of this committee, I fully understand and appreciate the important work within your jurisdiction.

I want to thank Senator White for her leadership and Senator Collamore for his hard work over the past two years. In the last biennium we accomplished many important things in the world of elections and professional regulation. We have advanced the principles of a responsive, efficient and accountable government where possible.

I also want to welcome Senators Clarkson and Pearson to the committee and welcome back Senator Ayer who has also had a hand in many of the successes of this committee over the years. We look forward to working with you all this biennium.

With six years behind me as the head of a small agency with a lot of important responsibilities, I have a greater appreciation every day for the importance of getting gov't operations right. Policy is one thing, but enacting that policy in a smart way too often gets lost in the halls of gov't agencies.

As VT's 38th SOS, and head of an agency touching so many VTers lives every single day, I am honored to be able to continue working toward:

- Open, transparent government, and
 - Good government solutions that are
 - well-designed,
 - efficient, and
 - customer friendly
 - while still protecting the VTers we serve.
 - Implemented 5 IT solutions – Website, Corps, Elections, Campaign Finance, and Lobbying – all on budget and working well!
 - OPR is in implementation stage to replace our 1st generation on line presence
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As you know, we have four divisions here at the SoS Office:

- **OPR** – Protecting the public’s health and safety through professional regulation and leading the way with efficient, effective licensing and enforcement systems
 - **VSARA** – Preserving/protecting our state’s most valued history, public records, and the access to those public records by working collaboratively with the rest of state gov’t
 - **Elections** – Safeguarding the integrity and accuracy of our elections while increasing voter participation and creating more effective election administration
 - **Corporations** – Ensuring proper registration and public protection while facilitating business and commerce in VT
 - **Administration/Business Office** – A fifth “division” of our office making sure we live within our means, provide true accounting of our budgets, and have the resources needed to provide services
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In addition to these divisions, we have many other programs, to name a few...

- **Municipal** – Fielding inquiries every day from muni officials and from VT citizens, providing much needed guidance on how to operate within the law (mention Jenny, 1200 calls/emails last year) focus on muni and publication updates)
 - **Public records / Open meetings** – Increasing transparency in gov’t by providing for free, open examination of records consistent with Chapter I, Article 6 of the VT Constitution and the public’s right to observe and participate in public meetings
 - **Safe at Home** – Providing an address confidentiality for victims of DV, sexual assault, and stalking (Now more than 150 participants up from 100)
 - **Temporary Officiant Program** – Allowing individuals to register with our office to perform a single marriage (~1200 / yr)
 - **APA Rules and Legislative Clerk** – The repository for all acts and resolves passed by the legislature and the processing gatekeeper ensuring that all administrative rules filings comply with public notice and hearing requirements
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With this in mind, I will quickly review our top Legislative priorities for 2017:

Ethics Commission – Participate in further amendments and (hopefully) passage. We appreciate the work done thus far. We will advocate for: adequate funding, independence, clear standards and definitions, education, inclusion of municipals.

Notaries – We must update ancient laws and ensure notaries are aware of their responsibilities as the first line of fraud prevention. Ensure VT’s public/private sector documents can go across state lines. Allow electronic notarization. Create a user friendly and efficient commissioning process.

Open Meetings / Public Records – Participate in the discussion regarding: copies vs. inspection; charging; burden on state and municipalities vs. access by the public; serial meetings language; and possible social media language.

Annual OPR Bill – We have various updates for several professions addressing the ever-changing world of the 50 different profession regulated by OPR. Include AGO recommended language to comply with recent anti-trust court decisions.

Professional Regulation Survey – Review responses on licensing in Vermont and how it is done across several different agencies for about 40 other professions outside OPR. Identify opportunities to unify and streamline for efficiency and better service and protection.

Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA) Housekeeping – Clarify outdated state records obligations transferring from libraries to VSARA, look to simplify charter changes certifications, other filings, records management updates.

Vital Records Study Committee – Advocate an effective and centralized system meeting public health needs, with improved management of these record and reasonable security around obtaining certified copies.

Elections Housekeeping – Various fixes from lessons learned over the past election.

Elections – We expect there will be several other issues raised requiring our participation, such as:

- undue influence,
- public financing,
- campaign finance
- and recount procedures.

Corporations – A major overhaul to the operations portions of the law, making business entity filings simpler and more consistent.