

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Judiciary to which was referred Senate Bill No. 244
3 entitled “An act relating to repealing the guidelines for spousal maintenance
4 awards” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends
5 that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and
6 inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. SPOUSAL SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE TASK FORCE

8 (a) Creation. There is created the Spousal Support and Maintenance Task
9 Force for the purpose of reviewing and making legislative recommendations to
10 Vermont’s laws concerning spousal support and maintenance.

11 (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following nine
12 members:

13 (1) a current member of the House of Representatives appointed by the
14 Speaker of the House;

15 (2) a current member of the Senate appointed by the Committee on
16 Committees;

17 (3) a Superior Court judge who has significant experience in the Family
18 Division of Superior Court appointed by the Chief Justice;

19 (4) the Chief Superior Judge;

20 (5) two experienced family law attorneys appointed by the Family Law
21 Section of the Vermont Bar Association;

1 (6) a representative of Vermont Alimony Reform who is domiciled in
2 Vermont;

3 (7) the Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women or a
4 designee who is domiciled in Vermont; and

5 (8) a member of the public, to be appointed by the Governor.

6 (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall make legislative
7 recommendations to Vermont’s spousal support and maintenance laws aimed
8 to improve clarity, fairness, predictability, and consistency across the State in
9 recognition of changes to the family structure in recent decades. The Task
10 Force shall consider:

11 (1) the impact of the federal tax law passed by Congress in December
12 2017 on Vermont’s spousal support laws;

13 (2) whether the term “permanent” in 15 V.S.A. § 752(a) should be
14 changed to “long term”;

15 (3) adding the impact of retirement of either the payor or the recipient as
16 a factor in determining the duration or amount of a spousal support award;

17 (4) the effect of prenuptial agreements on spousal support awards;

18 (5) the effect of remarriage, cohabitation, or the death of a payor on
19 spousal support judgments;

20 (6) how the standard of living affects spousal support awards;

1 (7) the appropriate balance between judicial discretion and consistency
2 in awards; and

3 (8) whether judicial discretion or the spousal support guidelines are
4 presumptive.

5 (d) Assistance. The legislative members of the Task Force shall have the
6 assistance of Legislative Council. The Vermont Bar Association shall provide
7 support with any surveys undertaken by the Task Force.

8 (e) Reports.

9 (1) On or before November 1, 2018, the Task Force shall submit an
10 interim report on the impact of the federal tax law passed by Congress in
11 December 2017 on Vermont’s spousal support laws, including its effects on
12 existing spousal support payors and recipients.

13 (2) On or before March 1, 2019, the Task Force shall submit a majority
14 and, if necessary, a minority report to the Senate and House Committees on
15 Judiciary with its recommendations with respect to subdivisions (c)(2)-(8) of
16 this section.

17 (f) Meetings.

18 (1) The Superior Court judge appointed in accordance with subdivision
19 (b)(3) of this section shall serve as the Chair.

20 (2) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

21 (3) The Task Force shall cease to exist on March 1, 2019.

