

Journal of the House

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

At ten o'clock in the forenoon the Speaker called the House to order.

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Speaker Mitzi Johnson of South Hero.

Pledge of Allegiance

Page Farren Stainton of Sharon led the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Message from the Senate No. 16

A message was received from the Senate by Mr. Marshall, its Assistant Secretary, as follows:

Madam Speaker:

I am directed to inform the House that:

The Senate has on its part passed Senate bill of the following title:

S. 128. An act relating to physician assistant licensure.

In the passage of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

The Senate has considered a bill originating in the House of the following title:

H. 83. An act relating to female genital cutting.

And has passed the same in concurrence with proposal of amendment in the adoption of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

The Senate has on its part considered the Governor's veto of a Senate bill of the following title:

S. 23. An act relating to increasing the minimum wage.

And has passed the same, the refusal of the Governor to approve notwithstanding.

The Senate has on its part adopted concurrent resolutions originating in the House of the following titles:

H.C.R. 250. House concurrent resolution designating the month of February 2020 as Pharmacists' Month in Vermont.

H.C.R. 251. House concurrent resolution congratulating Mickie and Neil

Richardson of Randolph on their receipt of the 2019 Rutland NAACP Lifetime Achievement Award.

Text of Communication from Governor

The text of the communication to the Senate from His Excellency, the Governor, whereby he vetoed and returned unsigned **Senate Bill No. 23** to the Senate is as follows:

“February 10, 2020

The Honorable John Bloomer, Jr.
Secretary of the Senate
115 State House
Montpelier, VT 05633-5401

Dear Mr. Bloomer:

Pursuant to Chapter II, Section 11 of the Vermont Constitution, I am returning S.23, *An act relating to increasing the minimum wage*, without my signature because of my objections described herein:

It’s critical to recognize that we share the goal of Vermonters making more money. I also believe Vermonters should keep more of what they earn, which is why I can’t support policies that increase the costs of living.

My objection to a mandated increase to the minimum wage is based on three primary concerns:

1. Fiscal analysis projects job losses, decreases to employee hours, and increased costs of goods and services, which will offset the intended positive benefits for workers;
2. These harmful impacts will be felt more significantly in rural parts of the state, worsening economic inequity between counties; and
3. There will be an overall negative impact on economic growth.

These concerns are reinforced by data and analysis from regions where mandated increases have taken effect, and – importantly – by the Vermont Legislature’s Joint Fiscal Office, which predicted, if implemented, this bill could cause job losses, reduced hours, and higher prices.

Based on our own experience with mandated minimum wage increases in recent years, Vermont data shows that increases to hourly rates do not guarantee an increase to weekly or annual earnings for Vermont workers.

The Legislature’s economist, Tom Kavet, also reported a mandated increase would have a more harmful economic impact in our more rural regions.

From workforce declines to overall economic recovery – or lack thereof – most of the state has simply not kept pace with Northwestern Vermont, particularly Chittenden County. A statewide mandated wage increase would exacerbate this regional economic inequity.

For example, a local mom and pop store in Monkton, Albany or Richford, already struggling to stay open, is far less able to absorb an increase than a retailer with a higher volume of sales in the Burlington area. That means workers in these areas are more likely to be impacted by the predicted job losses or reduced hours, and small, locally owned businesses will feel an even greater burden. We must ask ourselves what our struggling communities might look like with more empty storefronts.

Even New York recognized its own regional inequity when raising the minimum wage, carving out four discrete regions, which account for the different economic circumstances in different parts of the state. We must recognize we have two Vermonts with distinct economies.

Finally, I'm concerned with the overall economic impact to the state. The Legislature's JFO predicts a negative economic impact, specifically through a slight reduction in Vermont's Gross Domestic Product.

Vermont has one of the highest minimum wage rates in the country – which already increases annually – and yet employers across the state struggle to fill positions. If the minimum wage was directly correlated to economic prosperity and workforce growth, Vermont would have a stronger economy and a larger workforce than New Hampshire.

Despite S.23's good intentions, the reality is there are too many unintended consequences and we cannot grow the economy or make Vermont more affordable by arbitrarily forcing wage increases. I believe this legislation would end up hurting the very people it aims to help.

Based on the outstanding objections outlined above, I cannot support this legislation and must return it without my signature pursuant to Chapter II, Section 11 of the Vermont Constitution.

Sincerely,

/s/Philip B. Scott
Governor"

Senate Bill Referred

S. 128

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to physician assistant licensure

Was read and referred to the committee on Health Care.

Third Reading; Bill Passed

H. 922

House bill, entitled

An act relating to miscellaneous amendments to the Vermont State Employees' Retirement System

Was taken up, read the third time and passed.

Action on Bill Postponed

H. 674

House bill, entitled

An act relating to clarifying the definition of development used for use value appraisals

Was taken up and pending consideration of the report of the committee on Agriculture and Forestry, on motion of **Rep. Bartholomew of Hartland**, action on the bill was postponed until February 19, 2020.

Message from the Senate No. 17

A message was received from the Senate by Mr. Marshall, its Assistant Secretary, as follows:

Madam Speaker:

I am directed to inform the House that:

The Senate has on its part passed Senate bill of the following title:

S. 335. An act relating to universal access to afterschool programs.

In the passage of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

The Senate has considered House proposals of amendment to Senate proposals of amendment to House bill of the following title:

H. 760. An act relating to fiscal year 2020 budget adjustments.

And has concurred therein with an amendment in the passage of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

The Senate has considered the report of the Committee of Conference upon the disagreeing votes of the two Houses upon Senate bill of the following title:

S. 110. An act relating to data privacy and consumer protection.

And has accepted and adopted the same on its part.

The Senate has on its part adopted joint resolution of the following title:

J.R.S. 41. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment.

In the adoption of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

Adjournment

At ten o'clock and eleven minutes in the forenoon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until tomorrow at one o'clock in the afternoon.