

1           **DRAFT; NOT YET EDITED; FOR COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

2           TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

3           The Committee on Government Operations to which was referred Senate  
4           Bill No. 354 entitled “An act relating to emergency provisions for the  
5           operation of government” respectfully reports that it has considered the same  
6           and recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended  
7           by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the  
8           following:

9           Sec. 1. ANNUAL TOWN AND SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETINGS IN THE  
10           YEAR 2021; AUTHORIZED MEETING FORMATS;

11           **AUSTRALIAN BALLOT AUTHORITY FOR SPECIAL MEETINGS**

12           (a) Annual meetings. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the  
13           contrary, due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the year  
14           2021, each annual town meeting or representative annual town meeting and  
15           each annual town school district meeting shall be held pursuant to the  
16           Australian ballot system unless the town or school district:

17           (1) holds its annual meeting or representative annual meeting through  
18           electronic means in which the municipality uses technology that permits:

19           (A) the legal voters of the municipality to attend and participate in  
20           that meeting; and

21           (B) the public to access that meeting; or

1           (2) on or before December 31, 2020, the town or school district  
2           determines that it will hold its annual meeting or representative annual meeting  
3           in a manner that is consistent with the State guidance on indoor meetings that  
4           is in effect on the date of its determination.

5           **(b)** Special meetings. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection  
6           2680(a) of this subchapter that require the voters of a municipality to vote to  
7           apply the provisions of the Australian ballot system to a special meeting of the  
8           municipality or any other provision of law to the contrary, during the COVID-  
9           19 state of emergency declared under 20 V.S.A. chapter 1, the legislative body  
10           may vote to apply the Australian ballot system to an upcoming special meeting  
11           not less than 60 days in advance of that meeting if the legislative body  
12           determines that it is necessary to do so in order to protect the public health,  
13           safety, or welfare due to the circumstances of the state of emergency.

14           and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act  
15 relating to the method of holding town and school district meetings in the year  
16 2021”

17  
18           (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

19           \_\_\_\_\_

20           Representative \_\_\_\_\_

21           FOR THE COMMITTEE