



STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS

MEMORANDUM

To: Joint Legislative Management Committee, House Rules Committee, and Senate Rules Committee

From: Mike Ferrant, Director of Legislative Operations

Date: November 10, 2020

Subject: Recommendations for the 2021 Legislative Session

This memo serves as the formal opinion and recommendations of the Office of Legislative Operations for the logistical parameters of the upcoming 2021 Legislative Session. There have been many plans shared with various staff offices, equipment purchased and set up for hybrid committee meetings in three buildings throughout the Capitol Complex, and meetings of department heads to discuss what January and beyond “will look like”. As our discussions have increased in complexity, many unforeseen variables have come into play. We urge you to consider these as you plan for committee activity and environmental considerations going forward.

1. The safest format to conduct committee business is our remote meeting option, utilized with great success during the 2020 Legislative Session from March through September. Most returning Legislators and staff are already familiar with this process and it presents the safest option during this global pandemic that appears to be surging across the country and into Vermont.

If a hybrid committee meeting format is decided, we strongly urge the following conditions be put into policy for that option:

2. We recommend that any in-person committee meetings begin no earlier than January 19th in order to allow for proper quarantine periods to be conducted following the holiday season. The start date may need to be moved further out if the pandemic situation continues to deteriorate.
3. We urge that all in-person participation be exclusively limited to Members of the General Assembly and Legislative Staff only. Introducing any other variables or groups into this already delicate process presents an unnecessary risk to members and staff. The public, witnesses, and other interested parties can observe meetings via YouTube and participate remotely via Zoom just as they have since March.

4. ALL Legislative Staff must be afforded the opportunity to work remotely without fear of retribution and with full protection of their employment. Staff should be allowed to make personal decisions about their work environment and their safety without exception.
5. We urge the appropriate oversight committees to meet every two weeks to reassess the situation, hear feedback from staff offices and adjust the parameters of the format appropriately. As the oversight committee of staff offices, it is imperative that we have an audience to give feedback to on a regular basis.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the above recommendations. We all strive to work hard to create a successful atmosphere for the General Assembly to meet and conduct their business in a safe, supportive manner.