

Hello Senator White,

We are concerned that Act 92 9H. 681) AND ACT 106 (H. 948) provide for remote meetings in compliance with the open meeting law is in effect “during a declared state of emergency under 20 VSA Chapter 1 due to COVID-19”. The Governor has extended the state of emergency through July 15, however he may end that emergency before the legislature reconvenes in mid-August (although I imagine that may be unlikely).

I also want to make clear that we support funding to provide grants for the digitization of records that results that the records must be made available to the public on-line. The difficulty with the appropriation in S. 349 as it is proposed by the House, is that the overall appropriation is reduced from \$16 million overall to \$5,200,000 overall. We had hoped for a separate appropriation for digitization of records.

The Senate passed version of S. 349 provides \$14,850,000 to incorporated cities, towns villages, fire districts, consolidated water and sewer districts to reimburse eligible COVID-19 expenses including hazard pay, supplies and equipment, sanitation, facility alterations, overtime compensation, redirection of staff for first responder needs and any other eligible COVID-19 expenses not covered by other funding sources, including funding provided by FEMA. An additional \$1,000,000 would go to counties, unorganized towns or gores and the Unorganized Towns and Gores of Essex County (UTG).

The House passed version of S. 349 provides \$4,850,000 in grants not exceeding \$200,000 for the above purposes; expands the eligible applicants in that pool to include counties, towns, gores and the Unorganized Towns and Gores of Essex County; and gives preference to municipalities with populations under 2500. The amount of \$5,000,000 is made available for digitization of land records. Thus, the amount available to reimburse 246 cities and towns, 25 incorporated villages, six fire districts (noted in the appendix to Title 24), the UTG and four gores and grants, for COVID-19 expenses equals \$4,850,000. We expect that amount will be insufficient.



Karen Horn

Director, Public Policy & Advocacy

89 Main Street, Suite 4

Montpelier, VT 05602-2948

802-229-9111

www.vlct.org