

Act No. 61 (An Act Related to Boards and Commissions)

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BACKGROUND

The Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA) is responsible ^{for} with the State Boards and Commission Registry pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 116a. The Registry, which is required to be in place by January 1, 2023, will include the names of the members of each State board and commission, their term length and expiration, and their appointing authority. In addition, the Registry will include the date of creation of each State board and commission as well as amendments.

REGISTRY PREPARATION & ADMINISTRATION

The administration of the State Boards and Commission registry has the following requirements and, in preparation, these requirements necessitate several steps to occur prior to the effective date of the law, such as (1) reviewing and compiling information from each State board and commission's statutes; (2) determining which platform will serve best for the registry using existing or planned technologies within the Office of the Secretary of State; and (3) creating and testing the registry.

1. Register all state boards and commissions to assure they are defined, logged and up-to-date in the registry;
2. Define each seat on each state board and commission by appointing authority, term and special requirements to assure each seat is defined, logged and up-to-date in the registry;
3. Register and record each current appointment to each seat on each board;
4. Register and record every change in appointment to each seat on each board;
5. Develop and maintain forms, procedures, etc. to gather new appointing authority and appointee information;
6. Monitor when the General Assembly creates, dissolves or changes a State board or commission; changes the composition of a board or commission; and changes a seat, including a change to appointing authority or term.

7. Update the registry when the General Assembly creates, dissolves or changes a State board or commission; changes the composition of a board or commission; and changes a seat, including a change to appointing authority or term; and
8. Serve as the primary administrator for the registry and the registry contact for State Boards and Commissions, their appointees, potential applicants, and the public at large.

The work involved with establishing and maintaining this new registry should not be underestimated. The true number of State boards and commissions, their appointing authorities, their number seats, and requirements for each seat (e.g. professional or personal) is currently unknown; however, an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 individuals may be appointed at any given time. Unlike elected officials, including legislators, State board and commission members can be appointed at any time and have staggered terms.

As testified to both the Senate and House Government Operations Committees during the legislative session this year, the fulfilment of the requirements set forth in 3 V.S.A. § 116a, including the registry preparation, cannot be readily absorbed by any incumbent Secretary of State employee. VSARA is still recovering from a reduction in force (RIF) mandate that resulted in the loss of nine of its original 23 positions in 2009. In addition, as of July 1, 2019, VSARA is fulfilling all of Department of Health's online birth and death certificates, as well as most marriage and divorce certificate requests. This more than doubles the number of certificates processed by VSARA on an annual basis. VSARA's need for a newly allocated position, specifically a State Boards and Commission Registry administrator, has not diminished.

STATE BOARDS AND COMMISSION REGISTRY – FUTURE STATE

If done well and well resourced, there will be significant advantages and opportunities for streamlining the application process for board and commission staff; achieving greater public transparency for state boards and committees and their appointees; and expanding the registry to include additional State board and commission information. This is a very exciting endeavor for VSARA and one that aligns well with the data VSARA compiles regarding Vermont public agencies, legislative mandates, and public servants. The registry also aligns with VSARA's own mandate and mission of providing public records and information, in collaboration with other public agencies, for the benefit of the public collectively served.