

1 H.638

2 Introduced by Representative Andriano of Orwell

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: General provisions; common law; general rights; Open Meeting Law;

6 Working Group on Asynchronous Open Meetings

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish the
8 Working Group on Asynchronous Open Meetings to study and report on the
9 technology and best practices available for public bodies to hold asynchronous
10 electronic meetings.

11 An act relating to the Working Group on Asynchronous Open Meetings

12 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

13 Sec. 1. OPEN MEETING LAW; WORKING GROUP ON

14 ASYNCHRONOUS OPEN MEETINGS; REPORT

15 (a) Creation. There is created the Working Group on Asynchronous Open
16 Meetings to study and report on the technology and best practices available for
17 public bodies to hold asynchronous electronic meetings.

18 (b) Membership. The Working Group shall be composed of the following
19 members:

1 (1) two current members of the House of Representatives, not all from
2 the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

3 (2) two current members of the Senate, not all from the same political
4 party, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

5 (3) the Secretary of State or designee;

6 (4) the Attorney General or designee;

7 (5) one member representing Vermont's news media organizations,
8 appointed by the Vermont Press Association; and

9 (6) one member representing Vermont's municipalities, appointed by
10 the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

11 (c) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall study the feasibility of
12 asynchronous electronic meetings, including the following issues:

13 (1) the current technology and platforms available for public bodies to
14 hold asynchronous open meetings;

15 (2) whether the public will have sufficient access to and notice of the
16 deliberative meetings of public bodies who choose to use an asynchronous
17 electronic meeting platform;

18 (3) the resources available to enable the public to access asynchronous
19 electronic meetings;

20 (4) whether asynchronous open meetings are currently used in other
21 jurisdictions and whether the public bodies in those jurisdictions have

1 experienced an increase in the attendance of members and engagement of the
2 public;

3 (5) the best practices, procedures, and guidance available to public
4 bodies that use asynchronous electronic meeting platforms to conduct open
5 meetings; and

6 (6) the estimated costs of asynchronous electronic meeting platforms
7 and any information technology equipment and systems necessary for
8 operating those platforms.

9 (d) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the legal assistance of the
10 Office of the Secretary of State. For purposes of scheduling meetings, the
11 Working Group shall have the assistance of the Office of Legislative
12 Operations.

13 (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2025, the Working Group shall
14 submit a written report to the House Committee on Government Operations
15 and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations
16 with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

17 (f) Meetings.

18 (1) The Secretary of State or designee shall call the first meeting of the
19 Working Group to occur on or before September 1, 2024.

20 (2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at the
21 first meeting.

1 (3) Four members of the Working Group shall constitute a quorum.

2 (4) The Working Group shall cease to exist on January 15, 2025, or the
3 date on which the final report is submitted, whichever occurs first.

4 (g) Compensation and reimbursement.

5 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
6 Assembly, a legislative member of the Working Group shall be entitled to per
7 diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23
8 for not more than six meetings. These payments shall be made from monies
9 appropriated to the General Assembly.

10 (2) Other members of the Working Group shall be entitled to per diem
11 compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.
12 § 1010 for not more than six meetings. These payments shall be made from
13 monies appropriated to the Office of the Secretary of State.

14 (h) Appropriation. The sum of \$2,700.00 is appropriated to the Secretary
15 of State from the General Fund in fiscal year 2025 for per diem compensation
16 and reimbursement of expenses for members of the Working Group.

17 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.