

1 S.30

2 Introduced by Senators Hardy, Chittenden, Clarkson, Gulick, Lyons, Perchlik,
3 Ram Hinsdale, Watson and Weeks

4 Referred to Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General
5 Affairs

6 Date: January 24, 2023

7 Subject: Commerce and trade

8 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create a Sister
9 State Program within the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

10 An act relating to creating a Sister State Program

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

12 ~~Sec. 1, 3 V.S.A., § 2488 is added to read:~~

13 § 2488. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

14 (a) Creation; administration. The Vermont Sister State Program is created
15 within the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

16 (b) Oversight.

17 (1) A Vermont Sister State Committee composed of the following
18 members shall oversee the Program:

19 (A) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or
20 designee,

1 ~~(B) the Chair of the Board of Directors of Vermont Humanities or~~
2 ~~deserve;~~

3 ~~(C) a member appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees~~
4 ~~with experience in international relations;~~

5 ~~(D) a member appointed by the Speaker of the House with~~
6 ~~experience in international education and cultural exchange; and~~

7 ~~(E) a member appointed by the Governor with expertise in~~
8 ~~international arts or recreation.~~

9 ~~(2) The members appointed pursuant to subdivision (1)(C)–(E) of this~~
10 ~~subsection shall serve for terms of five years or until the member’s earlier~~
11 ~~resignation or removal for cause by the Governor.~~

12 ~~(3) If a member resigns or is removed, the appointing authority shall~~
13 ~~appoint a new member for the remainder of the member’s term.~~

14 ~~(4) The members of the Committee shall select a chair by a majority~~
15 ~~vote.~~

16 ~~(c) Administration. Subject to the approval of the Vermont Sister State~~
17 ~~Committee:~~

18 ~~(1) the Agency may contract for administration of part or all of the~~
19 ~~Program with a nonprofit organization that has expertise in international~~
20 ~~affairs,~~

1 ~~(2) the Agency, or its contracted administrator, shall create an~~
2 application form and process for evaluating Sister State relationships; and

3 ~~(3) the Agency may adopt rules and policies for the Program.~~

4 (d) Program requirements.

5 (1) The Vermont Sister State Committee may approve not more than
6 five Sister State relationships at one time with countries or provinces in
7 varying regions of the world upon finding that a relationship meets the
8 following goals:

9 (A) The relationship fosters understanding and collaboration between
10 residents, governments, businesses, and community organizations in Vermont
11 and residents, governments, businesses, and community organizations in the
12 Sister State.

13 (B) The relationship creates opportunities for cultural exchanges and
14 joint programs for educational, recreational, artistic, humanitarian, and
15 economic purposes that benefit both Vermont and the Sister State.

16 (C) The relationship promotes peace, human rights, and
17 environmental sustainability.

18 (D) The relationship involves a diverse range of individuals, sectors,
19 organizations, and communities in Vermont and the Sister State.

1 ~~(2) A Sister State agreement shall not initially exceed eight years and~~
2 ~~may be renewed for five-year increments upon approval of the Committee if it~~
3 ~~determines the relationship has met the goals of the Sister State Program.~~

4 (3) The Committee shall report to the relevant legislative committees
5 and the Governor biannually on or before February 1 concerning the status of
6 the Sister State Program, its programs, agreements, and progress meeting the
7 Program goals.

8 (4) In the event of an emergency, such as a public health emergency;
9 war or armed conflict; or serious human rights, environmental, or economic
10 violations, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker may agree to
11 immediately terminate a Sister State agreement or individual program.

12 Sec. 2. IMPLEMENTATION

13 The authorities authorized to make appointments to the Vermont Sister
14 State Committee pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 2488(b)(1)(C)–(E) shall appoint
15 members to initial terms of three, four, and five years, respectively.

16 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

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

Sec. 1. 3 V.S.A. § 2488 is added to read:

§ 2488. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

(a) Creation; administration. The Vermont Sister State Program is created
within the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

(b) Oversight.

(1) A Vermont Sister State Committee composed of the following members shall oversee the Program:

(A) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or designee;

(B) the Chair of the Board of Directors of Vermont Humanities or designee;

(C) two members appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees with experience in international relations;

(D) two members appointed by the Speaker of the House with experience in international education and cultural exchange; and

(E) two members appointed by the Governor with experience in international arts, recreation, or governance.

(2) The members appointed pursuant to subdivision (1)(C)–(E) of this subsection shall serve for terms of five years or until the member's earlier resignation or removal for cause by the Governor.

(3) If a member resigns or is removed, the appointing authority shall appoint a new member for the remainder of the member's term.

(4) The members of the Committee shall select a chair by a majority vote.

(c) Administration. Subject to the approval of the Vermont Sister State Committee:

(1) the Agency may contract for administration of part or all of the Program with a nonprofit organization that has expertise in international affairs;

(2) the Agency, or its contracted administrator, shall create an application form and process for evaluating Sister State relationships; and

(3) the Agency may adopt rules and policies for the Program.

(d) Program requirements.

(1) The Vermont Sister State Committee may approve not more than five Sister State relationships at one time with countries or provinces in varying regions of the world upon finding that a relationship meets the following goals:

(A) The relationship fosters understanding and collaboration between residents, governments, businesses, and community organizations in Vermont and residents, governments, businesses, and community organizations in the Sister State.

~~(B) The relationship creates opportunities for cultural exchanges and joint programs for educational, recreational, artistic, humanitarian, and economic purposes that benefit both Vermont and the Sister State.~~

~~(C) The relationship promotes peace, human rights, and environmental sustainability.~~

~~(D) The relationship involves a diverse range of individuals, sectors, organizations, and communities in Vermont and the Sister State.~~

~~(2) A Sister State agreement shall not initially exceed eight years and may be renewed for five-year increments upon approval of the Committee if it determines the relationship has met the goals of the Sister State Program.~~

~~(3) The Committee shall report to the relevant legislative committees and the Governor biannually on or before February 1 concerning the status of the Sister State Program, its programs, agreements, and progress meeting the Program goals.~~

~~(4) In the event of an emergency, such as a public health emergency; war or armed conflict; or serious human rights, environmental, or economic violations, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker may agree to immediately terminate a Sister State agreement or individual program.~~

~~(e) Compensation.~~

~~(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23.~~

~~(2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010.~~

~~(3) Payments to members of the Committee authorized under this subsection shall be made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development or other specific appropriation made for that purpose.~~

Sec. 2. IMPLEMENTATION

~~The authorities authorized to make appointments to the Vermont Sister State Committee pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 2488(b)(1)(C)–(E) shall appoint members to initial terms of three, four, and five years, respectively.~~

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

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

Sec. 1. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM; WORKING GROUP

(a) Creation. There is created the Vermont Sister State Program Working Group for the purpose of determining the administration, oversight, scope, and objectives of a Vermont Sister State Program.

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

(1) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or designee;

(2) the Secretary of Education or designee;

(3) the Secretary of Agriculture or designee;

(4) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Arts Council or designee of the Board of the Trustees;

(5) the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Vermont Council on World Affairs or designee of the Board of the Directors;

(6) the Vermont Adjutant General or designee; and

(7) three members with experience in educational or cultural exchanges or in international affairs to be appointed as follows:

(A) one member by the Governor;

(B) one member by the Senate Committee on Committees; and

(C) one member by the Speaker of the House.

(c) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or designee shall call the first meeting of the Working Group to occur on or before September 1, 2024.

(2) The Working Group shall select a chair from among its members at the first meeting.

(3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(4) In furtherance of its duties, the Working Group is encouraged to solicit input and participation from interested stakeholders, including those with experience in cultural exchange or in international relations, agriculture, trade, education, arts, recreation, or governance.

(d) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall review sister state programs in other jurisdictions and receive testimony from relevant stakeholders in order to make recommendations for legislative action. In

conducting its analysis, the Working Group shall consider and make recommendations on the following:

(1) which department in State government is best suited to administer, house, and provide support to the Program;

(2) the makeup of the membership of the Committee overseeing the Program;

(3) sources of funding that will financially support the Program;

(4) specific objectives of the Program that align with the following goals:

(A) that the Program exist to create, administer, and maintain mutually beneficial and long-lasting partnerships between Vermont and other select countries or provinces;

(B) that the Program promote peace, human rights, and environmental sustainability;

(C) that the Program foster the connection of immigrants and refugee communities in Vermont with their nations of origin;

(D) that the Program promote and foster cultural exchange, tourism, trade, and education between Vermont and Sister States; and

(E) that through the Program, the Committee communicate with and support military personnel, foreign service officers, aid organizations, nongovernmental organizations, Peace Corps volunteers, and any other relevant entities working in Sister States.

(5) the criteria for evaluating proposed and existing Sister State agreements;

(6) the requirements for creating and managing Sister State agreements, including:

(A) the term length for agreements; and

(B) the appropriate number of active agreements at one time; and

(7) any other issue the Working Group deems relevant to the success of the Vermont Sister State Program.

(e) Compensation and reimbursement.

(1) A nonlegislative member of the Working Group shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be

made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

(2) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Working Group serving in the member's capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

(f) Reporting.

(1) An initial report on the Working Group's progress on the work set forth in this section shall be submitted to the General Assembly on or before February 15, 2025.

(2) A final report shall include the Working Group's findings and recommendations for legislative language based on the requirements set forth in this section. The report shall also include the names of the stakeholders that the Working Group heard from during its work. The report shall be submitted to the General Assembly on or before November 1, 2025.

(g) Expiration. The Working Group shall cease to exist on March 31, 2026.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.