

1 S.39

2 An act relating to compensation and benefits for members of the Vermont
3 General Assembly

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

5 * * * Health Benefits * * *

6 Sec. 1. 3 V.S.A. § 631 is amended to read:

7 § 631. GROUP INSURANCE FOR STATE EMPLOYEES; SALARY
8 DEDUCTIONS FOR INSURANCE, SAVINGS PLANS, AND
9 CREDIT UNIONS

10 (a)(1) The Secretary of Administration may contract on behalf of the State
11 with any insurance company or nonprofit association doing business in this
12 State to secure the benefits of franchise or group insurance. Beginning on
13 July 1, 1978, the terms of coverage under the policy shall be determined under
14 section 904 of this title, but it may include:

15 * * *

16 (2)(A)(i) As used in this section, the term “employees” includes any
17 class or classes of elected or appointed officials, State’s Attorneys, sheriffs,
18 employees of State’s Attorneys’ offices whose compensation is administered
19 through the State of Vermont payroll system, except contractual and temporary
20 employees, and deputy sheriffs paid by the State of Vermont pursuant to
21 24 V.S.A. § 290(b). The term “employees” ~~shall~~ does not include ~~members of~~
22 ~~the General Assembly as such~~, any person rendering service on a retainer or

1 fee basis, members of boards or commissions, or persons ~~other than employees~~
2 ~~of the Vermont Historical Society, the Vermont Film Corporation, the~~
3 ~~Vermont State Employees' Credit Union, Vermont State Employees'~~
4 ~~Association, and the Vermont Council on the Arts,~~ whose compensation for
5 service is not paid from the State Treasury, or any elected or appointed official
6 ~~unless the~~ except as specifically provided pursuant to this subdivision
7 (a)(2)(A)(i). The term "employees" includes employees of the Vermont
8 Historical Society, the Vermont State Employees' Credit Union, the Vermont
9 State Employees' Association, the Vermont Council on the Arts, and any
10 elected or appointed official who is actively engaged in and devoting
11 substantially full-time to the conduct of the business of his or her the official's
12 public office. The term "employees" also includes members of the General
13 Assembly as set forth in subdivision (iv) of this subdivision (a)(2)(A).

14 * * *

15 (iv) For purposes of group hospital-surgical-medical expense
16 insurance, any employee assistance program offered to State employees, and
17 any flexible spending account program offered to State employees for health
18 care or dependent care expenses, or both, the term "employees" includes
19 members of the General Assembly.

20 (B)(i) The premiums for extending insurance coverage to employees
21 shall be paid in full by the Vermont Historical Society, ~~the Vermont Film~~

1 ~~Corporation~~, the Vermont State Employees' Association, the Vermont State
2 Employees' Credit Union, the Vermont Council on the Arts, or their respective
3 retirees. Nothing herein creates a legal obligation on the part of the State of
4 Vermont to pay any portion of the premiums required to extend insurance
5 coverage to this group of employees.

6 (ii) Members of the General Assembly shall be required to pay the
7 same portion of the premium for group hospital-surgical-medical expense
8 insurance as is required of employees of the Executive Branch.

9 * * *

10 * * * Compensation and Expenses * * *

11 Sec. 2. LEGISLATOR COMPENSATION FOR 2025–2026 BIENNIAL
12 SESSION

13 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of 32 V.S.A. § 1052 to the contrary,
14 members of the General Assembly other than the Speaker of the House and
15 President Pro Tempore of the Senate are entitled to the following weekly
16 salary amounts during the 2025–2026 Biennial Session:

17 (1) for 2025, a weekly salary of \$1,000.00 plus an adjustment consistent
18 with the compensation increase provided to other constitutional officers for
19 fiscal year 2025; and

1 (2) for 2026, a weekly salary of \$1,100.00 plus an adjustment consistent
2 with the compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers for
3 fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

4 (b) Notwithstanding any provision of 32 V.S.A. § 1051 to the contrary, the
5 Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate are entitled to
6 the following weekly salary amounts during the 2025–2026 Biennial Session:

7 (1) for 2025, a weekly salary of \$1,230.00 plus an adjustment consistent
8 with the compensation increase provided to other constitutional officers for
9 fiscal year 2025; and

10 (2) for 2026, a weekly salary of \$1,530.00 plus an adjustment consistent
11 with the compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers for
12 fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

13 (c) Notwithstanding any provision of 32 V.S.A. § 1051 to the contrary, the
14 Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate are entitled to
15 annual compensation for the 2025–2026 Biennial Session as follows:

16 (1) for 2025, an annual salary of \$19,000.00 plus an adjustment
17 consistent with the compensation increase provided to other constitutional
18 officers for fiscal year 2025; and

19 (2) for 2026, an annual salary of \$23,500.00 plus an adjustment
20 consistent with the compensation increases provided to other constitutional
21 officers for fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

1 constitutional officers. The salary of the Speaker and President Pro Tempore
2 shall be paid in biweekly installments.

3 (b) In addition to the annual compensation set forth in subsection (a) of this
4 section, the Speaker and President Pro Tempore shall be entitled to receive:

5 (1) ~~\$652.00 a week for the 2005~~ \$1,830.00 a week for the first year of
6 the 2027 Biennial Session, plus an adjustment consistent with the
7 compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers for fiscal years
8 2025–2027 and thereafter, to be paid in biweekly payments during the regular
9 and adjourned sessions of the General Assembly, ~~provided that, beginning on~~
10 ~~January 1, 2007, the weekly compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter~~
11 ~~by the cost of living adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most~~
12 ~~recent collective bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on July 1, 2021,~~
13 Beginning on January 1, 2028 and annually thereafter on January 1, the weekly
14 compensation shall be adjusted consistent with the compensation increases
15 provided to other constitutional officers;

16 * * *

17 (3) an allowance for or reimbursement of expenses for mileage, meals,
18 and lodging expenses as provided to members of the General Assembly under
19 subsection 1052(b) of this title during the biennial, adjourned, and special
20 sessions of the General Assembly and in addition such other actual and
21 necessary expenses incurred while engaged in duties imposed by law.

1 Sec. 4. 32 V.S.A. § 1052 is amended to read:

2 § 1052. MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY; COMPENSATION
3 AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

4 (a) Compensation.

5 (1) Session compensation. Each member of the General Assembly,
6 other than the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the
7 Senate, is entitled to a weekly salary of ~~\$589.00 for the 2005~~ \$1,210.00 for the
8 first year of the 2027 Biennial Session, plus an adjustment consistent with the
9 compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers for fiscal years
10 2025–2027 and thereafter, provided that, beginning on January 1, 2007, the
11 weekly compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter by the cost of living
12 adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most recent collective
13 bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on July 1, 2021. Beginning on
14 January 1, 2028 and annually thereafter on January 1, the weekly
15 compensation shall be adjusted consistent with the compensation increases
16 provided to other constitutional officers. The salary of members shall be paid
17 in biweekly installments.

18 (2) Special session compensation. During a special session, a member is
19 entitled to an amount equal to one-fifth of the annually adjusted weekly
20 compensation set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection, rounded up to the

1 nearest dollar, for each day of a special session ~~on which the House of which~~
2 ~~he or she is a~~ that the House in which the member serves shall sit.

3 (3) Adjournment compensation. During adjournment of the General
4 Assembly, a member may claim an amount equal to one-fifth of the annually
5 adjusted weekly compensation set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection
6 (a), rounded up to the nearest dollar, for each week of the adjournment of the
7 General Assembly.

8 (b) Expenses. During any session of the General Assembly, each member
9 is entitled to receive an allowance for or reimbursement of expenses as
10 ~~follows:~~ set forth in this subsection.

11 (1) Mileage reimbursement. ~~Reimbursement~~ Each member shall receive
12 reimbursement in an amount equal to the actual mileage traveled for each day
13 of session in which the member travels between Montpelier and the member's
14 home or from Montpelier or from the member's home to another site on
15 officially sanctioned legislative business. Reimbursement of actual mileage
16 traveled under this subdivision shall be at the rate per mile determined by the
17 federal Office of Government-wide Policy and published in the Federal
18 Register for the year of the session.

19 (2) Meals ~~and lodging allowance.~~ Each member shall receive either a
20 meals allowance or reimbursement of actual meals expenses. A member shall
21 be presumed to have elected to receive the meals allowance unless the member

1 informs the Office of Legislative Operations prior to the convening of the
2 regular or adjourned session that the member wishes to receive reimbursement
3 of actual meals expenses. A member's election to receive reimbursement of
4 actual meals expenses shall remain in effect through the remainder of that
5 session unless the member notifies the Office, in writing, that the member
6 needs to change to the meals allowance due to a change in circumstances or for
7 another compelling reason.

8 (A) Meals allowance. ~~A~~ A member who elects to receive a meals
9 allowance ~~is~~ shall receive an amount equal to the daily amount for meals ~~and~~
10 lodging determined for Montpelier, Vermont, by the federal Office of
11 Government-wide Policy and published in the Federal Register for the year of
12 the session; for each day the House in which the member serves shall sit.

13 (B) Meals reimbursement. A member who elects to receive
14 reimbursement of expenses shall receive reimbursement equal to the actual
15 amounts expended by the member for meals for each day that the House in
16 which the member serves shall sit, as well as meals for the night preceding the
17 first legislative day of each week during the legislative session; provided,
18 however, that the total amount of the weekly reimbursement available pursuant
19 to this subdivision shall not exceed the amount the member would have
20 received for the same week if the member had elected the meals allowance
21 pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (2). The member shall provide

1 meal receipts or otherwise substantiate the amounts expended to the Office of
2 Legislative Operations in the form and manner prescribed by the Director of
3 Legislative Operations.

4 (3) Lodging. Each member shall receive either a lodging allowance or
5 reimbursement of actual lodging expenses. A member shall be presumed to
6 have elected to receive the lodging allowance unless the member informs the
7 Office of Legislative Operations prior to the convening of the regular or
8 adjourned session that the member wishes to receive reimbursement of actual
9 lodging expenses. A member's election to receive reimbursement of actual
10 lodging expenses shall remain in effect through the remainder of that session
11 unless the member notifies the Office, in writing, that the member needs to
12 change to the lodging allowance due to a change in circumstances or for
13 another compelling reason.

14 (A) Lodging allowance. A member who elects to receive a lodging
15 allowance shall receive an amount equal to the daily amount for lodging
16 determined for Montpelier, Vermont, by the federal Office of Government-
17 wide Policy and published in the Federal Register for the year of the session
18 for each day the House in which the member serves shall sit.

19 (B) Lodging reimbursement. A member who elects to receive
20 reimbursement of expenses shall receive reimbursement equal to the actual
21 amounts expended by the member for lodging for each day that the House in

1 which the member serves shall sit, as well as lodging for the night preceding
2 the first legislative day of each week during the legislative session; provided,
3 however, that the total amount of the weekly reimbursement available pursuant
4 to this subdivision for each week shall not exceed the amount the member
5 would have received for the same week if the member had elected the lodging
6 allowance pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3). The member
7 shall provide lodging receipts or otherwise substantiate the amounts expended
8 to the Office of Legislative Operations in the form and manner prescribed by
9 the Director of Legislative Operations.

10 (4) Absences. If a member is absent for reasons other than sickness or
11 legislative business for one or more entire days while the house in which the
12 member sits is in session, the member shall notify the Office of Legislative
13 Operations of that absence, and ~~expenses received shall not include the amount~~
14 ~~that the legislator specifies was not incurred~~ the member shall not receive or be
15 reimbursed for mileage, meals, or lodging expenses incurred during the period
16 of that absence.

17 (c) ~~For attending a meeting of the Joint Fiscal Committee when a member~~
18 ~~is not receiving compensation as a member of the General Assembly, a~~
19 ~~member of the Joint Fiscal Committee shall be entitled to the same per diem~~
20 ~~compensation and reimbursement for necessary expenses as provided members~~
21 ~~of the General Assembly for attendance at sessions of the General Assembly.~~

1 ~~[Repealed.]~~ Members-elect; stipend. Each member-elect of the General
2 Assembly who is not an incumbent shall receive a stipend in an amount equal
3 to one-fifth of the annually adjusted weekly compensation set forth in
4 subdivision (a)(1) of this section, rounded up to the nearest dollar, for each day
5 of attendance at an orientation program for new legislators organized by the
6 General Assembly and its staff.

7 (d) Death of a member. If a member of the General Assembly dies while
8 the General Assembly is in session, the estate of the deceased member shall be
9 entitled to receive compensation for the entire pay period in which the death
10 occurred.

11 * * * Legislative Leave from Employment * * *

12 Sec. 5. 21 V.S.A. § 496 is amended to read:

13 § 496. LEGISLATIVE LEAVE

14 (a) Any person who, in order to serve as a member of the General
15 Assembly, must leave a ~~full-time~~ position in the employ of any employer, shall
16 be entitled to a temporary or partial leave of absence for the purpose of
17 allowing such employee to perform any official duty in connection with ~~his or~~
18 ~~her~~ the person's elected office.

19 (b) An employee who intends to seek election to the General Assembly and
20 to invoke, if elected, ~~his or her~~ the right to a leave of absence pursuant to
21 subsection (a) of this section, shall notify ~~his or her~~ the employee's employer

1 of those intentions in writing within ~~10~~ 14 days after ~~filing the primary election~~
2 ~~nominating petition required by 17 V.S.A. § 2353 or of taking any other action~~
3 ~~required by 17 V.S.A. chapter 49, to place his or her name on a primary or~~
4 ~~general election ballot~~ being elected. An employee who fails to give notice to
5 ~~his or her~~ the employee's employer as required by this section shall be deemed
6 to have waived ~~his or her~~ the right to a leave of absence under subsection (a) of
7 this section.

8 * * *

9 * * * Legislative Service Working Group * * *

10 Sec. 6. LEGISLATIVE SERVICE WORKING GROUP

11 (a) Creation. There is created the Legislative Service Working Group to
12 consider issues related to serving as a member of the Vermont General
13 Assembly.

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

16 (1) three current members of the House of Representatives, not all from
17 the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;
18 and

19 (2) three current members of the Senate, not all from the same political
20 party, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees.

1 (c) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall consider and make
2 recommendations on issues involving legislative compensation and benefits,
3 staffing, administrative support, and the length of the legislative session,
4 including:

5 (1) the current compensation and benefits offered to members of the
6 General Assembly, including:

7 (A) whether current salaries and benefits, including those added or
8 increased by this act, are sufficient and, if not, how they should be increased;

9 (B) the impact of current salaries and benefits, including those added
10 or increased by this act, on recruiting and retaining members from diverse
11 backgrounds and life experiences;

12 (C) the impact of making members eligible for the State employees'
13 health plan as set forth in Sec. 1 of this act on members of different income
14 levels;

15 (D) whether members should be offered additional benefits,
16 including reimbursement of child, dependent, and elder care expenses;

17 (E) options for establishing or engaging an independent entity to
18 make adjustments to legislative compensation and benefits;

19 (F) whether members should have the option to receive a prorated
20 salary throughout the calendar year instead of receiving their full salary
21 amount during the months that the General Assembly is in session;

1 (G) whether supplemental compensation should be provided to
2 members who hold leadership positions in addition to the Speaker of the House
3 and Senate President Pro Tempore, including caucus leaders and committee
4 chairs;

5 (H) how the salaries, benefits, and compensation structure in the
6 Vermont General Assembly compare to those of other state legislatures; and

7 (I) how the salaries, benefits, and compensation structure in the
8 Vermont General Assembly compare to the mean and median compensation
9 and benefits of Vermont residents;

10 (2) whether changes to staffing are necessary, such as increasing the
11 number of legislative staff in existing staff offices, expanding the types of
12 legislative staff services available to members, adding caucus staff, and adding
13 personal staff or providing members with an allowance to hire their own
14 personal staff;

15 (3) how to increase the administrative support available to members to
16 increase their effectiveness and ability to respond efficiently to the needs of
17 their constituents; and

18 (4) whether changes should be made to the length or structure of the
19 legislative session.

20 (d) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative,
21 technical, and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Operations, the

1 Office of Legislative Counsel, the Office of Human Resources, and the Joint
2 Fiscal Office.

3 (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2024, the Working Group shall report
4 its findings and recommendations, including any recommendations for
5 legislative action, to the Speaker of the House, the Senate President Pro
6 Tempore, and the House Committee on Government Operations and Military
7 Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations. Drafts of the
8 Working Group's report that are in progress but have not yet been shared with
9 the Working Group shall be confidential.

10 (f) Meetings.

11 (1) The Office of Legislative Operations shall call the first meeting of
12 the Working Group to occur on or before July 1, 2023.

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

15 (3) A majority of the membership of the Working Group shall constitute
16 a quorum.

17 (4) The Working Group shall cease to exist on January 15, 2024.

18 (g) Compensation and reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during
19 adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Working
20 Group shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of

1 expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than six meetings. These
2 payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

3 Sec. 7. [Deleted.]

4 * * * Effective Dates * * *

5 Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATES

6 (a) Secs. 5 (legislative leave from employment) and 6 (Legislative Service
7 Working Group) and this section shall take effect on passage.

8 (b) Secs. 3(b)(3) (expenses for Speaker and President Pro Tempore) and
9 4(b)–(d) (legislator expenses) shall take effect on January 1, 2024.

10 (c) Sec. 2 (legislator compensation for 2025–2026 Biennial Session) shall
11 take effect on July 1, 2024.

12 (d) The remaining sections shall take effect on January 1, 2025.