

1 S.30

2 An act relating to creating a Sister State Program

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

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

5 § 2488. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

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

8 (b) Oversight.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 (d) Program requirements.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 (4) In the event of an emergency, such as a public health emergency;
20 war or armed conflict; or serious human rights, environmental, or economic

1 violations, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker may agree to
2 immediately terminate a Sister State agreement or individual program.

3 (e) Compensation.

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

7 (2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem
8 compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.
9 § 1010.

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

14 Sec. 2. IMPLEMENTATION

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

18 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

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