

1 PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION
2 OF THE STATE OF VERMONT

3 Subject: Declaration of rights; government for the people; equality of
4 rights

5 PROPOSAL 4

6 Sec. 1. PURPOSE

7 (a) This proposal would amend the Constitution of the State of Vermont to
8 specify that the government must not deny equal treatment under the law on
9 account of a person’s race, ethnicity, sex, religion, disability, sexual
10 orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or national origin. The
11 Constitution is our founding legal document stating the overarching values of
12 our society. This amendment is in keeping with the values espoused by the
13 current Vermont Constitution. Chapter I, Article 1 declares “That all persons
14 are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent, and
15 unalienable rights.” Chapter I, Article 7 states “That government is, or ought
16 to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the
17 people.” The core value reflected in Article 7 is that all people should be
18 afforded all the benefits and protections bestowed by the government, and that
19 the government should not confer special advantages upon the privileged. This
20 amendment would expand upon the principles of equality and liberty by
21 ensuring that the government does not create or perpetuate the legal, social, or

1 economic inferiority of any class of people. This proposed constitutional
2 amendment is not intended to limit the scope of rights and protections afforded
3 by any other provision in the Vermont Constitution.

4 (b) Providing for equality of rights as a fundamental principle in the
5 Constitution would serve as a foundation for protecting the rights and dignity
6 of historically marginalized populations and addressing existing inequalities.
7 This amendment would reassert the broad principles of personal liberty and
8 equality reflected in the Constitution of the State of Vermont with authoritative
9 force, longevity, and symbolic importance.

10 Sec. 2. Article 23 of Chapter I of the Vermont Constitution is added to read:

11 Article 23. [Equality of rights]

12 That the people are guaranteed equal protection under the law. The State shall
13 not deny equal treatment under the law on account of a person's race, ethnicity,
14 sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression,
15 or national origin. Nothing in this Article shall be interpreted or applied to
16 prevent the adoption or implementation of measures intended to provide
17 equality of treatment and opportunity for members of groups that have
18 historically been subject to discrimination.

19 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 The amendment set forth in Sec. 2 shall become a part of the Constitution of
21 the State of Vermont on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November

- 1 2026 when ratified and adopted by the people of this State in accordance with
- 2 the provisions of 17 V.S.A. chapter 32.