

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Government Operations to which was referred House  
3 Bill No. 702 entitled “An act relating to legislative operations and government  
4 accountability” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and  
5 recommends that the Senate propose to the House that the bill be amended by  
6 striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the  
7 following:

8 \* \* \* Purpose and Findings \* \* \*

9 Sec. 1. PURPOSE

10 (a) The purpose of this act is to actuate the principle of government  
11 accountability by focusing on how evidence is used to inform policy, how our  
12 State laws are carried out, and how legislation can best be formed to achieve its  
13 intended outcomes. This act strives to systematize government accountability  
14 efforts as much as possible with simple, clear, independent, objective, and fact-  
15 based processes rather than rely upon individual legislators or individual  
16 committees to be effective.

17 (b) Government accountability means the principle of demanding that  
18 legislation succeeds in achieving its stated policy goals through the provision  
19 of means by which to measure whether the policy goals have been met. The  
20 metrics for determining whether success has been achieved are as important as  
21 the goals themselves.



1 Committees. In addition to two members-at-large appointed from each  
2 chamber, one appointment shall be made from each of the House Committee  
3 on Government Operations and Military Affairs, the Senate Committee on  
4 Government Operations, and the House and Senate Committees on  
5 Appropriations.

6 (c) The Committee shall elect a chair, vice chair, and clerk from among its  
7 members and shall adopt rules of procedure. The position of chair shall rotate  
8 biennially between the House and the Senate members. The Committee shall  
9 keep minutes of its meetings and maintain a file thereof. A quorum shall  
10 consist of five members.

11 (d) The Committee shall meet as necessary for the prompt discharge of its  
12 duties.

13 (e) For attendance at a meeting when the General Assembly is not in  
14 session, members of the Committee shall be entitled to compensation for  
15 services and reimbursement of expenses as provided under subsection 23(a) of  
16 this title.

17 (f) The professional and clerical services of the Joint Fiscal Office, the  
18 Office of Legislative Operations, and the Office of Legislative Counsel shall  
19 be available to the Committee.

20 § 972. DUTIES AND POWERS

1        (a) Duties. The Committee shall have duties as described in this section  
2        and elsewhere in law.

3                (1)(A) The Committee shall exercise government oversight by  
4        examining and investigating matters of significant public concern relating to  
5        State government performance. The Committee shall examine the possible  
6        reasons for any failure of government oversight and provide findings and  
7        tangible recommendations to standing committees of jurisdiction to prevent  
8        future failures.

9                (B) The Committee will select issues of significant public concern to  
10       examine and investigate by a majority of the current Committee members who  
11       have not recused themselves from the matter. The Committee shall consider  
12       issues of significant public concern referred to the Committee pursuant to a  
13       resolution adopted by either chamber of the General Assembly.

14               (C) As used in this section, an “issue of significant public concern”  
15       means any issue that:

16                (i) affects the State as a whole;

17                (ii) affects a vulnerable population;

18                (iii) costs the State more than \$100,000,000.00;

19                (iv) implicates a serious failure of State government oversight or  
20       accountability;

21                (v) arises from previously enacted legislation; or

1                   (vi) constitutes a failure to adequately respond to State or federal  
2 audits.

3                   (2) The Committee shall, with coordination from the Legislative  
4 Committee on Administrative Rules, evaluate executive entities directed to  
5 adopt rules to ensure consistency and accountability in the rulemaking process.

6                   (3) The Committee shall, on an annual basis, issue a report that includes:

7                   (A) which issues of significant public concern the Committee has  
8 examined and investigated, including relevant information and data;

9                   (B) the Committee’s current objectives for review of issues of  
10 significant public concern and which objectives, to date, have and have not  
11 been met;

12                   (C) the Committee’s objectives for review of issues of significant  
13 public concern for the upcoming two years; and

14                   (D) any additional resources required by the Committee to  
15 adequately conduct its work.

16                   (b) Powers. The Committee shall have powers as described in this section  
17 and elsewhere in law.

18                   (1) The Committee shall have the power to issue subpoenas and  
19 administer oaths in connection with the examination and investigation of  
20 matters of government oversight and accountability related to issues of  
21 significant public concern.



1 Sec. 4. 32 V.S.A. § 163 is amended to read:

2 § 163. DUTIES OF THE AUDITOR OF ACCOUNTS

3 In addition to any other duties prescribed by law, the Auditor of Accounts  
4 shall:

5 \* \* \*

6 (6)(A) Provide the Joint Government Oversight and Accountability  
7 Committee with a written summary of all audits completed by the Office of the  
8 Auditor of Accounts.

9 (B) Upon the request of the Joint Government Oversight and  
10 Accountability Committee, provide, at the mutual convenience of the  
11 Committee and Auditor, a presentation to the Committee of any completed  
12 audit.

13 \* \* \*

14 \* \* \* Reports \* \* \*

15 Sec. 5. 2 V.S.A. § 20 is amended to read:

16 § 20. LIMITATION ON DISTRIBUTION AND DURATION OF AGENCY  
17 REPORTS

18 (a) Unless otherwise provided by law, whenever it is required by statute,  
19 rule, or otherwise that an agency, department, or other entity submit an annual,  
20 biennial, or other periodic report to the General Assembly, that requirement  
21 shall be met by submission by ~~January~~ November 15 of copies of the report for

1 activities in the preceding fiscal year to the Clerk of the House, the Secretary  
2 of the Senate, the Office of Legislative ~~Counsel~~ Operations, chairs of  
3 legislative standing committees of jurisdiction, and such individual members  
4 of the General Assembly or committees that specifically request a copy of the  
5 report. ~~To the extent practicable, reports~~ Reports shall also be ~~placed~~  
6 published on the agency's ~~Internet~~ website. No general distribution or mailing  
7 of such reports shall be made to members of the General Assembly.

8 \* \* \*

9 (e) If it becomes apparent to any agency, department, or other entity  
10 directed by the General Assembly to report on a matter that the agency,  
11 department, or entity will be unable to do so within the required time, the  
12 reporting agency, department, or entity shall inform, if applicable, the relevant  
13 legislative committee's current chair, the committee assistant, and the Office of  
14 Legislative Operations of which report will be late, why, and when it will be  
15 delivered.

16 \* \* \* State-Funded Grants Review \* \* \*

17 Sec. 6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE GRANT PROCESS

18 IMPROVEMENTS

19 (a) Performance review. The Agency of Administration shall review and  
20 assess the performance of the State's current grant awarding procedures and



1 provide recommendations on how to improve such procedures in the form of a  
2 written report to the General Assembly. In its report, the Agency shall:

3 (1) provide recommendations on how to:

4 (A) simplify the grant application and reporting processes;

5 (B) reduce the reliance on reimbursable grant agreements;

6 (C) increase the standard indirect rate and apply it consistently  
7 statewide;

8 (D) reduce delays in the execution of grant awards and the issuance  
9 of payments on grant agreements; and

10 (E) reduce work granted to nonprofit and community-based  
11 organizations that could otherwise be done by the State;

12 (2) explain efforts to improve employee training on grant administration  
13 across State government; and

14 (3) detail best practices and models of grant administration from other  
15 states.

16 (b) Consultation. In furtherance of the review set forth in subsection (a),  
17 the Agency shall consult with:

18 (1) relevant State agencies and departments;

19 (2) nonprofit and community-based organizations identified in  
20 consultation with Common Good Vermont that have received a State-funded  
21 grant; and

