

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.