



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE
Joint Fiscal Office

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Fiscal Note

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S.224 – An act relating to compensation and benefits for members of the Vermont General Assembly As Amended by the Senate Committee on Government Operations

Bill Summary

This bill proposes changes to compensation and benefits for legislators. Provisions in the bill include updates to the annual wage and weekly session wage for the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and an updated weekly session wage for members of the General Assembly. The bill also makes changes to daily stipend amounts and reimbursements for meals, mileage, and lodging.

The bill creates a Legislative Service Working Group to study and report on legislative compensation and benefits, staffing, administrative support, the length of the legislative session, and the number of members in the General Assembly.

Fiscal Impact

In fiscal year 2025, this bill would create estimated new one-time General Fund costs of \$8,000 to cover costs associated with the Legislative Service Working Group. The bill does not include an appropriation; the costs would be absorbed by the General Assembly's budget.

If the changes in S.224 were enacted for fiscal year 2024, costs would total approximately \$1.2 million.

In fiscal year 2025, based on estimated inflationary changes, the fiscal impact would be approximately \$1.3 million.

Background and Details

The following sections have a fiscal impact.

Section 1

Section 1 proposes to make members of the General Assembly eligible for the same employee assistance program (EAP) benefits and flexible spending account program benefits that are available to State employees. This provision would be effective on January 1, 2025.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Costs for members of the General Assembly to participate in the EAP program are estimated to be approximately \$5,940 per year.

Flexible Spending Account Program

Costs to participate in a health or dependent care flexible spending account program are borne by employees. There are no estimated new costs to the State.

Section 2

This section proposes to adjust the annual and weekly session salaries for the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

Annual Compensation

The Speaker and the President Pro Tempore are entitled to receive annual compensation for the 2025 session equal to 35 percent of the annual mean Vermont wage according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent Occupational Employment and Wage Survey. Beginning in July 2025, and annually thereafter, their annual compensation would be adjusted in accordance with the compensation increases provided to the elected offices of the Executive branch, as enumerated in 32 V.S.A § 1003.

Session Compensation

For the 2025 session, the Speaker and the President Pro Tempore are entitled to receive a weekly salary equal to a one-fifty-second portion of 110 percent of the annual mean Vermont wage, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent Occupational Employment and Wage Survey. Beginning in July 2025, and annually thereafter, their weekly compensation shall be adjusted consistent with the compensation increases provided to the elected offices of the Executive branch, as enumerated in 32 V.S.A § 1003.

This section would also entitle the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate compensation for the week of Town Meeting Day.

In total, all else equal the fiscal impact of the section is approximately \$30,000 when compared with the fiscal year 2024 legislative budget.

Section 3

This section proposes to adjust compensation for members of the General Assembly.

Session Compensation

For the 2025 session, each member of the General Assembly is entitled to receive a weekly salary equal to a one-fifty-second portion of the annual mean Vermont wage, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent Occupational Employment and Wage Survey. Beginning in July 2025, and annually thereafter, their weekly compensation shall be adjusted consistent with the compensation increases provided to the elected offices of the Executive branch, as enumerated in 32 V.S.A § 1003.

This section would also entitle each member of the General Assembly to compensation for the week of Town Meeting Day.

Member-elect Stipend

This section also proposes to compensate members-elect at a rate equal to one-fifth of the weekly session compensation rate for each day of attendance at new member orientation.

Using the latest data, updated session compensation rates would result in increased annual costs of approximately \$1.2 million all else equal compared to fiscal year 2024 legislative budget.

Section 5

This section establishes a Legislative Service Working Group made up of three current House members, one former member of the House of Representatives, three current Senate members, and one former member of

the Senate, that would convene during the 2024 off-session and make recommendations on legislative compensation and benefits, staffing, administrative support, and the length of the legislative session. On or before December 15, 2024, the Group must report its findings and recommendations to the Speaker of the House, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, and the Senate Committee on Government Operations. Members of the Group would be entitled to compensation and expense reimbursement for not more than four meetings. Total estimated costs are \$8,000 in fiscal year 2025. This section does not include an appropriation; the cost would be absorbed by the General Assembly's fiscal year 2025 budget.

Change from Current Law	Current Law	Proposed	<i>For Reference:</i> S.39 (2023)¹
Sec. 1: Legislator EAP cost	\$0	\$5,940	\$5,940
Sec. 2: Speaker, Pro Tem Compensation - Salaries and FICA	\$69,476	\$96,116	\$145,516
Sec. 3-4: Legislator Compensation – Salaries and FICA	\$3,079,780	\$4,206,067	\$6,596,443
Sec. 6: Legislative Service Working Group (effective on passage)	N/A	\$8,000	\$10,000
Subtotal Costs	\$3,149,256	\$4,316,123	\$6,757,899
Estimated Mileage, Meals, Lodging	\$2,541,145	\$2,541,145	\$2,541,145
Estimated Health Care Costs	\$0	\$0	\$1,940,843
Total Costs Including Estimated Mileage, Meals, Lodging and Health Care Costs	\$5,690,401	\$6,857,268	\$11,239,887

¹ This table includes the cost estimates presented in S.39 during the 2023 legislative session. These numbers are only presented for reference to show this bill's changes from the first legislative compensation bill of this biennium.

<i>Table 2: S.224 Proposed Compensation Rate Comparison – Sections 2 & 3</i>			
Compensation Detail	2024 Compensation per Individual – Current Law	2024 Compensation per Individual – If S.224 Was Under Effect	Notes
<i>Section 2</i>			
Speaker and Pro Tem Compensation (annual)	\$14,433	\$20,717	35% of the annual mean Vermont wage
Speaker and Pro Tem Session Compensation (weekly)	\$934	\$1,252	one-fifty-second portion of 110% of the annual mean Vermont wage
Speaker and Pro Tem Session Compensation (daily)	\$187	\$251	one-fifth of weekly compensation
<i>Section 3</i>			
Member Session Compensation (weekly)	\$843	\$1,138	one-fifty-second portion of the annual mean Vermont wage
Member Session Compensation (daily)	\$169	\$228	one-fifth of weekly compensation
Chair of Regular Session Standing Committee (weekly)	\$843	\$1,138	one-fifty-second portion of the annual mean Vermont wage
Chair of Regular Session Standing Committee (daily)	\$169	\$228	one-fifth of weekly compensation
Member-elect Stipend	\$0	\$228	one-fifth of weekly compensation
Members will have an option for either an allowance or reimbursement for mileage, meals, and lodging			
Special Session compensation paid at regular session daily rates			