

1 S.224

2 Introduced by Senators Hardy, Baruth, Bray, Clarkson, Gulick, McCormack,  
3 Watson, White and Wrenner

4 Referred to Committee on

5 Date:

6 Subject: Legislature; salaries and fees; health insurance; legislator  
7 compensation and benefits

8 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to enable  
9 members of the General Assembly to participate in any flexible spending  
10 account program offered to State employees for health care expenses or  
11 dependent care expenses, or both. The bill would also provide annual  
12 compensation to the Speaker of the House and the president Pro Tempore of  
13 the Senate, chairs of the standing committees of the House and Senate, and for  
14 majority and minority leaders. It would provide members of the General  
15 Assembly compensation for up to 20 days of work during adjournment. The  
16 bill would tie member compensation to the mean Vermont wage. It would  
17 allow members of the General Assembly to choose whether to receive their  
18 payments for meals and lodging expenses as an allowance, which may be  
19 treated as income subject to tax for federal and State income tax purposes, or  
20 as reimbursement of actual expenses, which may be excluded from income for  
21 federal and State income tax purposes. The bill would provide a stipend for  
22 members-elect to attend orientation programs. It would expand the legislative

1 leave of absence law to allow members to take a leave of absence from any  
2 job, not only a full-time job, in order to serve in the General Assembly. The  
3 bill would also create the Legislative Service Working Group to consider and  
4 make recommendations on issues involving legislative compensation and  
5 benefits, staffing, administrative support, the length of the legislative session,  
6 and equalizing the number of members per legislative district in each House.

7 An act relating to compensation and benefits for members of the Vermont  
8 General Assembly

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

10 \* \* \* Flex Spending and Employee Assistance Programs \* \* \*

11 Sec. 1. 3 V.S.A. § 631 is amended to read:

12 § 631. GROUP INSURANCE FOR STATE EMPLOYEES; SALARY  
13 DEDUCTIONS FOR INSURANCE, SAVINGS PLANS, AND  
14 CREDIT UNIONS

15 (a)(1) The Secretary of Administration may contract on behalf of the State  
16 with any insurance company or nonprofit association doing business in this  
17 State to secure the benefits of franchise or group insurance. The terms of  
18 coverage under the policy shall be determined under section 904 of this title,  
19 but it may include:

20 \* \* \*

1           (2)(A)(i) As used in this section, the term “employees” includes any  
2           class or classes of elected or appointed officials, State’s Attorneys, sheriffs,  
3           employees of State’s Attorneys’ offices whose compensation is administered  
4           through the State of Vermont payroll system, except contractual and temporary  
5           employees, ~~and~~ deputy sheriffs paid by the State of Vermont pursuant to  
6           24 V.S.A. § 290(b), employees of the Vermont Historical Society, the Vermont  
7           State Employees’ Credit Union, the Vermont State Employees’ Association,  
8           the Vermont Council on the Arts, and any elected or appointed official who is  
9           actively engaged in and devoting substantially full-time to the conduct of the  
10           business of the official’s public office. The term “employees” ~~shall~~ does not  
11           include members of the General Assembly ~~as such~~, except as set forth in  
12           subdivision (iv) of this subdivision (a)(2)(A), any person individual rendering  
13           service on a retainer or fee basis, members of boards or commissions, ~~or~~  
14           ~~persons other than employees of the Vermont Historical Society, the Vermont~~  
15           ~~Film Corporation, the Vermont State Employees’ Credit Union, Vermont State~~  
16           ~~Employees’ Association, and the Vermont Council on the Arts,~~ any individual  
17           whose compensation for service is not paid from the State Treasury, or any  
18           elected or appointed official ~~unless the official~~ who is not actively engaged in  
19           and devoting substantially full-time to the conduct of the business of the  
20           official’s public office.

21   \* \* \*

1           (iv) For purposes of any employee assistance program offered to  
2           State employees and any flexible spending account program offered to State  
3           employees for health care or dependent care expenses, or both, the term  
4           “employees” includes members of the General Assembly.

5           (B) The premiums for extending insurance coverage to employees  
6           shall be paid in full by the Vermont Historical Society, ~~the Vermont Film~~  
7           ~~Corporation~~, the Vermont State Employees’ Association, the Vermont State  
8           Employees’ Credit Union, the Vermont Council on the Arts, or their respective  
9           retirees. Nothing herein creates a legal obligation on the part of the State of  
10          Vermont to pay any portion of the premiums required to extend insurance  
11          coverage to this group of employees.

12   \* \* \*

13   \* \* \* Compensation and Expenses \* \* \*

14          Sec. 2. 32 V.S.A. § 1051 is amended to read:

15          § 1051. SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE AND PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE  
16   OF THE SENATE; CHAIRS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES  
17   OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE; MAJORITY AND MINORITY  
18   LEADERS; COMPENSATION AND EXPENSE  
19   REIMBURSEMENT

20          (a) Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

21                   (1) Annual compensation. The Speaker of the House and the President  
22          Pro Tempore of the Senate shall be entitled to receive annual compensation of

1 ~~\$10,080.00 for the 2005 Biennial Session and thereafter, to be paid in biweekly~~  
2 ~~payments, provided that, beginning on January 1, 2007, the annual~~  
3 ~~compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter by the cost of living~~  
4 ~~adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most recent collective~~  
5 ~~bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on July 1, 2021 and annually~~  
6 ~~thereafter on January 1, the annual compensation shall be adjusted consistent~~  
7 ~~with the compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers equal~~  
8 ~~to 30 percent of the mean Vermont wage. In addition to the annual~~  
9 ~~compensation~~ The mean Vermont wage shall be determined on the first day of  
10 each November using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent  
11 Occupational Employment and Wage Survey, and that figure shall be used for  
12 the subsequent calendar year. The annual compensation of the Speaker and  
13 President Pro Tempore shall be paid in biweekly installments.

14 (2) Regular session compensation. During the regular session, the  
15 Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall be entitled  
16 to receive:

17 ~~(1) \$652.00 a week for the 2005 Biennial Session and thereafter, to be~~  
18 ~~paid in biweekly payments during the regular and adjourned sessions of the~~  
19 ~~General Assembly, provided that, beginning on January 1, 2007, the weekly~~  
20 ~~compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter by the cost of living~~  
21 ~~adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most recent collective~~  
22 ~~bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on July 1, 2021 and annually~~

1 ~~thereafter on January 1, the weekly compensation shall be adjusted consistent~~  
2 ~~with the compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers;~~

3 ~~(2) an amount equal to one fifth of the annually adjusted weekly~~  
4 ~~compensation set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection, rounded up to the~~  
5 ~~nearest dollar, per day during a special session of the General Assembly; and a~~  
6 ~~weekly salary equal to a one-fifty-second (1:52) portion of 130 percent of the~~  
7 ~~mean Vermont wage. The mean Vermont wage shall be determined on the~~  
8 ~~first day of each November using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' most~~  
9 ~~recent Occupational Employment and Wage Survey, and that figure shall be~~  
10 ~~used for the subsequent calendar year. The regular and special session~~  
11 ~~compensations of the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the~~  
12 ~~Senate shall be paid in biweekly installments.~~

13 ~~(3) Adjournment for Town Meeting Day. The Speaker of the House and~~  
14 ~~President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall be entitled to receive compensation~~  
15 ~~as described in subdivision (2) of this subsection for the days in which the~~  
16 ~~General Assembly is adjourned in observance of Town Meeting Day. The~~  
17 ~~Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall not be~~  
18 ~~entitled to receive any reimbursement of expenses for expenses as described in~~  
19 ~~subdivision (5) of this subsection for the days in which the General Assembly~~  
20 ~~is adjourned in observance of Town Meeting Day.~~

21 ~~(4) Special session compensation. During a special session, the Speaker~~  
22 ~~of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall be entitled to an~~

1 amount equal to a one-fifth (1:5) portion of the regular session weekly adjusted  
2 compensation set forth in subdivision (2) of this subsection, rounded up to the  
3 nearest dollar, for each day of a special session that the House in which the  
4 member serves shall sit.

5 (5) Additional compensation during adjournment. The Speaker of the  
6 House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate may claim and shall be  
7 entitled to receive compensation for times not described in subdivisions (1)–(4)  
8 in this subsection equal to a one-fifth (1:5) portion of the regular session  
9 adjusted weekly compensation described in subdivision (2) of this subsection,  
10 rounded up to the nearest dollar, for up to 20 days of work in their official  
11 capacity as a member of the General Assembly that is not otherwise  
12 compensated, including attending meetings requested by other State officials,  
13 professional development, community meetings related to the jurisdiction of  
14 any committee on which the Speaker or President Pro Tempore serves, and  
15 providing assistance or services to a constituent of the district that the Speaker  
16 or President Pro Tempore represents. The Speaker or President Pro Tempore  
17 shall not be entitled to receive compensation under this subdivision for  
18 activities conducted for the purpose of influencing an election, advocating a  
19 position on a public question, supporting or opposing one or more candidates,  
20 or organizing a political party, as defined by 17 V.S.A. § 2901.

21 ~~(3)~~(6) Expenses. The Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore  
22 of the Senate shall be entitled to reimbursement of expenses for mileage,

1 meals, and lodging ~~expenses~~ as provided to members of the General Assembly  
2 under subsection 1052(b) of this title during the biennial, adjourned, and  
3 special sessions of the General Assembly and in addition such other actual and  
4 necessary expenses incurred while engaged in duties imposed by law.

5 (b) Chairs of the standing committees of the House and Senate; majority  
6 and minority leaders in the House and the Senate.

7 (1) Annual compensation. The chairs of the standing committees and  
8 majority and minority leaders in the House and Senate shall be entitled to  
9 receive annual compensation equal to a one-tenth (1:10) portion of the mean  
10 Vermont wage. The mean Vermont wage shall be determined on the first day  
11 of each November using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent  
12 Occupational Employment and Wage Survey, and that figure shall be used for  
13 the subsequent calendar year. The annual compensation of the chairs of the  
14 standing committees and the majority and minority leaders in the House and  
15 Senate shall be paid in biweekly installments.

16 (2) Regular session compensation. During the regular session, the  
17 chairs of the standing committees and majority and minority leaders in the  
18 House and Senate shall be entitled to receive a weekly salary equal to a one-  
19 fifty-second (1:52) portion of 110 percent of the mean Vermont wage. The  
20 mean Vermont wage shall be determined on the first day of each November  
21 using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent Occupational  
22 Employment and Wage Survey, and that figure shall be used for the



1 subsequent calendar year. The regular and special session compensations of  
2 the chairs of the standing committees and the majority and minority leaders in  
3 the House and Senate shall be paid in biweekly installments.

4 (3) Special session compensation. During a special session, the chairs  
5 of the standing committees and the majority and minority leaders in the House  
6 and Senate shall be entitled to an amount equal to a one-fifth (1:5) portion of  
7 the regular session weekly adjusted compensation set forth in subdivision (2)  
8 of this subsection, rounded up to the nearest dollar, for each day of a special  
9 session that the House in which the member serves shall sit.

10 (4) Additional compensation during adjournment. The chairs of the  
11 standing committees and the majority and minority leaders in the House and  
12 Senate may claim and shall be entitled to receive compensation for times not  
13 described in subdivisions (1)–(3) in this subsection equal to a one-fifth  
14 (1:5) portion of the regular session adjusted weekly compensation described in  
15 subdivision (2) of this subsection, rounded up to the nearest dollar, for up to  
16 20 days of work in their official capacity as a member of the General  
17 Assembly that is not otherwise compensated, including attending meetings  
18 requested by other State officials, professional development approved by the  
19 Speaker of the House or the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, community  
20 meetings related to the jurisdiction of any committee on which the member  
21 serves, and providing assistance or services to a constituent of the district that  
22 the member represents. The chairs of the standing committees and the

1 majority and minority leaders in the House and Senate shall not be entitled to  
2 receive compensation under this subdivision for activities conducted for the  
3 purpose of influencing an election, advocating a position on a public question,  
4 supporting or opposing one or more candidates, or organizing a political party,  
5 as defined by 17 V.S.A. § 2901.

6 (c) Limit on compensation.

7 (1) The Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate,  
8 the chairs of the standing committees of the House and Senate, and the  
9 majority and minority leaders in the House and the Senate shall not be entitled  
10 to receive both compensation pursuant to subsections (a)–(b) of this section  
11 and compensation pursuant to subsection 1052(a) of this title.

12 (2) A member of the General Assembly shall not be entitled to receive  
13 compensation pursuant to subsection (b) of this section both as a chair of a  
14 standing committee and as a majority or minority leader.

15 Sec. 3. 32 V.S.A. § 1052 is amended to read:

16 § 1052. MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY; COMPENSATION  
17 AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

18 (a) Compensation.

19 (1) Regular session compensation. Each member of the General  
20 Assembly, other than the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore  
21 of the Senate, is entitled to a weekly salary of ~~\$589.00 for the 2005 Biennial~~  
22 ~~Session and thereafter, provided that, beginning on January 1, 2007, the~~

1 ~~weekly compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter by the cost of living~~  
2 ~~adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most recent collective~~  
3 ~~bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on July 1, 2021 and annually~~  
4 ~~thereafter on January 1, the weekly compensation shall be adjusted consistent~~  
5 ~~with the compensation increases provided to other constitutional officers~~  
6 during regular sessions equal to a one-fifty-second (1:52) portion of the mean  
7 Vermont wage. The mean Vermont wage shall be determined on the first day  
8 of each November using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent  
9 Occupational Employment and Wage Survey, and that figure shall be used for  
10 the subsequent calendar year. The salary of members shall be paid in biweekly  
11 installments.

12 (2) Adjournment for Town Meeting Day. Members of the General  
13 Assembly shall be entitled to receive compensation as described in  
14 subdivision (1) of this subsection for the days in which the General Assembly  
15 is adjourned in observance of Town Meeting Day. Members of the General  
16 Assembly shall not be entitled to receive any reimbursement of expenses for  
17 expenses as described in subsection (b) of this section for the days in which the  
18 General Assembly is adjourned in observance of Town Meeting Day.

19 (3) Special session compensation. During a special session, a member is  
20 entitled to an amount equal to a one-fifth (1:5) portion of the annually regular  
21 session adjusted weekly compensation set forth in subdivision (1) of this  
22 subsection, rounded up to the nearest dollar, for each day of a special session

1 ~~on which the House of which he or she is a~~ that the House in which the  
2 member serves shall sit.

3 (4) Additional compensation during adjournment. Members of the  
4 General Assembly may claim and shall be entitled to receive compensation for  
5 times not described in subdivisions (1)–(3) in this subsection equal to a one-  
6 fifth (1:5) portion of the regular session compensation described in subdivision  
7 (1) of this subsection, rounded up to the nearest dollar, for up to 20 days of  
8 work in their official capacity as a member of the General Assembly that is not  
9 otherwise compensated, including attending meetings requested by other State  
10 officials, professional development approved by the Speaker of the House or  
11 the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, community meetings related to the  
12 jurisdiction of any committee on which the member serves, and providing  
13 assistance or services to a constituent of the district that the member represents.

14 A member of the General Assembly shall not be entitled to receive  
15 compensation under this subdivision for activities conducted for the purpose of  
16 influencing an election, advocating a position on a public question, supporting  
17 or opposing one or more candidates, or organizing a political party, as defined  
18 by 17 V.S.A. § 2901.

19 (b) Expenses. During any session of the General Assembly, each member  
20 is entitled to receive reimbursement of expenses as follows: set forth in this  
21 subsection.

1           (1) Mileage reimbursement. ~~Reimbursement~~ Each member shall be  
2 entitled to receive reimbursement in an amount equal to the actual mileage  
3 traveled for each day of session in which the member travels between  
4 Montpelier and the member's home or from Montpelier or from the member's  
5 home to another site on officially sanctioned legislative business.  
6 Reimbursement of actual mileage traveled under this subdivision shall be at the  
7 rate per mile determined by the federal Office of Government-wide Policy and  
8 published in the Federal Register for the year of the session.

9           (2) Meals ~~and lodging allowance~~. ~~An~~ Each member shall receive either  
10 a meals allowance or reimbursement of actual meals expenses. A member  
11 shall be presumed to have elected to receive the meals allowance unless the  
12 member informs the Office of Legislative Operations prior to the convening of  
13 the regular or adjourned session that the member wishes to receive  
14 reimbursement of actual meals expenses. A member's election to receive  
15 reimbursement of actual meals expenses shall remain in effect through the  
16 remainder of that session unless the member notifies the Office, in writing, that  
17 the member needs to change to the meals allowance due to a change in  
18 circumstances or for another compelling reason.

19           (A) Meals allowance. A member who elects to receive a meals  
20 allowance ~~in~~ shall receive an amount equal to the daily amount for meals ~~and~~  
21 lodging determined for Montpelier, Vermont, by the federal Office of

1 Government-wide Policy and published in the Federal Register for the year of  
2 the session; for each day the House in which the member serves shall sit.

3 (B) Meals reimbursement. A member who elects to receive  
4 reimbursement of expenses shall receive reimbursement equal to the actual  
5 amounts expended by the member for meals for each day that the House in  
6 which the member serves shall sit, as well as meals for the night preceding the  
7 first legislative day of each week during the legislative session; provided,  
8 however, that the total amount of the weekly reimbursement available pursuant  
9 to this subdivision (B) shall not exceed the amount the member would have  
10 received for the same week if the member had elected the meals allowance  
11 pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (2). The member shall provide  
12 meal receipts or otherwise substantiate the amounts expended to the Office of  
13 Legislative Operations in the form and manner prescribed by the Director of  
14 Legislative Operations.

15 (3) Lodging. Each member shall receive either a lodging allowance or  
16 reimbursement of actual lodging expenses. A member shall be presumed to  
17 have elected to receive the lodging allowance unless the member informs the  
18 Office of Legislative Operations prior to the convening of the regular or  
19 adjourned session that the member wishes to receive reimbursement of actual  
20 lodging expenses. A member's election to receive reimbursement of actual  
21 lodging expenses shall remain in effect through the remainder of that session  
22 unless the member notifies the Office, in writing, that the member needs to

1 change to the lodging allowance due to a change in circumstances or for  
2 another compelling reason.

3 (A) Lodging allowance. A member who elects to receive a lodging  
4 allowance shall receive an amount equal to the daily amount for lodging  
5 determined for Montpelier, Vermont, by the federal Office of Government-  
6 wide Policy and published in the Federal Register for the year of the session  
7 for each day the House in which the member serves shall sit.

8 (B) Lodging reimbursement. A member who elects to receive  
9 reimbursement of expenses shall receive reimbursement equal to the actual  
10 amounts expended by the member for lodging for each day that the House in  
11 which the member serves shall sit, as well as lodging for the night preceding  
12 the first legislative day of each week during the legislative session; provided,  
13 however, that the total amount of the weekly reimbursement available pursuant  
14 to this subdivision (B) for each week shall not exceed the amount the member  
15 would have received for the same week if the member had elected the lodging  
16 allowance pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3). The member  
17 shall provide lodging receipts or otherwise substantiate the amounts expended  
18 to the Office of Legislative Operations in the form and manner prescribed by  
19 the Director of Legislative Operations.

20 (4) Absences. If a member is absent for reasons other than sickness or  
21 legislative business for one or more entire days while the ~~house~~ House in  
22 which the member sits is in session, the member shall notify the Office of

1 Legislative Operations of that absence, and ~~expenses received shall not include~~  
2 ~~the amount that the legislator specifies was not~~ the member shall not be  
3 entitled to receive or be reimbursed for mileage, meals, or lodging expenses  
4 incurred during the period of that absence, except that lodging expenses  
5 associated with a lease or rental agreement may be received or reimbursed  
6 upon approval of either the Speaker of the House or the President Pro Tempore  
7 of the Senate.

8 (c) ~~For attending a meeting of the Joint Fiscal Committee when a member~~  
9 ~~is not receiving compensation as a member of the General Assembly, a~~  
10 ~~member of the Joint Fiscal Committee shall be entitled to the same per diem~~  
11 ~~compensation and reimbursement for necessary expenses as provided members~~  
12 ~~of the General Assembly for attendance at sessions of the General Assembly.~~  
13 Members-elect; orientation stipend. Each member-elect of the General  
14 Assembly who is not an incumbent shall be entitled to receive a stipend in an  
15 amount equal to a one-fifth (1:5) portion of the regular session compensation  
16 set forth in subdivision (a)(1) of this section, rounded up to the nearest dollar,  
17 for each day of attendance at an orientation program for new legislators  
18 organized by the General Assembly and its staff.

19 (d) Death of a member. If a member of the General Assembly dies while  
20 the General Assembly is in session, the estate of the deceased member shall be  
21 entitled to receive compensation for the entire pay period in which the death  
22 occurred.



1                   \* \* \* Legislative Leave from Employment \* \* \*

2       Sec. 4. 21 V.S.A. § 496 is amended to read:

3       § 496. LEGISLATIVE LEAVE

4           (a) Any person who, in order to serve as a member of the General  
5       Assembly, must leave a ~~full-time~~ position in the employ of any employer; shall  
6       be entitled to a temporary or partial leave of absence for the purpose of  
7       allowing such employee to perform any official duty in connection with ~~his or~~  
8       ~~her~~ the person's elected office. Such leave of absence shall not cause loss of  
9       job status, seniority, or the right to participate in insurance and other employee  
10      benefits during the leave of absence.

11          (b) An employee who intends to seek election to the General Assembly and  
12      to invoke, if elected, ~~his or her~~ the right to a leave of absence pursuant to  
13      subsection (a) of this section; shall notify ~~his or her~~ the employee's employer  
14      of those intentions in writing within ~~10~~ 14 days after ~~filing the primary election~~  
15      ~~nominating petition required by 17 V.S.A. § 2353~~ or of taking any other action  
16      ~~required by 17 V.S.A. chapter 49, to place his or her name on a primary or~~  
17      ~~general election ballot~~ being elected. An employee who fails to give notice to  
18      ~~his or her~~ the employee's employer as required by this section shall be deemed  
19      to have waived ~~his or her~~ the right to a leave of absence under subsection (a) of  
20      this section.

21                   \* \* \*

1                   \* \* \* Legislative Service Working Group \* \* \*

2           Sec. 5. LEGISLATIVE SERVICE WORKING GROUP

3           (a) Creation. There is created the Legislative Service Working Group to  
4           consider issues related to serving as a member of the Vermont General  
5           Assembly.

6           (b) Membership. The Working Group shall be composed of the following  
7           members:

8                   (1) three current members of the House of Representatives, not all from  
9                   the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

10                   (2) one former member of the House of Representatives, who shall be  
11                   appointed by the Speaker of the House;

12                   (3) three current members of the Senate, not all from the same political  
13                   party, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees; and

14                   (4) one former member of the Senate, who shall be appointed by the  
15                   Committee on Committees.

16           (c) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall consider and make  
17           recommendations on issues involving legislative compensation and benefits,  
18           staffing, administrative support, the length of the legislative session, and the  
19           number of members in each House and number of members per district,  
20           including:

21                   (1) the current compensation and benefits offered to members of the  
22                   General Assembly, including:

1           (A) whether current salaries and benefits, including those added or  
2           increased by this act, are sufficient and, if not, how they should be increased;

3           (B) the impact of current salaries and benefits, including those added  
4           or increased by this act, on recruiting and retaining members from diverse  
5           backgrounds and life experiences;

6           (C) an implementation plan and proposed budget to make members  
7           eligible for State health plans; and

8           (D) whether members should be offered additional benefits,  
9           including reimbursement of health, child, dependent, and elder care expenses;

10          (2) whether changes to staffing are necessary, such as increasing the  
11          number of legislative staff in existing staff offices, expanding the types of  
12          legislative staff services available to members, adding caucus staff, and adding  
13          personal staff or providing members with an allowance to hire their own  
14          personal staff;

15          (3) how to increase the administrative support available to members to  
16          increase their effectiveness and ability to respond efficiently to the needs of  
17          their constituents;

18          (4) whether changes should be made to the length or structure of the  
19          legislative session;

20          (5) whether the number of members in each House should be decreased  
21          to offset increases in compensation, benefits, and staffing; and

1           (6) whether the number of members for each representative district  
2           should be the same and whether the number of members for each senatorial  
3           district should be the same for the purpose of equalizing the number of  
4           constituents per representative in each House in order to better balance the  
5           constituent services obligations and workloads of members.

6           (d) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative,  
7           technical, and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Operations, the  
8           Office of Legislative Counsel, the Office of Human Resources, and the Joint  
9           Fiscal Office.

10          (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2025, the Working Group shall report  
11          its findings and recommendations, including any recommendations for  
12          legislative action, to the Speaker of the House, the President Pro Tempore of  
13          the Senate, the House Committee on Government Operations and Military  
14          Affairs, and the Senate Committee on Government Operations. Drafts of the  
15          Working Group's report that are in progress but have not yet been shared by  
16          the Working Group shall be confidential.

17          (f) Meetings.

18               (1) The Office of Legislative Operations shall call the first meeting of  
19               the Working Group to occur on or before July 1, 2024.

20               (2) The Working Group shall select a chair from among its members at  
21               the first meeting.

1           (3) A majority of the membership of the Working Group shall constitute  
2           a quorum.

3           (4) The Working Group shall cease to exist on June 1, 2025.

4           (g) Compensation and reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during  
5           adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Working  
6           Group shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of  
7           expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than four meetings. These  
8           payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

9                                   \* \* \* Effective Dates \* \* \*

10           Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATES

11           (a) Sec. 5 (Legislative Service Working Group) and this section shall take  
12           effect on passage.

13           (b) The remaining sections shall take effect on January 1, 2025.