

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Government Operations to which was referred Senate
3 Bill No. 224 entitled “An act relating to compensation and benefits for
4 members of the Vermont General Assembly” respectfully reports that it has
5 considered the same and recommends that the bill be amended by striking out
6 all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 * * * Flex Spending and Employee Assistance Programs * * *

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

9 § 631. GROUP INSURANCE FOR STATE EMPLOYEES; SALARY
10 DEDUCTIONS FOR INSURANCE, SAVINGS PLANS, AND
11 CREDIT UNIONS

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

17 * * *

18 (2)(A)(i) As used in this section, the term “employees” includes any
19 class or classes of elected or appointed officials, State’s Attorneys, sheriffs,
20 employees of State’s Attorneys’ offices whose compensation is administered
21 through the State of Vermont payroll system, except contractual and temporary

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

17 * * *

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

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

8 * * *

9 * * * Compensation and Expenses * * *

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

11 § 1051. SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE AND PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
12 OF THE SENATE; COMPENSATION AND EXPENSE
13 REIMBURSEMENT

14 (a) Annual compensation. The Speaker of the House and the President Pro
15 Tempore of the Senate shall be entitled to receive annual compensation of
16 \$10,080.00 for the 2005 Biennial Session and thereafter, to be paid in biweekly
17 payments, provided that, beginning on January 1, 2007, the annual
18 compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter by the cost of living
19 adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most recent collective
20 bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on 2025 session and thereafter
21 equal to 35 percent of the mean Vermont annual wage, according to the U.S.

1 Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent Occupational Employment and Wage
2 Survey. Beginning in July 1, 2021 2025 and annually thereafter on January 1
3 in July, the annual compensation shall be adjusted consistent with the
4 compensation increases provided to other constitutional elective officers of the
5 Executive Department, as enumerated in section 1003 of this title. In addition
6 to the annual compensation The annual compensation of the Speaker and
7 President Pro Tempore shall be paid in biweekly installments.

8 (b) Regular session compensation. During the regular session, the Speaker
9 of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall be entitled to
10 receive:

11 (1) \$652.00 a week for the 2005 Biennial Session and thereafter, to be
12 paid in biweekly payments during the regular and adjourned sessions of the
13 General Assembly, provided that, beginning on January 1, 2007, the weekly
14 compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter by the cost of living
15 adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most recent collective
16 bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on a weekly salary for the 2025
17 session and thereafter equal to a one-fifty-second (1:52) portion of 110 percent
18 of the mean Vermont annual wage, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor
19 Statistics' most recent Occupational Employment and Wage Survey.
20 Beginning in July 1, 2021 2025 and annually thereafter on January in July 1,
21 the weekly compensation shall be adjusted consistent with the compensation

1 increases provided to other constitutional elective officers; of the Executive
2 Department, as enumerated in section 1003 of this title.

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~~
6 The regular session compensations of the Speaker of the House and President
7 Pro Tempore of the Senate shall be paid in biweekly installments.

8 (c) Adjournment for Town Meeting Day. The Speaker of the House and
9 President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall be entitled to receive compensation
10 as described in subsection (a) of this section for the days in which the General
11 Assembly is adjourned in observance of Town Meeting Day. The Speaker of
12 the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall not be entitled to
13 receive any reimbursement of expenses for expenses as described in subsection
14 (e) of this section for the days in which the General Assembly is adjourned in
15 observance of Town Meeting Day.

16 (d) Special session compensation. During a special session, the Speaker of
17 the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall be entitled to an
18 amount equal to a one-fifth (1:5) portion of the regular session weekly adjusted
19 compensation set forth in subsection (b) of this section, rounded up to the
20 nearest dollar, for each day of a special session that the House in which the
21 member serves shall sit.

1 ~~(3)~~(e) Expenses. The Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore
2 of the Senate shall be entitled to reimbursement of expenses for mileage,
3 meals, and lodging ~~expenses~~ as provided to members of the General Assembly
4 under subsection 1052(b) of this title during the biennial, ~~adjourned,~~ and
5 special sessions ~~and adjournment~~ of the General Assembly and in addition
6 such other actual and necessary expenses incurred while engaged in duties
7 imposed by law.

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

9 § 1052. MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY; COMPENSATION

10 AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

11 (a) Compensation.

12 (1) Regular session compensation. Each member of the General
13 Assembly, other than the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore
14 of the Senate, is entitled to a weekly salary of \$589.00 for the 2005 Biennial
15 Session 2025 session and thereafter, provided that, beginning on January 1,
16 2007, the weekly compensation shall be adjusted annually thereafter by the
17 cost of living adjustment negotiated for State employees under the most recent
18 collective bargaining agreement, except that, beginning on equal to a one-fifty-
19 second (1:52) portion of the mean Vermont annual wage, according to the U.S.
20 Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent Occupational Employment and Wage
21 Survey. Beginning in July 1, 2024 2025 and annually thereafter on January on

1 July 4, the weekly compensation shall be adjusted consistent with the
2 compensation increases provided to other ~~constitutional~~ elective officers of the
3 Executive Department, as enumerated in section 1003 of this title. The salary
4 of members shall be paid in biweekly installments.

5 (2) Adjournment for Town Meeting Day. Members of the General
6 Assembly shall be entitled to receive compensation as described in
7 subdivision (1) of this subsection for the days in which the General Assembly
8 is adjourned in observance of Town Meeting Day. Members of the General
9 Assembly shall not be entitled to receive any reimbursement of expenses for
10 expenses as described in subsection (b) of this section for the days in which the
11 General Assembly is adjourned in observance of Town Meeting Day.

12 (3) Special session compensation. During a special session, a member is
13 entitled to an amount equal to a one-fifth (1:5) portion of the annually regular
14 session adjusted weekly compensation set forth in subdivision (1) of this
15 subsection, rounded up to the nearest dollar, for each day of a special session
16 ~~on which the House of which he or she is a~~ that the House in which the
17 member serves shall sit.

18 (b) Expenses. During any session of the General Assembly, each member
19 is entitled to receive reimbursement of expenses as follows: set forth in this
20 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 by a date established by
13 the Office of Legislative Operations 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 ~~is~~ 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 by a date established by the Office of
19 Legislative Operations that the member wishes to receive reimbursement of
20 actual lodging expenses. A member's election to receive reimbursement of
21 actual lodging expenses shall remain in effect through the remainder of that

1 session unless the member notifies the Office, in writing, that the member
2 needs to change to the lodging allowance due to a change in circumstances or
3 for another compelling reason.

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

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

1 (4) Absences. If a member is absent for reasons other than sickness or
2 legislative business for one or more entire days while the ~~house~~ House in
3 which the member sits is in session, the member shall notify the Office of
4 Legislative Operations of that absence, and ~~expenses received shall not include~~
5 ~~the amount that the legislator specifies was not~~ the member shall not be
6 entitled to receive or be reimbursed for mileage, meals, or lodging expenses
7 incurred during the period of that absence, except that lodging expenses
8 associated with a lease or rental agreement may be received or reimbursed
9 upon approval of either the Speaker of the House or the President Pro Tempore
10 of the Senate.

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

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

5 * * * Legislative Leave from Employment * * *

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

7 § 496. LEGISLATIVE LEAVE

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

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

1 ~~his or her~~ the employee's employer as required by this section shall be deemed
2 to have waived ~~his or her~~ the right to a leave of absence under subsection (a) of
3 this section.

4 * * *

5 * * * Legislative Service Working Group * * *

6 Sec. 5. LEGISLATIVE SERVICE WORKING GROUP

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 (c) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall consider and make
21 recommendations on issues involving legislative compensation and benefits.

1 staffing, administrative support, and the length of the legislative session,

2 including:

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

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

7 (B) whether there should be additional compensation for chairs and
8 leaders and compensation for legislative work performed during the
9 adjournment;

10 (C) the impact of current salaries and benefits, including those added
11 or increased by this act, on recruiting and retaining members from diverse
12 backgrounds and life experiences;

13 (D) an implementation plan and proposed budget to make members
14 eligible for State health plans; and

15 (E) whether members should be offered additional benefits, including
16 reimbursement of health, child, dependent, and elder care expenses;

17 (2) whether changes to staffing are necessary, such as increasing the
18 number of legislative staff in existing staff offices, expanding the types of
19 legislative staff services available to members, adding caucus staff, and adding
20 personal staff or providing members with an allowance to hire their own
21 personal staff;

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

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

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

8 (6) how to better balance the constituent services obligations and
9 workloads of members.

10 (d) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative,
11 technical, and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Operations, the
12 Office of Legislative Counsel, the Office of Human Resources, and the Joint
13 Fiscal Office.

14 (e) Report. On or before December 15, 2024, the Working Group shall
15 report its findings and recommendations, including any recommendations for
16 legislative action, to the Speaker of the House, the President Pro Tempore of
17 the Senate, the House Committee on Government Operations and Military
18 Affairs, and the Senate Committee on Government Operations. Drafts of the
19 Working Group’s report that are in progress but have not yet been shared by
20 the Working Group shall be confidential.

21 (f) Meetings.

1

2

3 (Committee vote: _____)

4

5

Senator _____

6

FOR THE COMMITTEE