



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS

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MEMORANDUM

To: Senate Appropriations Committee

From: Senate Government Operations Committee

Date: April 11, 2024

Subject: Committee Budget Recommendations Fiscal Year 2025

We are writing to share our Committee's budget recommendations contained in bills and subjects within the jurisdiction of the Senate Government Operations Committee.

S.310 Government Response to Natural Disasters

This bill represents a Senate priority for a robust response to flood recovery, community resiliency, and government response. As such, SGO believes that funding the amounts requested in the table below are a priority and *should be funded in full*.

Assistance to municipalities flooded in August & December 2023 – equity with July flood assistance provided in BAA	\$1,030,000	one-time
Regional Emergency Management Coordinators – This would bring the total to at least 7.0 FTE, which includes 2.0 current, 1.0 in Gov's budget, plus 4.0 additional, and would allow one coordinator for every two counties.	\$450,000 (4.0 FTE)	base
Community Resilience & Disaster Mitigation Fund. Provide seed funding until permanent funding source can be found and/or provided through proposed superfund	\$5,000,000	one-time seed funding
Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) – state swift water rescue team support including statewide coordination, training, facilities, and equipment. The value of statewide USAR coordination was underscored last summer with actual lives saved throughout the state during multiple flooding events.	\$750,000	base
E-911 tariff report update and DPS state radio transmission line improvements	\$40,000	one-time

Other Senate Bills – S.55 and S.159

SGO and the full Senate passed S.55, an update to the Open Meeting Law, and S.159, a bill creating a study on county & regional governance, which include \$50,000 each to support relevant study committees and possible consulting work. The Committee strongly

recommends these one-time appropriations to the Secretary of State and Legislature, respectively, for a total of \$100,000.

House Bills Still in SGO

Due to the rushed schedule for passing the Budget Bill out of Committee, SGO has not yet had adequate time to complete work on the House bills referred to SGO. However, we plan to pass the several bills with fiscal impacts and recommend the following funding and position requests:

- *H.649 Truth & Reconciliation Commission* – the Commission requested a funding increase to support their work. We believe it was included in the House budget, and if so, we support the provisions of the House budget to ensure adequate funding and staffing of the Commission.
- *H.702 Legislative Operations & Government Accountability* – this bill would give JFO additional analysis duties, requiring an additional 1.0 FTE. We support this and don't believe it was included in the House budget.
- *H.870 Misc. OPR Bill* – we believe the House budget includes \$67,000 GF to compensate the Office for its work on interstate compacts and partially offset the loss in revenue due to joining multiple interstate licensure compacts. We fully support ensuring that OPR has a stable and sufficient funding source and recommend that such funding be included in the budget.
- *H.872 Vermont Criminal Justice Council* – the Council has requested 1.0 FTE policy director position. We support this request to fulfill the increased policy duties required of the Council. We don't believe this position was included in the House budget.
- *H.875 Ethics Commission* – the Commission has requested 3.0 FTE positions. One was included in the House budget. SGO supports providing an additional FTE for a total of 2.0 FTE additionally.

Miscellaneous Request

The VT-NEA and VSEA are jointly requesting \$15,000 in one-time funding to complete an analysis of the potential for using reference-based pricing for state health insurance plans. Given the recent significant increases in health insurance costs, SGO believes that such a study would be helpful in determining the merits of this cost-saving tool for Vermont's public employee health plans.