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An act relating to legislative operations and government accountability

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

* * * Purpose and Findings * * *

Sec. 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this act is to advance the principle of government accountability by examining how evidence is used to inform policy, how State laws are implemented, and how legislation may be structured to achieve its intended outcomes. This act seeks to support consistent and transparent accountability practices through simple, clear, independent, objective, and fact-based processes.

* * * Pilot Government Accountability Project * * *

Sec. 2. PILOT GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

(a) Assignment. The Joint Fiscal Committee shall, in addition to its other duties described in law and rules, conduct the Pilot Government Accountability Project to examine governmental practices, make recommendations on improving those practices, and develop effective tools for evaluating government accountability.

(b) Selection of Project issues before the Committee. The Chief Fiscal Officer of the Joint Fiscal Office, in consultation with the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore, will select issues for the Committee's

1 consideration and refer these to the Joint Fiscal Committee on or before
2 August 1, 2026.

3 (c) Charge. The Committee is charged with completing, to the extent
4 feasible, Project elements as described in this section.

5 (1) Examination of issues selected by Committee. The Committee shall
6 be empowered to examine, investigate, and otherwise analyze issues that it
7 selects pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

8 (2) Review of program performance. The Committee shall examine
9 whether State programs and initiatives are advancing the policy goals
10 established in statute, including consideration of outcome data, implementation
11 progress, and operational challenges.

12 (3) Consideration of evidence and evaluation. The Committee shall
13 review available research, independent evaluations, audits, and performance
14 measures relevant to State programs and policies and encourage the use of
15 reliable data and evaluation methods in legislative decision making.

16 (4) Identification of effective practices and improvement opportunities.
17 The Committee shall highlight approaches that demonstrate positive outcomes,
18 identify barriers to effective implementation, and recommend reasonable
19 opportunities for improvement, coordination, or replication where appropriate.

20 (5) Support for alignment of policy, funding, and outcomes. The
21 Committee shall provide information and recommendations that assist the

1 General Assembly in aligning appropriations, statutory intent, and measurable
2 results.

3 (6) Monitoring of follow-up actions. The Committee shall, when
4 issuing recommendations, request updates from relevant agencies regarding
5 actions taken or progress made, as appropriate.

6 (7) Coordination with existing oversight entities. The Committee shall
7 work in consultation with legislative committees of jurisdiction, the State
8 Auditor, the Chief Performance Officer, and other relevant entities to avoid
9 duplication and to support efficient use of State resources.

10 (8) Surveying of data and data impact. The Committee shall survey
11 available State data and documented impacts to better understand
12 implementation, outcomes, and opportunities for improvement.

13 (9) Communication of outcomes. The Committee shall consider how
14 and when program outcomes and performance information are communicated,
15 including the audiences receiving such information and the clarity, timeliness,
16 and usefulness of the communication for supporting transparency, public
17 understanding, and informed decision making.

18 (10) Development of evaluation tools. The Committee may consider the
19 development or use of appropriate tools and methods to assess program
20 outcomes and performance, including measures that support consistent

1 evaluation, transparency, and informed legislative and administrative decision
2 making.

3 (d) Report. On or before December 15, 2026, and again on or before
4 November 15, 2027, the Committee shall present and submit a written report to
5 the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the
6 Senate Committee on Government Operations that includes any findings on the
7 issues examined and any recommendations for legislative action.

8 * * * Joint Fiscal Office Consultant; Appropriation * * *

9 Sec. 3. LEGISLATIVE JOINT FISCAL OFFICE CONSULTANT

10 (a) Committee personnel. The Legislative Joint Fiscal Office may, to
11 conduct research and analysis and to provide other support as necessary for the
12 Pilot Government Accountability Project, either:

13 (1) contract with a consultant for a two-year term; or

14 (2) create a new exempt limited service position for a two-year term.

15 (b) Appropriation. There is appropriated to the Legislative Joint Fiscal
16 Office from the General Fund in fiscal year 2027 the sum of \$300,000.00, to be
17 used for Pilot Government Accountability Project personnel over a two-year
18 period.

19 * * * Effective Date * * *

20 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

21 This act shall take effect on passage.