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H.907

An act relating to legislative review of reporting requirements

The House concurs in the Senate proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment thereto as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 32, effective date, and its reader assistance heading in their entireties and inserting in lieu thereof a reader assistance heading and a new section Sec. 32 to read as follows:

\* \* \* Vermont Sister State Program \* \* \*

Sec. 32. 3 V.S.A. § 2479 is added to read:

§ 2479. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

(a) Creation and purpose.

(1) The Vermont Sister State Program is created within the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The Agency shall provide support to the Program and to the Sister State Program Committee as required.

(2) The purpose of the Program is to strengthen Vermont's international engagement and to foster mutually beneficial relationships with national and subnational governments abroad, with a goal of promoting cultural exchange, economic development, and educational cooperation.

(b) Program oversight.

1           (1) The Sister State Program Committee, composed of the following  
2 members, shall oversee the Program:

3           (A) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or  
4 designee;

5           (B) a member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the  
6 Speaker of the House;

7           (C) a member of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on  
8 Committees;

9           (D) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Council on  
10 World Affairs or designee;

11           (E) the Vermont Adjutant General or designee;

12           (F) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Arts Council  
13 or designee; and

14           (G) three members, as follows:

15           (i) one member with expertise in cultural exchange or in Peace  
16 Corps operations, appointed by the Governor;

17           (ii) one member representing a private institution of higher  
18 education, appointed by the Committee on Committees; and

19           (iii) one member representing a public institution of higher  
20 education, appointed by the Speaker.

1           (2) Members of the Committee shall serve two-year terms, provided that  
2 members appointed pursuant to subdivision (1)(G) of this subsection shall  
3 serve initial terms of three years each to establish staggered terms. Members  
4 may be reappointed.

5           (3) The Committee shall elect a chair and vice chair from among its  
6 members that shall each serve a two-year term.

7           (4) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

8           (c) Meetings.

9           (1) All meetings shall be called by the Chair, but in the event that the  
10 Committee does not have a chair, a meeting may be called by the Secretary of  
11 Commerce and Community Development or designee.

12           (2) The Committee shall meet:

13           (A) at least once quarterly, for the purpose of:

14           (i) evaluating current Program agreements;

15           (ii) proposing new Program agreements;

16           (iii) preparing its annual report; or

17           (iv) discussing any other matter that the Committee deems

18 relevant to its work; and

1           (B) to review and score an eligible Program application not later than  
2 30 days after the Committee receives the application from the Agency,  
3 pursuant to subdivision (d)(3) of this section.

4           (d) Program application, review, and approval procedures.

5           (1) Development of application process. The Agency, in consultation  
6 with the Committee, shall develop a process by which an entity can apply and  
7 be considered for admission as a partner to the Program. This process shall  
8 include the development of:

9           (A) an official application to be in the Program;

10           (B) a confidential internal review procedure to be used by the  
11 Agency to review Program applicants for sensitive political, legal, ethical, and  
12 strategic factors;

13           (C) minimum eligibility requirements to be considered for the  
14 Program;

15           (D) a fixed-scoring system, including a rubric, to be uniformly  
16 applied by the Committee to evaluate all eligible applications;

17           (E) a memorandum of understanding template to be used and signed  
18 by the State and an approved Program partner that shall include a termination  
19 date; and

1           (F) any other necessary Program parameters, including the length of  
2 time for partner agreements to be in effect.

3           (2) Agency initial verification.

4           (A) When a Program application has been received by the Agency  
5 pursuant to this section, the Agency shall, before the Committee may meet to  
6 review the application:

7                   (i) verify that the application meets the Program's minimum  
8 eligibility requirements; and

9                   (ii) conduct a confidential internal review of the applicant.

10           (B) Not later than 10 days after completion of the Agency's initial  
11 verification and review of an application pursuant to subdivision (A) of this  
12 subdivision (2), the Agency shall send the Committee a copy of the application  
13 along with a summary of the Agency's analysis.

14           (C) The confidential internal review process conducted in subdivision  
15 (A)(ii) of this subdivision (2), along with any and all documents reviewed  
16 during that process, shall be exempt from public inspection and copying.

17           (3) Committee review and recommendation.

18           (A) The Committee, upon receiving an application that has received  
19 preliminary approval from the Agency, shall meet to review the application

1 pursuant to subdivision (c)(2)(B) of this section not later than 30 days after  
2 receipt of the application from the Agency.

3 (B) If the Committee recommends that an application reviewed  
4 pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3) be approved, the Committee  
5 shall submit its recommendation to the Governor along with a copy of the  
6 application not later than 30 days after completing its review of the application.  
7 The Committee shall not send to the Governor an application that the  
8 Committee does not recommend be approved.

9 (4) Governor's review.

10 (A) The Governor shall have the sole authority to issue final approval  
11 or disapproval of a Sister State Program application that the Committee  
12 recommended be approved. The Governor shall send written notice of the  
13 Governor's decision to the Agency not later than 10 days after the Governor's  
14 decision.

15 (B) If the Governor disapproves a Program application, the  
16 Governor's notice in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (4) shall include a  
17 written explanation of why the Governor did not follow the recommendation of  
18 the Committee.

19 (C) Upon the Agency's receipt of the Governor's decision pursuant  
20 to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (4), the Agency shall notify the applicant

1 of the Governor's decision not later than 30 days after the Agency receives  
2 notice of the Governor's decision.

3 (D) If the application is approved by the Governor, the Agency shall  
4 finalize a memorandum of understanding between the State and the Sister State  
5 Program applicant.

6 (5) Termination.

7 (A) The Committee may, at one of its meetings, propose to the  
8 Governor upon a majority vote that an active Sister State Program partnership  
9 be terminated.

10 (B) The Governor shall have the sole authority to terminate an active  
11 Sister State Program partnership.

12 (e) Reporting. The Committee shall submit an annual report not later than  
13 January 15 of each year to the Governor and to the House Committee on  
14 Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on  
15 Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs that includes the  
16 following:

17 (1) an executive summary of key development and outcomes of the  
18 Program;

19 (2) a description of Committee activities, including a summary of  
20 attendance and decisions at its meetings;

1           (3) updates on the Program, including an evaluation of sister state  
2 applications, new partners, significant developments, metrics of success, and  
3 challenges;

4           (4) a description of stakeholder engagement with the Program;

5           (5) a financial overview, including a summary of funding sources and  
6 expenditures; and

7           (6) an outlook for the Program, which shall include strategic objectives,  
8 potential new agreements, and growth opportunities for the next year.

9           (f) Compensation and reimbursement.

10           (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General  
11 Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in the member's  
12 capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and  
13 reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than eight  
14 meetings per year. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to  
15 the General Assembly.

16           (2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem  
17 compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.  
18 § 1010 for not more than eight meetings per year. These payments shall be  
19 made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Commerce and Community  
20 Development.





1           (2) detailed accounting from the State Treasurer's office of the:

2           (A) administrative expenses that have been paid with funds raised by  
3 the Commission, pursuant to subsection (g) of this section; and

4           (B) funds raised and donations, grants, and bequests received through  
5 the Commission including the name, country of residence, and amount donated  
6 of each contributor.

7           (g)(1) The Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission is authorized to raise funds,  
8 through direct solicitation or other fundraising events, alone or with other  
9 groups, and accept donations, grants, and bequests from individuals,  
10 corporations, foundations, governmental agencies, and public and private  
11 organizations and institutions, to defray the Commission's administrative  
12 expenses ~~and to carry out its purposes as set forth in this chapter.~~

13           (2) The funds, donations, grants, or bequests received pursuant to this  
14 chapter subdivision (1) of this subsection shall be deposited in a bank account  
15 and allocated annually by the State Treasurer's office to defray the  
16 Commission's administrative expenses and carry out its purposes. Any monies  
17 so withdrawn shall not be used for any purpose other than the payment of  
18 administrative expenses under incurred pursuant to this chapter section and  
19 shall be itemized and tracked for reporting purposes by the State Treasurer's  
20 office. Interest earned shall remain in the bank account. The State Treasurer

1 shall include the balance of the account in the annual reporting required  
2 pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.

3 (3) For purposes of this section, “administrative expenses” does not  
4 include any:

5 (A) expenses related to:

6 (i) campaign or election activity; or

7 (ii) food or beverages provided at official Commission meetings;

8 or

9 (B) other expense that is not specific to the administrative functions  
10 of the Commission.

11 (h) Members of the Commission shall not receive any compensation or be  
12 entitled to reimbursement of expenses by the State of Vermont or from the  
13 fund managed by the State Treasurer pursuant to subsection (g) of this section  
14 for their service on the Commission.

15 Third: By adding a new section to be Sec. 34 to read as follows:

16 Sec. 34. REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF THE VERMONT-IRELAND

17 TRADE COMMISSION

18 On or before December 1, 2029, the Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission  
19 shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Commerce and

1 Economic Development and to the Senate Committee on Economic  
2 Development, Housing and General Affairs with the following information:

3 (1) a summary of the accomplishments of the Commission since its  
4 inception;

5 (2) a detailed analysis as to how the Commission has served its  
6 legislative purposes pursuant to 9 V.S.A. § 4129(b); and

7 (3) an accounting on funds raised and details on gifts received pursuant  
8 to 9 V.S.A. § 4129(g) since the Commission's inception.

9 Fourth: By inserting a reader assistance heading and adding a new section  
10 to be Sec. 35 to read as follows:

11 \* \* \* Effective Dates \* \* \*

12 Sec. 35. EFFECTIVE DATES

13 (a) Secs. 1–31 shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

14 (b) This section and Secs. 32–34 shall take effect on passage.