

S.56

Introduced by Senators Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim, Vyhovsky, Weeks  
and White

Referred to Committee on Government Operations

Date: February 7, 2025

Subject: Executive; Office of New Americans; report

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the  
Office of New Americans Study Committee to study and report concerning the  
creation of an independent Office of New Americans.

An act relating to creating an Office of New Americans

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

~~S. C. 1. OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS STUDY COMMITTEE, REPORT~~

~~(a) Creation. There is created the Office of New Americans Study  
Committee to make recommendations for creating an independent Office of  
New Americans.~~

~~(b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following  
members:~~

~~(1) the Director of the Vermont Refugee Office, who shall be Chair;~~

~~(2) one current member of the House of Representatives, who shall be~~  
appointed by the Speaker of the House;  
~~(3) one current member of the Senate, who shall be appointed by the~~  
~~Committee on Committees;~~  
~~(4) one member, appointed by the Secretary of Human Services;~~  
~~(5) one member, appointed by the Commissioner of Labor;~~  
~~(6) one member, appointed by the Executive Director of the Office of~~  
~~Racial Equity;~~  
~~(7) one member representing the Association of Africans Living in~~  
~~Vermont; and~~  
~~(8) seven members, appointed by the Governor, who shall include:~~  
~~(A) one member, nominated by the Association of Africans Living in~~  
~~Vermont;~~  
~~(B) one member, nominated by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and~~  
~~Immigrants;~~  
~~(C) one member, nominated by the Brattleboro Development Credit~~  
~~Corporation;~~  
~~(D) one member, nominated by the Vermont Afghan Alliance;~~  
~~(E) one member, nominated by World Education Services;~~  
~~(F) one member, nominated by the Vermont Asylum Assistance~~  
~~Project; and~~

1 ~~(C) one member with experience or expertise serving nonnative~~  
2 Vermonters on a statewide level.

3 (c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study and submit a written  
4 report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military  
5 Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations concerning  
6 recommendations for creating an independent Office of New Americans,  
7 including:

8 (1) a summary of the current demographic, economic, and public health  
9 data regarding New Americans in the State and information regarding the  
10 government services being utilized and underutilized by New Americans;

11 (2) a summary or survey of varying and successful approaches to  
12 providing government services to New Americans in other states, with  
13 particular focus on the topics of the role of education and training institutions,  
14 professional licensing, housing, and support for employers and municipalities;

15 (3) in consultation with community-based organizations composed of or  
16 serving New Americans, State agencies and departments that provided services  
17 to New Americans, municipal government leaders, educational institutions,  
18 and business leaders, information on:

19 (A) the existing State and local-level barriers for New Americans for  
20 gainfully participating in the State's workforce, economy, and business  
21 communities,

1 ~~(D) additional governmental services needed by New Americans but~~  
2 not yet offered by the State; and

3 (C) the transfer or consolidation of existing governmental services  
4 for New Americans that would be more efficiently provided by a new Office  
5 of New Americans;

6 (4) the structure of a to-be-created independent Office of New  
7 Americans; and

8 (5) the proposed structure, duties, funding, and labor needs of an Office  
9 of New Americans.

10 (d) The Committee shall be composed of the following three  
11 subcommittees, with duties and leadership to be assigned by the Chair at the  
12 first meeting of the Committee:

13 (1) Legal Services;

14 (2) Equity and Access to State Programs and Resources; and

15 (3) Workforce, Economic Opportunity, and Inclusion.

16 (e) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative, technical,  
17 and legal assistance of the Agency of Human Services.

18 (f) Date of Report. On or before September 1, 2026, the Committee shall  
19 submit the written report required by subsection (c) of this section.

20 ~~(g) Meetings.~~

1 ~~(1) The Chair shall call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on~~  
2 ~~or before September 1, 2025.~~

3 ~~(2) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.~~

4 ~~(3) The Committee shall cease to exist on the earlier of September 1,~~  
5 ~~2026 or the date that the Committee submits its written report.~~

6 ~~(h) Compensation and reimbursement.~~

7 ~~(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General~~  
8 ~~Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in the member's~~  
9 ~~capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and~~  
10 ~~reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than 20~~  
11 ~~meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the~~  
12 ~~General Assembly.~~

13 ~~(2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem~~  
14 ~~compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.~~  
15 ~~§ 1010 for not more than 20 meetings. These payments shall be made from~~  
16 ~~monies appropriated to the Agency of Human Services.~~

17 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 ~~This act shall take effect on passage.~~

*Sec. 1. OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS STUDY COMMITTEE; REPORT*

*(a) Creation. There is created the Office of New Americans Study Committee to make recommendations for creating an independent Office of New Americans.*

(b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following members:

(1) the Director of the Vermont Refugee Office, who shall be Chair;

(2) one member, appointed by the Commissioner of Labor;

(3) one member, appointed by the Executive Director of the Office of Racial Equity; and

(4) five members, appointed by the Governor, one who must be a New American with lived experience, who shall include:

(A) one member, nominated by the Association of Africans Living in Vermont;

(B) one member, nominated by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants;

(C) one member, nominated by the Vermont Afghan Alliance;

(D) one member, nominated by the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation; and

(E) one member, nominated by Migrant Justice.

(c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study and submit a written report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Government Operations concerning recommendations for creating an independent Office of New Americans, including:

(1) a summary of the current demographic, economic, and public health data regarding New Americans in the State and information regarding the government services being utilized and underutilized by New Americans;

(2) a summary or survey of varying and successful approaches to providing government services to New Americans in other states, with particular focus on the topics of the role of education and training institutions, professional licensing, housing, and support for employers and municipalities;

(3) in consultation with community-based organizations composed of or serving New Americans, the Vermont Asylum Assistance Project, State agencies and departments that provide services to New Americans, the Secretary of State's Office, municipal government leaders, educational institutions, and business leaders, information on:

(A) the existing State and local-level barriers for New Americans for gainfully participating in the State's workforce, economy, and business communities;

(B) additional governmental services needed by New Americans but not yet offered by the State; and

(C) the transfer or consolidation of existing governmental services for New Americans that would be more efficiently provided by a new Office of New Americans;

(4) the proposed structure, duties, funding, and labor needs of an Office of New Americans; and

(5) a definition of the term "New Americans" for the purposes of an Office of New Americans.

(d) The Committee may create subcommittees, with duties and leadership to be assigned by the Chair.

(e) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Agency of Human Services.

(f) Date of Report. On or before September 1, 2026, the Committee shall submit the written report required by subsection (c) of this section.

(g) Meetings.

(1) The Chair shall call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on or before September 1, 2025.

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

(3) The Committee shall cease to exist on the earlier of September 1, 2026 or the date that the Committee submits its written report.

(h) Compensation and reimbursement.

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

(2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Human Services.

*Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE*

*This act shall take effect on passage.*