

Senate Calendar

FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2025
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ACTION CALENDAR

UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF FRIDAY, MAY 16, 2025

Third Reading

H. 50.

An act relating to identifying underutilized State buildings and land.

Proposal of amendment to H. 50 to be offered by Senators Douglass, Harrison, Ingalls, Major, Plunkett and Watson before Third Reading

Senators Douglass, Harrison, Ingalls, Major, Plunkett and Watson move to amend the Senate proposal of amendment by striking out subsection (g) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (g) to read as follows:

(g) The head of each agency shall prepare and forward to the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services ~~when requested by the Commissioner~~ annually in a format prescribed by the Commissioner an inventory of: square footage available for use; square footage in actual use; square footage not in use; square footage used for storage; square footage that is unfinished; cost per square foot for rent; cost per square foot for operation and maintenance; and the source of funds for rent, operation, and maintenance, including the act and section numbers of a legislative directive if applicable. The head of each agency shall additionally indicate in its inventory in a format prescribed by the Commissioner whether any building is vacant and whether any land is unnecessary for the statutory purpose of the agency.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2025

Second Reading

H. 454.

An act relating to transforming Vermont's education governance, quality, and finance systems.

NEW BUSINESS

Third Reading

H. 91.

An act relating to the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program.

H. 472.

An act relating to professions and occupations regulated by the Office of Professional Regulation.

Second Reading

Favorable with Proposal of Amendment

H. 319.

An act relating to miscellaneous environmental subjects.

Reported favorably with recommendation of proposal of amendment by Senator Watson for the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

The Committee recommends that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Battery Extended Producer Responsibility * * *

Sec. 1. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 152, Sec. 3 is amended to read:

Sec. 3. ANR BATTERY ASSESSMENT

(a) On or before July 1, 2026, ~~the Secretary of Natural Resources~~ 2027, the stewardship organization formed pursuant to 10 V.S.A. chapter 168 shall complete an assessment of the opportunities, challenges, and feasibility of establishing mandatory end-of-life management programs for the following battery types:

- (1) batteries used in hybrid and electric vehicles;
- (2) battery energy storage systems; and
- (3) batteries that are not easily removable from the products they power.

(b) The assessment required by this section shall include:

(1) a summary of the work and progress other states have made in establishing end-of-life management programs for the three battery types listed under subsection (a) of this section; and

(2) policy recommendations on whether mandatory end-of-life management programs are necessary for the battery types listed under subsection (a) of this section.

(c) The assessment required by this section shall be provided to the Secretary of Natural Resources, the House Committee on Environment and Energy, and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

* * * Fuel Storage Tanks * * *

Sec. 2. 10 V.S.A. § 1927(d) is amended to read:

(d) No person shall deliver a regulated substance to a category one tank that is ~~visibly~~ designated by the Agency as not having a valid permit or not meeting standards adopted by the Secretary related to corrosion protection, spill prevention, leak detection, financial responsibility, or overfill protection that may result in the tank releasing a regulated substance to the environment.

* * * Household Hazardous Waste Extended Producer Responsibility * * *

Sec. 3. 10 V.S.A. § 7181 is amended to read:

§ 7181. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(4)(A) “Covered household hazardous product” means a consumer product offered for retail sale that is contained in the receptacle in which the product is offered for retail sale, if the product has any of the following characteristics:

(i) the product or a component of the product is a hazardous waste under subchapter 2 of the Vermont Hazardous Waste Management Regulations, regardless of the status of the generator of the hazardous waste; or

(ii) the product is a gas cylinder.

(B) “Covered household hazardous product” does not mean any of the following:

* * *

(iv) ~~architectural paint~~ paint products as that term is defined in section 6672 of this title;

* * *

Sec. 4. 10 V.S.A. § 7182 is amended to read:

§ 7182. SALE OF COVERED HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS;
STEWARDSHIP ORGANIZATION REGISTRATION;
MANUFACTURER REGISTRATION

(a) Sale prohibited.

(1) A manufacturer of a covered household hazardous product shall not sell, offer for sale, or deliver to a retailer for subsequent sale a covered

household hazardous product without registering with the stewardship organization pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

(2) Beginning six months after a final decision on the adequacy of a collection plan by the Secretary, a manufacturer of a covered household hazardous product shall not sell, offer for sale, or deliver to a retailer for subsequent sale a covered household hazardous product unless all the following have been met:

~~(1)(A)~~ The manufacturer is participating in a stewardship organization implementing an approved collection plan.

~~(2)(B)~~ The name of the manufacturer, the manufacturer's brand, and the name of the covered household hazardous product are submitted to the Agency of Natural Resources by a stewardship organization and listed on the stewardship organization's website as covered by an approved collection plan.

~~(3)(C)~~ The stewardship organization in which the manufacturer participates has submitted an annual report consistent with the requirements of section 7185 of this title.

~~(4)(D)~~ The stewardship organization in which the manufacturer participates has conducted a plan audit consistent with the requirements of subsection 7185(b) of this title.

(b) Stewardship organization registration requirements.

(1) On or before July 1, 2025 ~~and annually thereafter~~, a stewardship organization shall file a registration form with the Secretary. The Secretary shall provide the registration form to the stewardship organization. The registration form shall include:

~~(A) a list of the manufacturers participating in the stewardship organization;~~

~~(B) a list of the brands of each manufacturer participating in the stewardship organization;~~

~~(C) a list of the covered household hazardous products of each manufacturer participating in the stewardship organization;~~

~~(D) the name, address, and contact information of a person responsible for ensuring compliance with this chapter;~~

~~(E) a description of how the stewardship organization meets the requirements of subsection 7184(b) of this title, including any reasonable requirements for participation in the stewardship organization; and~~

~~(F)~~(B) the name, address, and contact information of a person for a nonmember manufacturer to contact regarding how to participate in the stewardship organization to satisfy the requirements of this chapter.

~~(2) A renewal of a registration without changes may be accomplished through notifying the Agency of Natural Resources on a form provided by the Agency Beginning on July 1, 2026 and annually thereafter, a stewardship organization shall renew its registration with the Secretary. A renewal registration shall include the following:~~

~~(A) a list of the manufacturers participating in the stewardship organization;~~

~~(B) a list of the brands of each manufacturer participating in the stewardship organization;~~

~~(C) a list of the covered household hazardous products of each manufacturer participating in the stewardship organization;~~

~~(D) the name, address, and contact information of a person responsible for ensuring compliance with this chapter;~~

~~(E) a description of how the stewardship organization meets the requirements of subsection 7184(b) of this title, including any reasonable requirements for participation in the stewardship organization; and~~

~~(F) the name, address, and contact information of a person for a nonmember manufacturer to contact regarding how to participate in the stewardship organization to satisfy the requirements of this chapter.~~

~~(c) Manufacturer registration. On or before November 1, 2025, a manufacturer of a covered household hazardous product shall register with the stewardship organization in a manner proscribed by the stewardship organization.~~

Sec. 5. 10 V.S.A. § 7183 is amended to read:

§ 7183. COLLECTION PLANS

~~(a) Collection plan required. Prior to July 1, 2025~~ On or before July 1, 2026, any stewardship organization registered with the Secretary as representing manufacturers of covered household hazardous products shall coordinate and submit to the Secretary for review one collection plan for all manufacturers.

~~(b) Collection plan; minimum requirements. Each collection plan shall include, at a minimum, all of the following requirements:~~

(1) Initial plan. The initial plan shall last for a period not to exceed three years and contain, at a minimum, the following requirements:

(A) List of participants. A list of the manufacturers, brands, and products participating in the collection plan and a methodology for adding and removing manufacturers and notifying the Agency of new participants.

(2)(B) Free statewide collection of covered household hazardous products. The collection program shall provide reimburse municipalities when a municipality provides for free, convenient, and accessible statewide opportunities for the collection from covered entities of covered household hazardous products, including orphan covered products. ~~A stewardship organization shall accept all covered household hazardous products collected from a covered entity and shall not refuse the collection of a covered household hazardous product, including orphan covered household products, based on the brand or manufacturer of the covered household hazardous product unless specifically exempt from this requirement.~~ The collection program shall also provide for the payment of collection, processing, and end-of-life management of the covered household hazardous products. Collection costs include facility costs, equipment costs, labor, supplies, maintenance, events costs, and event contractor costs, including collection event set-up fees, environmental service fees, insurance fees, and shipping containers and materials.

~~(3) Convenient collection location. The stewardship organization shall develop a collection program that allows all municipal household hazardous waste collection programs to opt to be a part of the collection plan, including collection events and facilities offered by solid waste planning entities. The plan shall make efforts to site points of collection equitably across all regions of the State to allow for convenient and reasonable access of all Vermonters to collection facilities or collection events.~~

~~(4) Public education and outreach. The collection plan shall include an education and outreach program that shall include a website and may include media advertising, retail displays, articles and publications, and other public educational efforts. Outreach and education shall be suitable for the State's diverse ethnic populations, through translated and culturally appropriate materials, including in-language and targeted outreach. Public education and outreach should include content to increase meaningful participation by environmental justice focus populations as required by 3 V.S.A. chapter 72. During the first year of program implementation and two years after adoption of the collection plan, each stewardship organization shall carry out a survey of public awareness regarding the requirements of the program established under this chapter that can identify communities that have disparities in~~

~~awareness and need more outreach. Each stewardship organization shall share the results of the public awareness surveys with the Secretary. If multiple stewardship organizations are implementing plans approved by the Secretary, the stewardship organizations shall coordinate in carrying out their education and outreach responsibilities under this subdivision and shall include in their annual reports to the Secretary a summary of their coordinated education and outreach efforts. The education and outreach program and website shall notify the public of the following:~~

~~(A) that there is a free collection program for covered household hazardous products;~~

~~(B) the location and hours of operation of collection points and how a covered entity can access this collection program;~~

~~(C) the special handling considerations associated with covered household hazardous products; and~~

~~(D) source reduction information for consumers to reduce leftover covered household products.~~

~~(5) Compliance with appropriate environmental standards. In implementing a collection plan, a stewardship organization shall comply with all applicable laws related to the collection, transportation, and disposal of hazardous waste. A stewardship organization shall comply with any special handling or disposal standards established by the Secretary for covered household hazardous products or for the collection plan of the manufacturer.~~

~~(6) Method of disposition. The collection plan shall describe how covered household hazardous products will be managed in the most environmentally and economically sound manner, including following the waste-management hierarchy. The management of covered household hazardous products under the collection plan shall use management activities in the following priority order: source reduction, reuse, recycling, energy recovery, and disposal. Collected covered household hazardous products shall be recycled when technically and economically feasible.~~

~~(7) Performance goals. A collection plan shall include:~~

~~(A) A performance goal for covered household hazardous products determined by the number of total participants at collection events and facilities listed in the collection plan during a program year divided by the total number of households. The number of households shall include seasonal households. The calculation methodology for the number of households shall be included in the plan.~~

~~(B) At a minimum, the collection performance goal for the first approved plan shall be an annual participation rate of five percent of the households for every collection program based on the number of households the collection program serves. After the initial approved program plan, the stewardship organization shall propose performance goals for subsequent program plans. The Secretary shall approve the performance goals for the plan at least every five years. The stewardship organization shall use the results of the most recent waste composition study required under 6604 of this title and other relevant factors to propose the performance goals of the collection plan. If a stewardship organization does not meet its performance goals, the Secretary may require the stewardship organization to revise the collection plan to provide for one or more of the following: additional public education and outreach, additional collection events, or additional hours of operation for collection sites. A stewardship organization is not authorized to reduce or cease collection, education and outreach, or other activities implemented under an approved plan on the basis of achievement of program performance goals.~~

~~(8)(C) Collection plan funding. The collection plan shall describe how the stewardship organization will fund the implementation of the collection plan and collection activities under the plan, including the costs for education and outreach, collection, processing, and end-of-life management of the covered household hazardous product~~ all municipal collection offered to the public in a base program year. A base program year shall be based on the services provided in calendar year 2024 and any other collection facilities or events approved by the Secretary. Collection costs include facility costs, equipment costs, labor, supplies, maintenance, events costs, and event contractor costs, including collection event set-up fees, environmental service fees, insurance fees, and shipping containers and materials. The collection plan shall include how municipalities will be compensated for all costs attributed to collection of covered household hazardous products. The Secretary shall resolve disputes relating to compensation.

(2) Subsequent plans. After the expiration of the initial plan approved by the Secretary, the collection plan shall include, at a minimum, the following:

(A) List of participants. A list of the manufacturers, brands, and products participating in the collection plan and a methodology for adding and removing manufacturers and notifying the Agency of new participants.

(B) Free statewide collection of covered household hazardous products. The collection program shall provide for free, convenient, and accessible statewide opportunities for the collection from covered entities of

covered household hazardous products, including orphan covered products. A stewardship organization shall accept all covered household hazardous products collected from a covered entity and shall not refuse the collection of a covered household hazardous product, including orphan covered household products, based on the brand or manufacturer of the covered household hazardous product unless specifically exempt from this requirement. The collection program shall also provide for the payment of collection, processing, and end-of-life management of the covered household hazardous products. Collection costs include facility costs, equipment costs, labor, supplies, maintenance, events costs, and event contractor costs, including collection event set-up fees, environmental service fees, insurance fees, and shipping containers and materials.

(C) Convenient collection location. The stewardship organization shall develop a collection program that allows all municipal household hazardous waste collection programs to opt to be a part of the collection plan, including collection events and facilities offered by solid waste planning entities. The plan shall make efforts to site points of collection equitably across all regions of the State to allow for convenient and reasonable access of all Vermonters to collection facilities or collection events.

(D) Public education and outreach. The collection plan shall include an education and outreach program that shall include a website and may include media advertising, retail displays, articles and publications, and other public educational efforts. Outreach and education shall be suitable for the State's diverse ethnic populations, through translated and culturally appropriate materials, including in-language and targeted outreach. Public education and outreach should include content to increase meaningful participation by environmental justice focus populations as required by 3 V.S.A. chapter 72. During the second approved plan, each stewardship organization shall carry out a survey of public awareness regarding the requirements of the program established under this chapter that can identify communities that have disparities in awareness and need more outreach. Each stewardship organization shall share the results of the public awareness surveys with the Secretary. If multiple stewardship organizations are implementing plans approved by the Secretary, the stewardship organizations shall coordinate in carrying out their education and outreach responsibilities under this subdivision (D) and shall include in their annual reports to the Secretary a summary of their coordinated education and outreach efforts. The education and outreach program and website shall notify the public of the following:

(i) that there is a free collection program for covered household hazardous products;

(ii) the location and hours of operation of collection points and how a covered entity can access this collection program;

(iii) the special handling considerations associated with covered household hazardous products; and

(iv) source reduction information for consumers to reduce leftover covered household products.

(E) Compliance with appropriate environmental standards. In implementing a collection plan, a stewardship organization shall comply with all applicable laws related to the collection, transportation, and disposal of hazardous waste. A stewardship organization shall comply with any special handling or disposal standards established by the Secretary for covered household hazardous products or for the collection plan of the manufacturer.

(F) Method of management. The collection plan shall describe how covered household hazardous products will be managed in the most environmentally and economically sound manner, including following the waste-management hierarchy. The management of covered household hazardous products under the collection plan shall use management activities in the following priority order: source reduction, reuse, recycling, energy recovery, and disposal. Collected covered household hazardous products shall be recycled when technically and economically feasible.

(G) Performance goals. A collection plan shall include:

(i) A performance goal for covered household hazardous products determined by the number of total participants at collection events and facilities listed in the collection plan during a program year divided by the total number of households. The number of households shall include seasonal households. The calculation methodology for the number of households shall be included in the plan.

(ii) At a minimum, the collection performance goal for the initial plan approved pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection (b) shall be an annual participation rate of seven percent of the households for every collection program based on the number of households the collection program serves. After the initial approved program plan, the stewardship organization shall propose performance goals for subsequent program plans. The Secretary shall approve the performance goals for the plan at least every five years. The stewardship organization shall use the results of the most recent waste composition study required under 6604 of this title and other relevant factors

to propose the performance goals of the collection plan. If a stewardship organization does not meet its performance goals, the Secretary may require the stewardship organization to revise the collection plan to provide for one or more of the following: additional public education and outreach, additional collection events, or additional hours of operation for collection sites. A stewardship organization is not authorized to reduce or cease collection, education and outreach, or other activities implemented under an approved plan on the basis of achievement of program performance goals.

(H) Collection plan funding. The collection plan shall describe how the stewardship organization will fund the implementation of the collection plan and collection activities under the plan, including the costs for education and outreach, collection, processing, and end-of-life management of the covered household hazardous product. Collection costs include facility costs, equipment costs, labor, supplies, maintenance, events costs, and event contractor costs, including collection event set-up fees, environmental service fees, insurance fees, and shipping containers and materials. The collection plan shall include how municipalities will be compensated for all costs attributed to collection of covered household hazardous products. The Secretary shall resolve disputes relating to compensation.

(c) Term of collection plan. A collection plan approved by the Secretary under section 7187 of this title shall have a term not to exceed five years, provided that the stewardship organization remains in compliance with the requirements of this chapter and the terms of the approved collection plan.

(d) Collection plan implementation. Stewardship organizations shall implement the collection plan on or before six months after the date of a final decision by the Secretary on the adequacy of the collection plan.

Sec. 6. 10 V.S.A. § 7184 is amended to read:

§ 7184. STEWARDSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

(a) Participation in a stewardship organization. A manufacturer shall meet the requirements of this chapter by participating in a stewardship organization that undertakes the responsibilities under sections 7182, 7183, and 7185 of this title.

(b) Qualifications for a stewardship organization. To qualify as a stewardship organization under this chapter, an organization shall:

(1) commit to assume the responsibilities, obligations, and liabilities of all manufacturers participating in the stewardship organization;

(2) not create unreasonable barriers for participation in the stewardship organization; and

(3) maintain a public website that lists all manufacturers and manufacturers' brands and products covered by the stewardship organization's approved collection plan.

(c) A stewardship organization is authorized to charge its members reasonable fees for the organization, administration, and implementation of the programs required by this chapter.

Sec. 7. 10 V.S.A. § 7187 is amended to read:

§ 7187. AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

(a) Review and approve collection plans. The Secretary shall review and approve or deny collection plans submitted under section 7183 of this title according to the public notice and comment requirements of section 7714 of this title.

* * *

(g) Agency collection plan. If no stewardship organization is formed on or before July 1, 2025 or the stewardship organization fails to submit a plan or submits a plan that does not meet the requirements of this chapter, the Secretary shall adopt and administer a plan that meets the requirements of section 7183 of this title. If the Secretary administers the plan adopted under section 7183, the Secretary shall charge each manufacturer the prorated costs of plan administration, the Agency's oversight costs, and an additional hazardous waste reduction assessment of 10 percent of the plan's total cost to be deposited in the Solid Waste Management Assistance Account of the Waste Management Assistance Fund, for the purpose of providing grants to municipalities and small businesses to prevent pollution and reduce the generation of hazardous waste in the State. When determining a manufacturer's assessment under this section, the Agency may allocate costs to a manufacturer of covered household hazardous products based on the sales of covered household hazardous products nationally prorated to the population of Vermont.

Sec. 8. 10 V.S.A. § 6621a is amended to read:

§ 6621a. LANDFILL DISPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

(a) In accordance with the following schedule, no person shall knowingly dispose of the following materials in solid waste or in landfills:

* * *

(12) Covered household hazardous products after July 1, ~~2025~~ 2026.

* * *

Sec. 9. SOLID WASTE PLAN; FLEXIBILITY

(a) Notwithstanding the municipal household hazardous waste (HHW) collection requirements under the State Solid Waste Plan adopted pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 6604, the Secretary of Natural Resources may grant a variance from the requirement to conduct at least two household hazardous waste collection events in that municipality. The variance shall allow a municipality to meet its obligations, as follows:

(1) the municipality has partnered with another municipality to allow its residents the ability to access a permanent HHW facility in the same manner as the municipality that operates the permanent HHW facility;

(2) the municipality has partnered with a nearby municipality to offer collection events to members in both municipalities; or

(3) the municipality has demonstrated that it has made reasonable efforts to provide alternate collection opportunities identified under subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection and was unable and that the cost of a collection event is unreasonable. In such circumstances the Secretary of Natural Resources may reduce the required collection events to one per year.

(b) This section shall be repealed on July 1, 2027.

* * * Paint Product Stewardship Program * * *

Sec. 10. 10 V.S.A. chapter 159, subchapter 4 is amended to read:

Subchapter 4. Paint Product Stewardship Program

§ 6671. PURPOSE

The purpose of this subchapter is to establish an environmentally sound, cost-effective Paint Product Stewardship Program in the State that will undertake responsibility for the development and implementation of strategies to reduce the generation of postconsumer paint; promote the reuse of postconsumer paint; and collect, transport, and process postconsumer paint, including reuse, recycling, energy recovery, and disposal. The Paint Product Stewardship Program will follow the waste management hierarchy for managing and reducing postconsumer paint in the order as follows: reduce consumer generation of postconsumer paint, reuse, recycle, provide for energy recovery, and dispose. The Paint Product Stewardship Program will provide more opportunities for consumers to manage properly their postconsumer paint, provide fiscal relief for local government in managing postconsumer paint, keep paint out of the waste stream, and conserve natural resources.

§ 6672. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Aerosol coating product” means a pressurized coating product containing pigments or resins dispensed by means of a propellant and packaged and sold in a disposable aerosol container for handheld application, or for use in specialized equipment for ground traffic or marking applications.

(2) “Architectural paint” means interior and exterior architectural coatings, including interior or exterior water- and oil-based coatings, primers, sealers, or wood coatings, that are sold in containers of five gallons or less. “Architectural paint” does not mean industrial coatings, original equipment coatings, or specialty coatings.

(3) “Coating-related product” means a product used as a paint additive, paint thinner, paint colorant, paint remover, surface sealant, surface preparation, or surface adhesive, and sold for home improvement. “Coating-related product” does not mean original equipment manufacturer products or industrial products.

(2)(4) “Distributor” means a company that has a contractual relationship with one or more producers to market and sell architectural paint to retailers in Vermont.

(3)(5) “Energy recovery” means recovery in which all or a part of the solid waste materials are processed in order to use the heat content or other forms of energy of or from the material.

(4)(6) “Environmentally sound management practices” means policies to be implemented by a producer or a stewardship organization to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and also addressing such issues as adequate record keeping, tracking and documenting the fate of materials within the State and beyond, and adequate environmental liability coverage for professional services and for the operations of the contractors working on behalf of the producer organization.

(5)(7) “Municipality” means a city, town, or a village.

(6) ~~“Paint stewardship assessment” means a one-time charge that is:~~

~~(A) added to the purchase price of architectural paint sold in Vermont;~~

~~(B) passed from the producer to the wholesale purchaser to the retailer and then to a retail consumer; and~~

~~(C) necessary to cover the cost of collecting, transporting, and processing the postconsumer paint managed through the statewide Program.~~

(8) “Nonindustrial coating” means arts and crafts paint, automotive refinish paint, driveway sealer, faux finish or glaze, furniture oil, furniture paint, lime wash, lime paint, marine paint, antifouling paint, road and traffic marking paint, two-component paint, wood preservative, fire retardant paint, dry fog paint, chalkboard paint, and conductive paint, sold in containers of five gallons or less for commercial and homeowner use, but does not include coatings purchased for industrial or original equipment manufacturer use.

(9)(A) “Paint product” includes:

- (i) architectural paint;
- (ii) aerosol coating products;
- (iii) coating-related products; and
- (iv) nonindustrial coatings.

(B) “Paint product” does not include a health and beauty product.

~~(7)~~(10) “Postconsumer paint” means architectural a paint product and its containers not used and no longer wanted by a purchaser.

~~(8)~~(11) “Producer” means a manufacturer of architectural paint products who sells, offers for sale, or distributes that paint in Vermont under the producer’s own name or brand.

~~(9)~~(12) “Recycling” means any process by which discarded products, components, and by-products are transformed into new usable or marketable materials in a manner in which the original products may lose their identity but does not include energy recovery or energy generation by means of combusting discarded products, components, and by-products with or without other waste products.

~~(10)~~(13) “Retailer” means any person that offers architectural a paint product for sale at retail in Vermont.

~~(11)~~(14) “Reuse” means the return of a product into the economic stream for use in the same kind of application as originally intended, without a change in the product’s identity.

~~(12)~~(15) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Natural Resources.

~~(13)~~(16) “Sell” or “sale” means any transfer of title for consideration, including remote sales conducted through sales outlets, catalogues, or the Internet internet or any other similar electronic means.

~~(14)~~(17) “Stewardship organization” means a nonprofit corporation or nonprofit organization created by a producer or group of producers to

implement the Paint Product Stewardship Program required under this subchapter.

§ 6673. PAINT PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

(a) A producer or a stewardship organization representing producers shall submit a an amended plan for the establishment of a Paint Product Stewardship Program to the Secretary for approval ~~by December 1, 2013~~. The plan shall address the following:

(1) Provide a list of participating producers and brands covered by the Program.

(2) Provide specific information on the ~~architectural~~ paint products covered under the Program, such as interior or exterior water- and oil-based coatings, primers, sealers, or wood coatings.

(3) Describe how the Program proposed under the plan will collect, transport, recycle, and process postconsumer paint products for end-of-life management, including recycling, energy recovery, and disposal, using environmentally sound management practices.

(4) Describe the Program and how it will provide for convenient and available statewide collection of postconsumer ~~architectural~~ paint products in urban and rural areas of the State. The producer or stewardship organization shall use the existing household hazardous waste collection infrastructure when selecting collection points for postconsumer ~~architectural~~ paint products. A paint retailer shall be authorized as a paint collection point of postconsumer architectural paint for a Paint Product Stewardship Program if the paint retailer volunteers to act as a ~~paint~~ collection point and complies with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

(5) Provide geographic information modeling to determine the number and distribution of sites for collection of postconsumer architectural paint based on the following criteria:

(A) at least 90 percent of Vermont residents shall have a permanent collection site within a 15-mile radius; and

(B) one additional permanent site will be established for every 10,000 residents of a municipality and additional sites shall be distributed to provide convenient and reasonably equitable access for residents within each municipality, unless otherwise approved by the Secretary.

(6) Establish goals to reduce the generation of postconsumer paint products, to promote the reuse of postconsumer paint products, and for the proper management of postconsumer paint products as practical based on

current household hazardous waste program information. The goals may be revised by the producer or stewardship organization based on the information collected for the annual report.

(7) Describe how postconsumer paint products will be managed in the most environmentally and economically sound manner, including following the waste-management hierarchy. The management of paint under the Program shall use management activities that promote source reduction, reuse, recycling, energy recovery, and disposal.

(8) Describe education and outreach efforts to inform consumers of collection opportunities for postconsumer paint products and to promote the source reduction and recycling of ~~architectural~~ paint products for each of the following: consumers, contractors, and retailers.

(b) The producer or stewardship organization shall submit a budget for the Program proposed under subsection (a) of this section, and for any amendment to the plan that would affect the Program's costs. The budget shall include a funding mechanism under which each ~~architectural~~ paint product producer remits to a stewardship organization payment of a paint product stewardship assessment for each ~~container of architectural paint product~~ it sells in this State. Prior to submitting the proposed budget and assessment to the Secretary, the producer or stewardship organization shall provide the budget and assessment to a third-party auditor agreed upon by the Secretary. The third-party auditor shall provide a recommendation as to whether the proposed budget and assessment is cost-effective, reasonable, and limited to covering the cost of the Program. The paint product stewardship assessment shall be added to the cost of all ~~architectural~~ paint products sold in Vermont. To ensure that the funding mechanism is equitable and sustainable, a uniform paint product stewardship assessment shall be established for all ~~architectural~~ paint products sold. The paint stewardship assessment shall be ~~approved by the Secretary and shall be sufficient to recover, but not exceed, the costs of the Paint Stewardship Program~~ the amount established in section 6681 of this title.

(c) ~~Beginning no later than July 1, 2014, or three~~ Six months after approval of the plan for a Paint Product Stewardship Program required under subsection (a) of this section, ~~whichever occurs later,~~ a producer of ~~architectural~~ paint products sold at retail or a stewardship organization of which a producer is a member shall implement the approved plan for a Paint Product Stewardship Program.

(d) A producer or a stewardship organization of which a producer is a member shall promote a Paint Product Stewardship Program and provide consumers with educational and informational materials describing collection

opportunities for postconsumer paint products Statewide and promotion of waste prevention, reuse, and recycling. The educational and informational program shall make consumers aware that the funding for the operation of the Paint Product Stewardship Program has been added to the purchase price of all ~~architectural~~ paint products sold in the State.

(e) A plan approved under this section shall provide for collection of postconsumer ~~architectural~~ paint at no cost to the person from whom the ~~architectural~~ paint product is collected. The program plan also shall provide for the payment of municipalities for collection, processing, and end-of-life management of aerosol coating products, coating-related products, and nonindustrial coatings contained in the receptacle in which the product is offered for retail sale. Collection costs include facility costs, equipment costs, labor, supplies, maintenance, events costs, and event contractor costs, including collection event set-up fees, environmental service fees, insurance fees, and shipping containers and materials.

(f) When a plan or amendment to an approved plan is submitted under this section, the Secretary shall make the proposed plan or amendment available for public review and comment for at least 30 days.

(g) A producer or paint stewardship organization shall submit to the Secretary for review, in the same manner as required under subsection 6675(a) of this title, an amendment to an approved plan when there is:

- (1) ~~a change to a paint stewardship assessment under the plan;~~
- (2) an addition to or removal of a category of products covered under the Program; or
- ~~(3)~~(2) a revision of the product stewardship organization's goals.

(h) A plan approved by the Secretary under section 6675 of this title shall have a term not to exceed five years, provided that the producer remains in compliance with the requirements of this chapter and the terms of the approved plan.

(i) In addition to the requirements specified in subsection (a) of this section, a stewardship organization shall notify the Secretary in writing within 30 days ~~of after~~ any change to:

- (1) the number of collection sites for postconsumer ~~architectural~~ paint products identified under this section as part of the plan;
- (2) the producers identified under this section as part of the plan;
- (3) the brands of ~~architectural~~ paint products identified under this section as part of the plan; and

(4) the processors that manage postconsumer ~~architectural~~ paint products identified under this section as part of the plan.

(j) Upon submission of a plan to the Secretary under this section, a producer or a stewardship organization shall pay the fee required by 3 V.S.A. § 2822(j)(31). Thereafter, the producer or stewardship organization shall pay the fee required by 3 V.S.A. § 2822(j)(31) annually ~~by~~ on or before July 1 of each year.

§ 6674. RETAILER RESPONSIBILITY

(a) A producer or retailer may not sell or offer for sale ~~architectural~~ a paint product to any person in Vermont unless the producer ~~of that architectural paint brand~~ or a stewardship program ~~of which the producer of that architectural paint brand is a member~~ that the producer is a member of is implementing an approved plan for a Paint Product Stewardship Program as required by section 6673 of this title. A retailer complies with the requirements of this section if, on the date the ~~architectural~~ paint product was ordered from the producer or its agent, the producer or paint brand is listed on the Agency of Natural Resources' website as a producer or brand participating in an approved plan for a Paint Product Stewardship Program.

(b) At the time of sale to a consumer, a producer, a stewardship organization, or a retailer selling or offering ~~architectural~~ paint products for sale shall provide the consumer with information regarding available management options for postconsumer paint products collected through the Paint Product Stewardship Program or a brand of paint being sold under the Program.

§ 6675. AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

(a)(1) Within 90 days ~~of~~ after receipt of a plan submitted under section 6673 of this title, the Secretary shall review the plan and make a determination whether or not to approve the plan. The Secretary shall issue a letter of approval for a submitted plan if:

(A) the submitted plan provides for the establishment of a Paint Product Stewardship Program that meets the requirements of subsection 6673(a) of this subchapter; and

(B) the Secretary determines that the plan:

(i) achieves convenient collection for consumers;

(ii) educates the public on proper paint product management; and

(iii) manages waste paint products in a manner that is environmentally safe and promotes reuse and recycling; and

~~(iv) is cost-effective.~~

(2) If the Secretary does not approve a submitted plan, the Secretary shall issue to the paint product stewardship organization a letter listing the reasons for the disapproval of the plan. If the Secretary disapproves a plan, a paint product stewardship organization intending to sell or continue to sell architectural paint products in the State shall submit a new plan within 60 days of after receipt of the letter of disapproval.

~~(b)(1) The Secretary shall review and approve the stewardship assessment proposed by a producer pursuant to subsection 6673(b) of this title. The Secretary shall only approve the Program budget and any assessment if the applicant has demonstrated that the costs of the Program and any proposed assessment are reasonable and the assessment does not exceed the costs of implementing an approved plan.~~

~~(2) If an amended plan is submitted under subsection 6673(g) of this title that proposes to change the cost of the Program or proposes to change the paint stewardship assessment under the plan, the disapproval of any proposed new assessment or the failure of an approved new assessment to cover the total costs of the Program shall not relieve a producer or stewardship organization of its obligation to continue to implement the approved plan under the originally approved assessment.~~

(e) Facilities solely collecting paint products for the Paint Product Stewardship Program that would not otherwise be subject to solid waste certification requirements shall not be required to obtain a solid waste certification. Persons solely transporting paint for the Paint Product Stewardship Program that would not otherwise be subject to solid waste hauler permitting requirements shall not be required to obtain a solid waste hauler's permit.

§ 6676. ANTICOMPETITIVE CONDUCT

(a) A producer or an organization of producers that manages postconsumer paint products, including collection, transport, recycling, and processing of postconsumer paint products, as required by this subchapter may engage in anticompetitive conduct to the extent necessary to implement the plan approved by the Secretary and is immune from liability for the conduct relating to antitrust, restraint of trade, unfair trade practices, and other regulation of trade or commerce.

(b) The activity authorized and the immunity afforded under subsection (a) of this section shall not apply to any agreement among producers or paint product stewardship organizations:

- (1) establishing or affecting the price of paint products, ~~except for the paint stewardship assessment approved under subsection 6675(b) of this title;~~
- (2) setting or limiting the output or production of paint products;
- (3) setting or limiting the volume of paint products sold in a geographic area;
- (4) restricting the geographic area where paint products will be sold; or
- (5) restricting the customers to whom paint products will be sold or the volume of paint products that will be sold.

§ 6677. PRODUCER REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

~~No later than October 15, 2015, and annually thereafter,~~ Annually, a producer or a stewardship program of which the producer is a member shall submit to the Secretary a report describing the Paint Product Stewardship Program that the producer or Stewardship Program is implementing as required by section 6673 of this title. At a minimum, the report shall include:

- (1) a description of the methods the producer or Stewardship Program used to reduce, reuse, collect, transport, recycle, and process postconsumer paint products statewide in Vermont;
- (2) the volume and type of postconsumer paint products collected by the producer or Stewardship Program at each collection center in all regions of Vermont;
- (3) the volume of postconsumer paint products collected by the producer or Stewardship Program in Vermont by method of disposition, including reuse, recycling, energy recovery, and disposal;
- (4) an independent financial audit of the Paint Product Stewardship Program implemented by the producer or the Stewardship Program;
- (5) the prior year's actual direct and indirect costs for each Program element and the administrative and overhead costs of administering the approved Program; and
- (6) samples of the educational materials that the producer or stewardship program provided to consumers of architectural paint.

* * *

§ 6680. UNIVERSAL WASTE DESIGNATION FOR POSTCONSUMER PAINT

- (a) The requirements of Subchapter 9 of the Vermont Hazardous Waste Management Rules, which allow certain categories of hazardous waste to be

managed as universal waste, shall apply to postconsumer paint products until the postconsumer paint is discarded, provided that:

(1) the postconsumer paint product is collected as a part of a stewardship plan approved under this subchapter; and

(2) the collected postconsumer paint product is or includes a paint product that is a hazardous waste as defined and regulated by the Vermont Hazardous Waste Management Rules.

(b) When postconsumer paint product is regulated as universal waste under subsection (a) of this section, small and large quantity handlers of the postconsumer paint shall manage the postconsumer paint products in a manner that prevents releases of any universal waste or component of the universal waste to the environment. Postconsumer paint products regulated as universal waste shall, at a minimum, be contained in one or more of the following:

(1) a container that remains closed, structurally sound, and compatible with the postconsumer paint products and that lacks evidence of leakage, spillage, or damage that could cause leakage under reasonably foreseeable conditions; or

(2) a container that does not meet the requirements of subdivision (1) of this subsection, provided that the unacceptable container is overpacked in a container that meets the requirements of subdivision (1).

(c) Containers holding postconsumer paint products that ~~is~~ are regulated as universal waste shall be clearly labeled to clearly identify the contents of the container, such as "Paint-Related Waste," "Universal Waste Paint," "Used Paint," or "Waste Paint."

(d) Unless otherwise provided by statute, the definitions of the Vermont Hazardous Waste Management Rules shall apply to this section.

§ 6681. PAINT CONSUMER FEES

(a) The paint product stewardship assessment shall be sufficient to implement and sustain the Paint Product Stewardship Program. If at any time the stewardship assessments established in this section are not sufficient to implement and sustain the Paint Product Stewardship Program, the Paint Product Stewardship Program shall propose new stewardship assessments that are sufficient to implement and sustain the Program.

(b) A retailer shall charge an assessment on paint products, based on current material management costs of the Paint Product Stewardship Program, in the following amounts for architectural paint:

<u>(1) Half pint or smaller:</u>	<u>No fee.</u>
<u>(2) Greater than a half pint to one gallon:</u>	<u>\$0.65.</u>
<u>(3) Greater than one gallon to two gallons:</u>	<u>\$1.35.</u>
<u>(4) Greater than two gallons to five gallons:</u>	<u>\$2.45.</u>

Sec. 11. IMPLEMENTATION; FEE REPORT

(a) The requirements for the sale of paint products under 10 V.S.A. § 6673 shall apply to architectural paint beginning on July 1, 2013 and all paint products beginning on July 1, 2026.

(b) The requirement under 10 V.S.A. § 6673 for an architectural paint producer to submit a stewardship plan to the Secretary of Natural Resources currently applies to producers of architectural paint as required beginning on July 1, 2013 and shall also apply to producers of paint related products beginning on July 1, 2026.

(c) The requirement under 10 V.S.A. § 6677 that an architectural paint producer annually report to the Secretary of Natural Resources currently applies to producers of architectural paint as required beginning on July 1, 2013 and shall also apply to producers of paint related products beginning on March 1, 2027.

(d) On or before December 15, 2025, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall submit to the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy and on Finance and the House Committees on Environment and on Ways and Means a report recommending a paint consumer fee or fees to be charged for paint products that are not architectural paint.

* * * Healthy Homes Initiative * * *

Sec. 12. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. B.1103 is amended to read:

Sec. B.1103 CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT – FISCAL YEAR 2024
ONE-TIME APPROPRIATIONS

* * *

(j)(1) In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$6,100,000 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds is appropriated to the Department of Environmental Conservation for the Healthy Homes Initiative. Funds shall be used to make repairs or improvements to drinking water, wastewater, or stormwater systems for Vermonters who have low to moderate income or who live in manufactured housing communities, or both.

(2) All information submitted to or compiled by the Department of Environmental Conservation related to the issuance of individual funding awards under the Healthy Homes Initiative shall be considered confidential unless the person providing the information designates that it is not confidential. This shall include all personal information of applicants that request or receive funding. Notwithstanding 1 V.S.A. § 214, this subdivision shall take effect on passage and shall apply retroactively to July 1, 2023.

* * *

* * * Flood Safety * * *

Sec. 13. 2024 Act and Resolves No. 121, Sec. 3 is amended to read:

Sec. 3. DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION;
RIVER CORRIDOR BASE MAP; INFILL MAPPING;
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

(a) On or before January 1, ~~2026~~ 2027, the Department of Environmental Conservation, in consultation with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the regional planning commissions, shall amend by procedure the statewide River Corridor Base Map to identify areas suitable for development that are located within existing settlements and that will not cause or contribute to increases in fluvial erosion hazards.

(b) Beginning on January 1, 2025 and ending on January 1, ~~2027~~ 2028, the Department of Environmental Conservation shall conduct an education and outreach program to consult with and collect input from municipalities, environmental justice focus populations, the Environmental Justice Advisory Council, businesses, property owners, farmers, and other members of the public regarding how State permitting of development in mapped river corridors will be implemented, including potential restrictions on the use of land within mapped river corridors. The Department shall develop educational materials for the public as part of its charge under this section. The Department shall collect input from the public regarding the permitting of development in mapped river corridors as proposed by this act. On or before January 15, ~~2027~~ 2028 and until permitting of development in mapped river corridors begins under 10 V.S.A. § 754, the Department shall submit to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, the House Committee on Environment and Energy, and the Environmental Justice Advisory Council a report that shall include:

(1) a summary of the public input it received regarding State permitting of development in mapped river corridors during the public education and outreach required under this section;

(2) recommendations, based on the public input collected, for changes to the requirements for State permitting of development in mapped river corridors;

(3) an analysis and summary of State permitting of development in mapped river corridors on environmental justice populations; and

(4) a summary of the Department's progress in adopting the rules required under 10 V.S.A. § 754 for the regulation of development in mapped river corridors.

Sec. 14. 10 V.S.A. § 754 is amended to read:

§ 754. MAPPED RIVER CORRIDOR RULES

(a) Rulemaking authority.

(1) On or before ~~July 1, 2027~~ July 15, 2028, the Secretary shall adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 that establish requirements for issuing and enforcing permits for:

(A) all development within a mapped river corridor in the State; and

(B) for development exempt from municipal regulation in flood hazard areas.

(2) The Secretary shall not adopt rules under this subsection that regulate agricultural activities without the consent of the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, provided that the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall not withhold consent under this subdivision when lack of such consent would result in the State's noncompliance with the National Flood Insurance Program.

(3) The Secretary shall seek the guidance of the Federal Emergency Management Agency in developing and drafting the rules required by this section in order to ensure that the rules are sufficient to meet eligibility requirements for the National Flood Insurance Program.

* * *

(e) Permit requirement. Beginning on ~~January 1, 2028~~ July 1, 2029, a person shall not commence or conduct development exempt from municipal regulation in a flood hazard area or commence or conduct any development in a mapped river corridor without a permit issued under the rules required under subsection (a) of this section by the Secretary or by a State agency delegated permitting authority under subsection (f) of this section. When an application is filed under this section, the Secretary or delegated State agency shall proceed in accordance with chapter 170 of this title.

* * *

Sec. 15. 2024 Acts and Resolves 121, Sec. 10 is amended to read:

Sec. 10. STUDY COMMITTEE ON STATE ADMINISTRATION OF
THE NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

* * *

(e) Report. On or before August 15, ~~2025~~ 2026, the Study Committee shall submit a written report to the General Assembly with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action. Any recommendation for legislative action shall be as draft legislation.

* * *

Sec. 16. 2024 Acts and Resolves 121, Sec. 11(a) is amended to read:

(a) The Secretary of Natural Resources shall initiate rulemaking, including pre-rulemaking, for the rules required in Sec. 5 of this act, 10 V.S.A. § 754 (river corridor development), not later than July 1, 2025. The rules shall be adopted on or before July 1, ~~2027~~ 2028.

Sec. 17. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 121, Sec. 29(b) is amended to read:

(b) All other sections shall take effect July 1, 2024, except that:

(1) Secs. 6a, 7, 8, 8a, and 9 (conforming amendments to municipal river corridor planning) shall take effect on January 1, 2028, except that in Sec. 9, 24 V.S.A. § 4424(a)(2)(B)(i) (municipal compliance with the State Flood Hazard Area Standards) shall take effect on January 1, ~~2026~~ 2028;

* * *

* * * Wetlands * * *

Sec. 18. 10 V.S.A. § 918 is amended to read:

§ 918. NET GAIN OF WETLANDS; STATE GOAL; RULEMAKING

(a) On or before ~~July 1~~ December 1, 2025, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall amend the Vermont Wetlands Rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to clarify that the goal of wetlands regulation and management in the State is the net gain of wetlands to be achieved through protection of existing wetlands and restoration of wetlands that were previously adversely affected. This condition shall not apply to wetland, river, and flood plain restoration projects, including dam removals.

* * *

(c) At a minimum, the Wetlands Rules shall be revised to:

(1) Require an applicant for a wetland permit that authorizes adverse impacts to more than 5,000 square feet of wetlands to compensate for those impacts through restoration, enhancement, or creation of wetland resources.

(2) Incorporate the net gain rule into requirements for permits issued after ~~September 1~~ December 1, 2025.

* * *

* * * Dams * * *

Sec. 19. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 121, Sec. 22 is amended to read:

Sec. 22. STUDY COMMITTEE ON DAM EMERGENCY OPERATIONS
PLANNING

(a) Creation. There is created the Study Committee on Dam Emergency Operations Planning to review and recommend how to improve regional emergency action planning for hazards caused by dam failure, including how to shift responsibility for emergency planning from individual municipalities to regional authorities, how to improve regional implementation of dam emergency response plans, and how to fund dam emergency action planning at the regional level.

* * *

(e) Report. On or before December 15, ~~2024~~ 2025, the Study Committee shall submit a written report to the General Assembly with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action. Any recommendation for legislative action shall be submitted as draft legislation.

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of Natural Resources or designee shall call the first meeting of the Study Committee.

(2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at the first meeting.

(3) A majority of the membership of the Study Committee shall constitute a quorum.

(4) The Study Committee shall cease to exist on March 1, ~~2025~~ 2026.

* * *

Sec. 20. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 121, Sec. 24(f) is amended to read:

(f) On or before ~~January 15~~ September 1, 2025, the Agency of Natural Resources shall complete its analysis of the capital and ongoing operations and maintenance costs of the Green River Dam, as authorized in 2022 Acts and

Resolves No. 83, Sec. 46, and shall submit the results of the analysis to the House Committees on Environment ~~and Energy~~ and on Appropriations and the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy and on Appropriations.

* * * Resilience Implementation Strategy; Climate Superfund Act * * *

Sec. 21. 10 V.S.A. § 599a is amended to read:

§ 599a. REPORTS; RULEMAKING

(a) On or before January 15, 2025, the Agency, in consultation with the State Treasurer, shall submit a report to the General Assembly detailing the feasibility and progress of carrying out the requirements of this chapter, including any recommendations for improving the administration of the Program.

(b) The Agency shall adopt rules necessary to implement the requirements of this chapter, including:

(1) adopting methodologies using available science and publicly available data to identify responsible parties and determine their applicable share of covered greenhouse gas emissions; and

(2) requirements for registering entities that are responsible parties and issuing notices of cost recovery demands under the Program; ~~and~~

(3) ~~the Resilience Implementation Strategy, which shall include:~~

(A) ~~practices utilizing nature-based solutions intended to stabilize floodplains, riparian zones, lake shoreland, wetlands, and similar lands;~~

(B) ~~practices to adapt infrastructure to the impacts of climate change;~~

(C) ~~practices needed to build out early warning mechanisms and support fast, effective response to climate-related threats;~~

(D) ~~practices that support economic and environmental sustainability in the face of changing climate conditions; and~~

(E) ~~criteria and procedures for prioritizing climate change adaptation projects eligible to receive monies from the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program.~~

(c) On or before September 15, 2025, the Secretary shall submit to the House Committee on Environment and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy a report summarizing the Agency of Natural Resources' adoption of the Resilience Implementation Strategy. The Strategy shall include:

(1) practices utilizing nature-based solutions intended to stabilize floodplains, riparian zones, lake shoreland, wetlands, and similar lands;

(2) practices to adapt infrastructure to the impacts of climate change;

(3) practices needed to build out early warning mechanisms and support fast, effective response to climate-related threats;

(4) practices that support economic and environmental sustainability in the face of changing climate conditions; and

(5) criteria and procedures for prioritizing climate change adaptation projects eligible to receive monies from the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program.

~~(e)~~(d) In adopting the Strategy, the Agency shall:

(1) consult with the Environmental Justice Advisory Council;

(2) in consultation with other State agencies and departments, including the Department of Public Safety's Division of Vermont Emergency Management, assess the adaptation needs and vulnerabilities of various areas vital to the State's economy, normal functioning, and the health and well-being of Vermonters;

(3) identify major potential, proposed, and ongoing climate change adaptation projects throughout the State;

(4) identify opportunities for alignment with existing federal, State, and local funding streams;

(5) consult with stakeholders, including local governments, businesses, environmental advocates, relevant subject area experts, and representatives of environmental justice focus populations;

(6) consider components of the Vermont Climate Action Plan required under section 592 of this title that are related to adaptation or resilience, as defined in section 590 of this title; and

(7) conduct public engagement in areas and communities that have the most significant exposure to the impacts of climate change, including disadvantaged, low-income, and rural communities and areas.

~~(d)~~(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the existing authority of a State agency, department, or entity to regulate greenhouse gas emissions or establish strategies or adopt rules to mitigate climate risk and build resilience to climate change.

Sec. 22. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 122, Sec. 3 is amended to read:

Sec. 3. IMPLEMENTATION

(a) ~~On or before July 1, 2025, the Agency of Natural Resources pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 837 shall file with the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules the proposed rule for the adoption of the Resilience Implementation Strategy required pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 599a(b)(3). On or before January 1, 2026, the Agency of Natural Resources shall adopt the final rule establishing the Resilience Implementation Strategy required pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 599a(b)(3). [Repealed.]~~

(b) On or before July 1, ~~2026~~ 2027, the Agency of Natural Resources pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 837 shall file with the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules the proposed rules required pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 599a(b)(1) and (b)(2). On or before January 1, ~~2027~~ 2028, the Agency of Natural Resources shall adopt the final rule rules required pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 599a(b)(1) and (b)(2).

Sec. 23. 10 V.S.A. § 596 is amended to read:

§ 596. DEFINITIONS

* * *

(7) “Covered greenhouse gas emissions” means the total quantity of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere ~~during the covered period~~, expressed in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, resulting from the use of fossil fuels extracted or refined by an entity during the covered period.

* * *

(22) “Responsible party” means any entity or a successor in interest to an entity that during any part of the covered period was engaged in the trade or business of extracting fossil fuel or refining crude oil and is determined by the Agency attributable to for more than one billion metric tons of covered greenhouse gas emissions ~~during the covered period~~. The term responsible party does not include any person who lacks sufficient connection with the State to satisfy the nexus requirements of the U.S. Constitution.

* * *

Sec. 24. 10 V.S.A. § 598(b) is amended to read:

(b) With respect to each responsible party, the cost recovery demand shall be equal to an amount that bears the same ratio to the cost to the State of Vermont and its residents, as calculated by the State Treasurer pursuant to section 599c of this title, from ~~the emission of~~ covered greenhouse gases

~~during the covered period gas emissions~~ as the responsible party's applicable share of covered greenhouse gas emissions bears to the aggregate applicable shares of covered greenhouse gas emissions ~~resulting from the use of fossil fuels extracted or refined during the covered period.~~

Sec. 25. 10 V.S.A. § 599c is amended to read:

§ 599c. STATE TREASURER REPORT ON THE COST TO VERMONT OF COVERED GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

On or before January 15, ~~2026~~ 2027, the State Treasurer, after consultation with the Interagency Advisory Board to the Climate Action Office, and with any other person or entity whom the State Treasurer decides to consult for the purpose of obtaining and utilizing credible data or methodologies that the State Treasurer determines may aid the State Treasurer in making the assessments and estimates required by this section, shall submit to the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Finance, on Agriculture, and on Natural Resources and Energy and the House Committees on Appropriations; on Ways and Means; on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry; and on Environment ~~and Energy~~ an assessment of the cost to the State of Vermont and its residents ~~of the emission of covered greenhouse gases for the period that began on January 1, 1995 and ended on December 31, 2024~~ gas emissions. The assessment shall include:

* * *

(3) a categorized calculation of the costs that have been incurred and are projected to be incurred in the future within the State of Vermont to abate the effects of covered greenhouse gas emissions ~~from between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 2024~~ on the State of Vermont and its residents.

* * * Agency of Natural Rules; Federal Reference * * *

Sec. 26. AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES' RULES; FEDERAL REFERENCE

(a) Any federal regulation incorporated by reference into an Agency of Natural Resources' Rule as of January 1, 2025 shall continue in effect as an Agency rule until January 31, 2029 or when the Agency rule is next amended, whichever is sooner, regardless of whether the federal regulation was later repealed or amended.

(b) The Secretary of Natural Resources shall provide notice of any incorporated federal regulations by posting them on the Agency of Natural Resources' website.

(c) Nothing in this section shall prevent the Secretary of Natural Resources from adopting or amending a rule pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25, including through emergency rulemaking.

* * * Commercial Salt Application * * *

Sec. 27. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of Secs. 28—32 of this act to establish the accepted standards of care for the application of salt and salt alternatives in an effective and efficient manner that provides safe conditions for pedestrians and motor vehicles on traveled surfaces while also reducing the impacts of salt and salt alternatives on the quality of the waters of the State.

Sec. 28. 10 V.S.A. chapter 47, subchapter 3A is added to read:

Subchapter 3A. Chloride Contamination Reduction Program

§ 1351. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Apply salt” or “application of salt” means to apply salt or a salt alternative to roadways, parking lots, or sidewalks for the purpose of winter maintenance or for summer dust control. “Apply salt” or “application of salt” does not mean the application of salt to a transportation infrastructure construction project.

(2) “Commercial salt applicator” means any individual who for compensation applies salt but does not include municipal or State employees.

(3) “Master commercial salt applicator” means any individual who employs and is responsible for individuals who for compensation apply salt but does not include municipal or State employees.

(4) “Salt” means sodium chloride, calcium chloride, magnesium chloride, or any other substance containing chloride used for the purpose of deicing, anti-icing, or dust control.

(5) “Salt alternative” means any substance not containing chloride used for the purpose of deicing, anti-icing, or dust control.

(6) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Natural Resources.

(7) “Transportation infrastructure construction project” means a project that involves the construction of roadways, parking lots, sidewalks, or other construction activities at transportation facilities or within transportation rights-of-way.

§ 1352. CHLORIDE CONTAMINATION REDUCTION PROGRAM

(a) The Secretary of Natural Resources, after consultation with the Secretary of Transportation and other states with similar chloride reduction programs, shall establish the Chloride Contamination Reduction Program for the voluntary education, training, and certification of commercial salt applicators regarding effective and efficient application of salt and salt alternatives to provide safe conditions for pedestrians and motor vehicles on traveled surfaces while also reducing the impacts of salt and salt alternatives on the quality of the waters of the State.

(b) As part of the Program, the Secretary of Natural Resources, on or before July 1, 2026, shall adopt by rule best management practices for application of salt or salt alternatives by commercial salt applicators. The best management practices may be based on practices currently implemented by the Agency of Transportation or other entities. The best management practices shall:

(1) establish measures or techniques to increase efficiency in the application of salt or salt alternatives so that the least amount of salt or salt alternatives are used while maintaining safe conditions for pedestrians and motor vehicles on traveled surfaces;

(2) establish standards for when and how salt and salt alternatives are applied in order to prevent salt or salt alternatives from entering waters of the State, including:

(A) salt alternatives that are cost-effective and less harmful to water quality while maintaining safe conditions for pedestrians and motor vehicles on traveled surfaces;

(B) whether and how to implement equipment to calibrate, monitor, or meter application of salt or salt alternatives; and

(C) when sand is an appropriate alternative to salt or salt alternatives for deicing or dust control, particularly in regard to when application of sand will be less harmful to water quality;

(3) establish record-keeping requirements for commercial salt applicators, including records of training and records describing the type and rate of application of salt or salt alternatives, the dates of use, weather conditions requiring use of salt or salt alternatives, and any other factors that the Secretary of Natural Resources deems necessary for the purposes of the Program;

(4) create and circulate a model form for record-keeping information required under this section;

(5) establish requirements for certification under this subchapter, including frequency of training and manner of training;

(6) establish a testing requirement for applicators to complete prior to receiving an initial certification under the Program; and

(7) establish other requirements deemed necessary by the Secretary to achieve the purposes of the Program.

(c)(1) The Program shall offer training for commercial applicators in the implementation of the best management practices required under subsection (b) of this section. Upon completion of training, a commercial salt applicator shall be designated a certified commercial salt applicator. The term of a commercial salt applicator certification issued under the Program shall be for two years from the date of issuance of certification.

(2) A business that employs multiple commercial salt applicators may apply to the Secretary for certification of the business owner or other designated employee as a master commercial salt applicator. A certified master commercial salt applicator shall ensure that all persons employed by the business to apply salt or salt alternatives are trained to comply with the best management practices established under subsection (b) of this section.

(d)(1) A certified commercial salt applicator shall submit an annual summary of total winter salt usage to the Secretary of Natural Resources.

(2) The Secretary of Natural Resources shall establish methods to estimate and track the amount of salt applied by certified commercial salt applicators.

(e) The Secretary may revoke a certification issued under this subchapter after notice and opportunity for a hearing for a violation of the requirements of this subchapter, the rules of this subchapter, or the provisions of a certification issued under this subchapter.

(f)(1) The Program shall include requirements for certification of a master commercial salt applicator.

(2) The Program shall specifically exclude salt applications related to transportation infrastructure construction projects.

(3) The Secretary may elect to implement the Program with State agency staff or through a third-party vendor, or some combination.

§ 1353. AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE; SALT APPLICATION;

(a) A commercial salt applicator or an owner, occupant, or lessee of real property maintained by a certified commercial salt applicator shall have an

affirmative defense against a claim for damages resulting from a hazard caused by snow or ice if:

(1) the claimed damages were caused solely by snow or ice; and

(2) any failure or delay in removing or mitigating the hazard is the result of the certified commercial salt applicator's implementation of the best management practices established under section 1352 of this title for application of salt or salt alternatives.

(b) The affirmative defense provided under subsection (a) shall not apply when the civil damages are due to gross negligence or reckless disregard of the hazard.

(c) The affirmative defense provided under this section is not exclusive and is in addition to any other defenses or immunities provided under State law.

(d) In order to assert the affirmative defense provided under subsection (a) of this section, a commercial salt applicator or an owner, occupant, or lessee of real property maintained by a certified commercial salt applicator shall keep a record describing its road, parking lot, and property maintenance practices, consistent with the requirements determined by the Secretary under this subchapter. The record shall include the type and rate of application of salt and salt alternatives used, the dates of treatment, and the weather conditions for each event requiring deicing. Such records shall be retained by the applicator for a period of three years.

§ 1354. ENFORCEMENT; PRESUMPTION OF COMPLIANCE; WATER QUALITY

(a) A certified commercial salt applicator or a commercial salt applicator employed by a certified master commercial salt applicator is entitled to a rebuttable presumption that the certified commercial salt applicator or commercial salt applicator is in compliance with the requirements of sections 1263 and 1264 of this title when applying salt or salt alternatives according to the best management practices established under section 1352 of this title. The rebuttable presumption under this subsection shall not apply to requirements of a total maximum daily load plan required under this chapter or the requirements of a municipal separate storm sewer system permit required under section 1264 of this title.

(b) The Secretary may revoke a certification issued under this subchapter after notice and opportunity for a hearing for a violation of the requirements of this subchapter, the rules of this subchapter, or the provisions of a certification issued under this subchapter.

§ 1355. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The Secretary of Natural Resources, through the staff of the Chloride Contamination Reduction Program, shall conduct education and outreach to inform:

(1) commercial salt applicators of the existence of the Chloride Contamination Reduction Program and the training and affirmative defense offered under the Program; and

(2) members of the public who purchase salt or salt alternatives for use on driveways, sidewalks, private roads, and other paved surfaces of the potential harm to water quality, pets, and wildlife from excessive application of salt and salt alternatives and how to decrease the potential harm.

Sec. 29. ANR REPORT ON MANAGEMENT OF SALT AND SAND STORAGE FACILITIES

On or before January 15, 2026, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall submit to the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy and on Transportation and the House Committees on Environment and on Transportation a report regarding the management of State and municipal facilities (facilities) for the storage of salt, salt and sand mixtures, and sand that is not mixed with salt. The report shall include:

(1) an inventory of facilities in the State used for the storage of salt, salt and sand mixtures, or sand that is not mixed with salt;

(2) an estimated number of facilities that are currently covered;

(3) an estimate of the number of facilities that are not covered and are within 100 yards of a surface water or drinking water source;

(4) an estimate of the number of facilities that are not covered and are more than 100 yards from a surface water or drinking water source; and

(5) an estimate of the total cost to cover or move facilities for the storage of salt, salt and sand mixtures, or sand that is not mixed with salt, including a proposed annual amount of funding that would be required to meet the timelines for cover or management.

Sec. 30. MUNICIPAL SALT APPLICATORS; VERMONT LOCAL ROADS CURRICULUM; AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

(a)(1) On or before November 1, 2026, the Secretary of Natural Resources, in collaboration with the Secretary of Transportation, shall identify and make changes to the Vermont Local Roads curriculum needed to support municipal

salt applicators in meeting the purpose of this act, including training for best management practices for spreading salt on roads, parking lots, and sidewalks.

(2) As used in this subsection, “municipal salt applicator” means any individual who applies or supervises others who apply salt in the applicator’s capacity as an employee or agent of a town or a municipality but does not include State employees.

(b) Notwithstanding 24 V.S.A. § 901a to the contrary, a municipal employee shall have an affirmative defense against a claim for damages resulting from a hazard caused by snow or ice if:

(1) the municipal salt applicator completed the Vermont Local Roads curriculum providing best management practices for spreading salt on roads, parking lots, and sidewalks in that calendar year;

(2) the claimed damages were caused solely by snow or ice; and

(3) any failure or delay in removing or mitigating the hazard is the result of the certified commercial salt applicator’s implementation of the best management practices learned under the Vermont Local Roads curriculum.

(c) The affirmative defense provided under subsection (b) of this section shall not apply when the civil damages are due to gross negligence or reckless disregard of the hazard.

(d) The affirmative defense provided under this section is not exclusive and is in addition to any other defenses or immunities provided under State law.

(e) In order to assert the affirmative defense provided under subsection (b) of this section, a municipality shall keep a record describing its road, parking lot, and property maintenance practices, consistent with the requirements determined by the Secretary under this subchapter. The record shall include the type and rate of application of salt and salt alternatives used, the dates of treatment, and the weather conditions for each event requiring deicing. Such records shall be retained by the applicator for a period of three years.

Sec. 31. FEE REPORT

On or before January 15, 2026, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall solicit interest from third-party vendors for training and certifying commercial salt applicators under 10 V.S.A. chapter 47, subchapter 3A. The Secretary shall recommend to the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy and on Finance and the House Committees on Environment and on Ways and Means a fee to be charged either by the State or by a third-party vendor for certification of commercial salt applicators under 10 V.S.A. chapter 47, subchapter 3A. Any fee charged to commercial salt applicators by the State or

a third-party vendor for certification under the Chloride Contamination Reduction Program shall be approved by the General Assembly.

Sec. 32. CONTINGENT IMPLEMENTATION; FUNDING

The duty of the Agency of Natural Resources to implement Secs. 28 (Chloride Contamination Reduction Program), 30 (municipal salt applicators), and 31 (fee report) of this act is contingent upon an appropriation from the General Fund for the specific purposes described in Secs. 28, 30, and 31 of this act.

* * * Renewable Power Portfolio * * *

Sec. 33. 30 V.S.A. § 8009 is amended to read:

§ 8009. BASELOAD RENEWABLE POWER PORTFOLIO
REQUIREMENT

* * *

(d) On or before November 1, ~~2027~~ 2028, the Commission shall determine, for the period beginning on November 1, ~~2026~~ 2028 and ending on November 1, 2032, the price to be paid to a plant used to satisfy the baseload renewable power portfolio requirement. The Commission shall not be required to make this determination as a contested case under 3 V.S.A. chapter 25. The price shall be the avoided cost of the Vermont composite electric utility system. As used in this subsection, the term “avoided cost” means the incremental cost to retail electricity providers of electric energy or capacity, or both, that, but for the purchase from the plant proposed to satisfy the baseload renewable power portfolio requirement, such providers would obtain from a source using the same generation technology as the proposed plant. For the purposes of this subsection, the term “avoided cost” also includes the Commission’s consideration of each of the following:

* * *

(k) Collocation and efficiency requirements.

(1) The owner of the plant used to satisfy the baseload renewable power portfolio requirement shall cause the plant’s overall efficiency to be increased by at least 50 percent relative to the 12-month period preceding July 1, 2022. In achieving this efficiency, the owner shall comply with the requirements of this subsection.

(2) On or before ~~July~~ October 1, ~~2023~~ 2025, the owner of the plant shall submit to the Commission and the Department:

(A) A signed contract providing for the construction of a facility at the plant that utilizes the excess thermal heat generated at the plant for a beneficial purpose. As used in this subdivision (A), beneficial purpose may include the displacement of fossil fuel use for the sustainable production of a product or service or more efficient or less costly generation of electricity.

(B) A certification by a qualified professional engineer that the construction of the facility shall meet the requirement of subdivision (1) of this subsection (k).

(3) On or before October 1, ~~2025~~ 2026, the owner of the plant shall submit to the Commission and the Department a certification that the main components of the facility used to meet the requirement of subdivision (1) of this subsection have been manufactured and that the construction plans for the facility have been completed.

(4) If the contract and certification required under subdivision (2) of this subsection are not submitted to the Commission and Department on or before ~~July~~ October 1, ~~2023~~ 2025 or if the certification required under subdivision (3) is not submitted to the Commission and Department on or before October 1, ~~2025~~ 2026, then the obligation under this section for each Vermont retail electricity provider to purchase a pro rata share of the baseload renewable power portfolio requirement shall cease on November 1, ~~2025~~ 2026, and the Commission is not required to conduct the rate determination provided for in subsection (d) of this section.

(5) On or before September 1, ~~2026~~ 2027, the Department shall investigate and submit a recommendation to the Commission on whether the plant has achieved the requirement of subdivision (1) of this subsection. If the Department recommends that the plant has not achieved the requirement of subdivision (1) of this subsection, the obligation under this section shall cease on November 1, ~~2026~~ 2027, and the Commission is not required to conduct the rate determination provided for in subsection (d) of this section.

(6) After November 1, ~~2027~~ 2028, the owner of the plant shall report annually to the Department and the Department shall verify the overall efficiency of the plant for the prior 12-month period. If the overall efficiency of the plant falls below the requirement of subdivision (1) of this subsection, the report shall include a plan to return the plant to the required efficiency within one year.

(7) If, after implementing the plan in subdivision (6) of this subsection, the owner of the plant does not achieve the efficiency required in subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Department shall request that the Commission commence a proceeding to terminate the obligation under this section.

* * *

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 34. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

(Committee vote: 5-0-0)

(For House amendments, see House Journal of March 21, 2025, pages 655 to 673)

Reported favorably by Senator Beck for the Committee on Finance.

The Committee recommends that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

(Committee vote: 7-0-0)

Reported favorably by Senator Watson for the Committee on Appropriations.

The Committee recommends that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

(Committee vote: 7-0-0)

Amendment to proposal of amendment of the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy to H. 319 to be offered by Senator Brennan

Senator Brennan moves to amend the proposal of amendment of the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 18, 10 V.S.A. 918, and its reader assistance in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 18 to read:

Sec. 18. [Deleted.]

Second: By striking out Sec. 34, effective date, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof six new sections to be Secs. 34–39 and their related reader assistance headings to read:

* * * Wetlands; Permitting * * *

Sec. 34. 10 V.S.A. § 902 is amended to read:

§ 902. DEFINITIONS

Wherever used or referred to in this chapter, unless a different meaning clearly appears from the context:

* * *

(7) “Class II wetland” means a wetland other than a Class I or Class III wetland that:

(A) is a mapped wetland identified on the Vermont significant wetlands inventory maps; or

(B) is an unmapped wetland that the Secretary determines to merit protection, pursuant to section 914 of this title, based upon an evaluation of the extent to which it serves the functions and values set forth in subdivision 905b(18)(A) of this title and the rules of the Department.

(8) “Class III wetland” means a wetland that is neither a Class I wetland nor a Class II wetland.

(9) “Buffer zone” means an area contiguous to a significant wetland that protects the wetland’s functions and values.

(A) The Except as provided in subdivision (B) of this subdivision (9):

(i) the buffer zone for a Class I wetland shall extend at least 100 feet from the border of the wetland, unless the Department determines otherwise under section 915 of this title. The; and

(ii) the buffer zone for a Class II wetland shall extend at least 50 feet from the border of the wetland unless the Secretary determines otherwise under section 914 of this title.

(B) The buffer zone of a Class II wetland shall be 25 feet when the wetland is located in:

(i) an industrial park, as that term is defined in subdivision 212(7) of this title, that is permitted under chapter 151 of this title;

(ii) designated centers designated under 24 V.S.A. chapter 76A;

(iii) Tier 1A and Tier 1B areas approved by the Land Use Review Board; or

(iv) locations meeting the requirements established in subsection 6081(z) of this title as eligible for an interim exemption from the permit or permit amendment requirements of chapter 151 of this title.

~~(10) “Panel” means the Water Resources Panel of the Agency of Natural Resources.~~

~~(11)~~ “Significant wetland” means any Class I or Class II wetland.

~~(12)~~(11) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Natural Resources or the Secretary’s authorized representative.

~~(13)~~(12) “Dam removal” has the same meaning as in section 1080 of this title.

Sec. 35. 10 V.S.A. § 913 is amended to read:

§ 913. PROHIBITION

(a) Except for allowed uses adopted by the Department by rule, no person shall conduct or allow to be conducted an activity in a significant wetland or buffer zone of a significant wetland except in compliance with a permit, conditional use determination, or order issued by the Secretary.

(b) A permit shall not be required under this section for:

(1) any activity that occurred before the effective date of this section unless the activity occurred within:

(A) an area identified as a wetland on the Vermont significant wetlands inventory maps;

(B) a wetland that was contiguous to an area identified as a wetland on the Vermont significant wetlands inventory maps; or

(C) the buffer zone of a wetland referred to in subdivision (A) or (B) of this subdivision (1);

(2) any construction within a wetland that is identified on the Vermont significant wetlands inventory maps or within the buffer zone of such a wetland, provided that the construction was completed prior to February 23, 1992, and no action for which a permit is required under the rules of the Department was taken or caused to be taken on or after February 23, 1992; or

(3) any construction or activity in an unmapped Class II wetland located in:

(A) an industrial park, as that term is defined in subdivision 212(7) of this title, that is permitted under chapter 151 of this title;

(B) designated centers designated under 24 V.S.A. chapter 76A;

(C) Tier 1A and Tier 1B areas approved by the Land Use Review Board; or

(D) locations meeting the requirements established in subsection 6081(z) of this title as eligible for an interim exemption from the permit or permit amendment requirements of chapter 151 of this title.

Sec. 36. 10 V.S.A. § 914 is amended to read:

§ 914. WETLANDS DETERMINATIONS

(a) The Secretary may, upon a petition or on ~~his or her~~ the Secretary's own motion, determine whether any wetland is a Class II or Class III wetland. ~~Such~~ The Secretary's determinations shall be based on an evaluation of the functions and values set forth in subdivision 905b(18)(A) of this title and the rules of the Department.

(b) The Secretary may establish the necessary width of the buffer zone of any Class II wetland as part of any wetland determination pursuant to the rules of the Department, except that the buffer zone of a Class II wetland shall be 25 feet when the wetland is located in:

(1) an industrial park, as that term is defined in subdivision 212(7) of this title, that is permitted under chapter 151 of this title;

(2) designated centers designated under 24 V.S.A. chapter 76A;

(3) Tier 1A and Tier 1B areas approved by the Land Use Review Board;
or

(4) locations meeting the requirements established in subsection 6081(z) of this title as eligible for an interim exemption from the permit or permit amendment requirements of chapter 151 of this title.

* * *

Sec. 37. 10 V.S.A. § 918 is amended to read:

§ 918. NET GAIN OF WETLANDS; STATE GOAL; RULEMAKING

(a) On or before July 1, ~~2025~~ 2026, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall amend the Vermont Wetlands Rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to clarify that the goal of wetlands regulation and management in the State is the net gain of wetlands to be achieved through protection of existing wetlands and restoration of wetlands that were previously adversely affected. ~~This condition shall not apply to wetland, river, and flood plain restoration projects, including dam removals.~~

(b)(1) The Vermont Wetlands Rules shall prioritize the protection of existing intact wetlands from adverse effects.

(2) Where a permitted activity in a wetland will cause more than 5,000 square feet of adverse effects that cannot be avoided, the Secretary shall mandate that the permit applicant restore, enhance, or create wetlands or buffers to compensate for the adverse effects on a wetland. The amount of wetlands to be restored, enhanced, or created shall be calculated, at a

minimum, by determining the acreage or square footage of wetlands permanently drained or filled as a result of the permitted activity and multiplying that acreage or square footage by two, to result in a ratio of 2:1 restoration to wetland loss, except that a ratio of 1:1 restoration to wetland loss shall apply in:

(A) an industrial park, as that term is defined in subdivision 212(7) of this title, that is permitted under chapter 151 of this title;

(B) designated centers designated under 24 V.S.A. chapter 76A;

(C) Tier 1A and Tier 1B areas approved by the Land Use Review Board; or

(D) locations meeting the requirements established in subsection 6081(z) of this title as eligible for an interim exemption from the permit or permit amendment requirements of chapter 151 of this title.

(3) Establishment of a buffer zone contiguous to a wetland shall not substitute for the restoration, enhancement, or creation of wetlands. Adverse impacts to wetland buffers shall be compensated for based on the effects of the impact on wetland function.

* * *

Sec. 38. 10 V.S.A. § 919 is amended to read:

§ 919. WETLANDS PROGRAM REPORTS

(a) On or before April 30, 2025, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall submit to the House Committee on Environment ~~and Energy~~ and to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy a report on annual losses and gains of significant wetlands in the State. The report shall include:

(1) the location and acreage of Class II wetland and buffer losses permitted by the Agency in accordance with section 913 of this title, for which construction of the permitted project has commenced;

(2) the acreage of Class II wetlands and buffers gained through permit-related enhancement and restoration, and an estimate of wetlands gained through wetlands, river, and floodplain restoration projects, including dam removals;

(3) the number of site visits and technical assistance calls conducted by the Agency of Natural Resources, the number of permits processed by the Agency, and any enforcement actions that were taken by the Agency or the

Office of the Attorney General in the previous year for violations of this chapter; and

(4) an updated mitigation summary of the extent of wetlands restored on-site compared with compensation performed off-site, in-lieu fees paid, or conservation.

* * *

(c) On or before December 15, 2025, the Agency of Natural Resources shall publish on its website and submit to the House Committee on Environment and to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy wetland guidance on the mitigation and compensation sequence contemplated in the Vermont Wetland Rules subsections 9.5(b) and (c). The guidance shall clearly identify the process applicants should follow and the information and proof necessary to demonstrate a project has practicably avoided and minimized wetland impacts and is eligible for mitigation during the State wetland permit application process.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 39. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

H. 480.

An act relating to miscellaneous amendments to education law.

Reported favorably with recommendation of proposal of amendment by Senator Weeks for the Committee on Education.

The Committee recommends that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * School Safety * * *

Sec. 1. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 29, Secs. 5 and 6 are amended to read:

Sec. 5. BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS; IMPLEMENTATION

* * *

(b) Establishment of behavioral threat assessment teams; training.

(1) School districts and independent schools not already using behavioral threat assessment teams shall ~~take all actions necessary to establish a team~~ establish a team and identify team members not later than July 1, 2025; ~~including:~~

(2) School districts and independent schools shall take all actions necessary to implement comprehensive behavioral threat assessment and management programs not later than October 1, 2025, including:

(A) identifying and training team members, which shall include group bias training and the training requirements contained in 16 V.S.A. § 1485(d);

(B) adopting a behavioral threat assessment team policy;

(C) establishing procedures for proper, fair, and effective use of behavioral threat assessment teams;

(D) updating and exercising emergency operations plans; and

(E) providing education to the school community on the purpose and use of behavioral threat assessment teams.

~~(2)(3)~~ School districts and independent schools currently using behavioral threat assessment teams shall certify compliance with the training requirements contained in 16 V.S.A. § 1485(d) on or before the first day of the 2023–2024 school year.

~~(3)(4)~~ The Agency of Education and Department of Public Safety shall issue guidance and offer training necessary to assist school districts and independent schools with implementation of this subsection.

~~(c) The Agency of Education shall establish guidelines necessary to collect the data required pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 1485(e). Each supervisory union, supervisory district, and independent school using behavioral threat assessment teams as of July 1, 2023 shall comply with the data collection requirements under 16 V.S.A. § 1485(e) beginning in the 2023–2024 school year. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATES

* * *

(c) Sec. 2 (16 V.S.A. § 1480) shall take effect on July 1, ~~2024~~ 2025.

(d) Sec. 4 (16 V.S.A. § 1485) shall take effect on July 1, 2025, except that subdivision (b)(3) shall take effect on October 1, 2025 and subsection (e) shall take effect on July 1, 2027.

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 1485 is amended to read:

§ 1485. BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS

* * *

(b) Policy.

* * *

(3) Each school district and each approved or recognized independent school shall develop, adopt, and ensure implementation of a policy and procedures for use of behavioral threat assessment teams that is consistent with and at least as comprehensive as the model policy and procedures developed by the Secretary. Any school board or independent school that fails to adopt such a policy ~~or procedures~~ shall be presumed to have adopted the most current model policy ~~and procedures~~ published by the Secretary. Any superintendent or independent school that fails to adopt such procedures shall be presumed to have adopted the most current model procedures published by the Secretary.

* * *

* * * Postsecondary Schools Chartered in Vermont * * *

Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 176(d) is amended to read:

(d) Exemptions. The following are exempt from the requirements of this section except for the requirements of subdivision (c)(1)(C) of this section:

* * *

(4) Postsecondary schools that are accredited. The following postsecondary institutions are accredited, meet the criteria for exempt status, and are authorized to operate educational programs beyond secondary education, including programs leading to a degree or certificate: Bennington College, Champlain College, ~~College of St. Joseph, Goddard College, Green Mountain College,~~ Landmark College, ~~Marlboro College,~~ Middlebury College, ~~New England Culinary Institute,~~ Norwich University, Saint Michael's College, SIT Graduate Institute, ~~Southern Vermont College,~~ Sterling College, Vermont College of Fine Arts, and Vermont Law and Graduate School. This authorization is provided solely to the extent necessary to ensure institutional compliance with federal financial aid-related regulations, and it does not affect, rescind, or supersede any preexisting authorizations, charters, or other forms of recognition or authorization.

* * *

* * * Nutrition Contracts and Public Bids * * *

Sec. 4. 16 V.S.A. § 559 is amended to read:

§ 559. PUBLIC BIDS

* * *

(e) Application of this section. Any contract entered into or purchase made in violation of the provisions of this section shall be void; provided, however, that:

(1) The provisions of this section shall not apply to contracts for the purchase of books or other materials of instruction.

(2) A school board may name in the specifications and invitations for bids under this section the particular make, kind, or brand of article or articles to be purchased or contracted.

(3) Nothing in this section shall apply to emergency repairs.

~~(4) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit a school board from awarding a school nutrition contract after using any method of bidding or requests for proposals permitted under federal law for award of the contract. Notwithstanding the monetary amount in subsection (a) of this section for which a school board is required to advertise publicly or invite three or more bids or requests for proposal, a school board is required to publicly advertise or invite three or more bids or requests for proposal for purchases made from the nonprofit school food service account for purchases in excess of the federal simplified acquisition threshold when purchasing food or in excess of \$25,000.00 when purchasing nonfood items, unless a municipality sets a lower threshold for purchases from the nonprofit school food service account. The provisions of this section shall not apply to contracts for the purchase of food made from a nonprofit school food services account.~~

* * *

* * * Virtual Learning * * *

Sec. 5. 16 V.S.A. § 948 is added to read:

§ 948. VIRTUAL LEARNING

(a) The Agency of Education shall maintain access to and oversight of a virtual learning provider for the purpose of offering virtual learning opportunities to Vermont students.

(b) A student may enroll in virtual learning if:

(1) the student is enrolled in a Vermont public school, including a Vermont career technical center;

(2) virtual learning is determined to be an appropriate learning pathway outlined in the student's personalized learning plan; and

(3) the student's learning experience occurs under the supervision of an appropriately licensed educator and aligns with State expectations and

standards, as adopted by the Agency and the State Board of Education, as applicable.

(c) A school district shall count a student enrolled in virtual learning in the school district's average daily membership, as defined in section 4001 of this title, if the student meets all of the criteria in subsection (b) of this section.

Sec. 6. 16 V.S.A. § 942(13) is amended to read:

~~(13) "Virtual learning" means learning in which the teacher and student communicate concurrently through real-time telecommunication. "Virtual learning" also means online learning in which communication between the teacher and student does not occur concurrently and the student works according to his or her own schedule~~ an intentionally designed learning environment for online teaching and learning using online design principles and teachers trained in the delivery of online instruction. This instruction may take place either in a self-paced environment or a real-time environment.

* * * BOCES Start-up Grant Program * * *

Sec. 7. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 168, Sec. 4 is amended to read:

Sec. 4. BOCES GRANT PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

(a) There is established the Boards of Cooperative Education Services Start-up Grant Program, to be administered by the Agency of Education, from funds appropriated for this purpose, to award grants to enable the formation of boards of cooperative education services (BOCES) formed pursuant to 16 V.S.A. chapter 10 after July 1, 2024. BOCES Supervisory unions shall be eligible for a single \$10,000.00 grant after the Secretary of Education approves the applicant's initial articles of agreement pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 603(b) two or more boards vote to explore the advisability of forming a board of cooperative education services pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 603(a). Grants may be used for start-up and formation costs and may include reimbursement to member supervisory unions for costs incurred during the exploration and formation of the BOCES and articles of agreement, including the development of proposed articles of agreement. Grants shall be awarded to only one supervisory union within each group of supervisory unions exploring the formation of a BOCES.

(b) Notwithstanding any provision of 16 V.S.A. § 4025 to the contrary, the sum of \$70,000.00 is appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2025 to fund the Boards of Cooperative Education Services Start-up Grant Program created in subsection (a) of this section. Unexpended appropriations shall carry forward into the subsequent fiscal year and remain available for use for this purpose.

* * * Military-Related Postsecondary Opportunities * * *

Sec. 8. 16 V.S.A. § 941 is amended to read:

§ 941. FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

(a) There is created within the Agency a Flexible Pathways Initiative:

(1) to encourage and support the creativity of school districts as they develop and expand high-quality educational experiences that are an integral part of secondary education in the evolving ~~21st-Century~~ 21st-century classroom;

(2) to promote opportunities for Vermont students to achieve postsecondary readiness through high-quality educational experiences that acknowledge individual goals, learning styles, and abilities; and

(3) to increase the rates of secondary school completion and postsecondary continuation and retention in Vermont.

(b) The Secretary shall develop, publish, and regularly update guidance, in the form of technical assistance, sharing of best practices and model documents, legal interpretations, and other support designed to assist school districts:

(1) ~~to~~ To identify and support secondary students who require additional assistance to succeed in school and to identify ways in which individual students would benefit from flexible pathways to graduation~~;~~.

(2) ~~to~~ To work with every student in grade ~~7~~ seven through grade 12 in an ongoing personalized learning planning process that:

(A) identifies the student's emerging abilities, aptitude, and disposition;

(B) includes participation by families and other engaged adults;

(C) guides decisions regarding course offerings and other high-quality educational experiences; ~~and~~

(D) identifies career and postsecondary planning options using resources provided pursuant to subdivision (4) of this subsection (b); and

(E) is documented by a personalized learning plan~~;~~.

(3) ~~to~~ To create opportunities for secondary students to pursue flexible pathways to graduation that:

(A) increase aspiration and encourage postsecondary continuation of training and education;

(B) are an integral component of a student's personalized learning plan; and

(C) include:

(i) applied or work-based learning opportunities, including career and career technical education and internships;

(ii) virtual learning and blended learning;

(iii) dual enrollment opportunities as set forth in section 944 of this title;

(iv) early college programs as set forth in subsection 4011(e) of this title; and

(v) [Repealed.]

(vi) adult education and secondary credential opportunities as set forth in section 945 of this title; and.

(4) ~~to~~ To provide students, beginning ~~no not~~ later than in grade 7 ~~seven~~, with career development and postsecondary planning resources to ensure that they are able to take full advantage of the opportunities available within the flexible pathways to graduation and to achieve their career and postsecondary education and training goals. Resources provided pursuant to this subdivision shall include information regarding the admissions process and requirements necessary to proceed with any and all military-related opportunities.

(c) Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed as discouraging or limiting the authority of any school district to develop or continue to provide educational opportunities for its students that are otherwise permitted, including the provision of Advanced Placement courses.

(d) An individual entitlement or private right of action shall not arise from creation of a personalized learning plan.

* * * Secretary of Education Search * * *

Sec. 9. 3 V.S.A. § 2702 is amended to read:

§ 2702. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

(a) With the advice and consent of the Senate, the Governor shall appoint a Secretary of Education from among ~~no not~~ fewer than three candidates proposed by the State Board of Education. The Secretary shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

(1) Not later than 30 days after public notification of a vacancy or anticipated vacancy in the position of Secretary of Education, the Governor

shall send a letter to the Chair of the State Board of Education asking the Board to initiate the candidate selection process for a new Secretary of Education. The Governor's letter shall include direction as to the Governor's preferred candidate qualifications and experience.

(2) The State Board shall begin a national search process not later than 60 days after receipt of a letter from the Governor issued pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(3) The State Board may request from the Agency of Education the funds necessary to utilize outside resources for the search process required pursuant to this subsection.

(b) The Secretary shall report directly to the Governor and shall be a member of the Governor's Cabinet.

(c) At the time of appointment, the Secretary shall have expertise in education management and policy and demonstrated leadership and management abilities.

* * * Supplemental Reading Instruction * * *

Sec. 10. 16 V.S.A. § 2903 is amended to read:

§ 2903. ~~PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL FAILURE; READING~~
INSTRUCTION FOUNDATION FOR LITERACY

(a) Statement of policy. The ability to read is critical to success in learning. Children who fail to read by the end of the first grade will likely fall further behind in school. The personal and economic costs of reading failure are enormous both while the student remains in school and long afterward. All students need to receive systematic and explicit evidence-based reading instruction in the early grades from a teacher who is skilled in teaching the foundational components of reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Students who require intensive supplemental instruction tailored to the unique difficulties encountered shall be provided those additional supports by an appropriately trained education professional.

* * *

(c) Reading instruction. A public school or approved independent school that is eligible to receive public tuition that offers instruction in grades kindergarten, one, two, or three shall provide systematic and explicit evidence-based reading instruction to all students. In addition, such for students in grades kindergarten through 12, public schools and approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition shall provide supplemental

reading instruction to any enrolled student whose reading proficiency falls significantly below proficiency standards for the student's grade level or whose reading proficiency prevents progress in school. Schools shall provide support and information to the parents and legal guardians ~~of such students regarding the student's current level of reading proficiency, which shall be based on valid and reliable assessments.~~

* * * Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program * * *

Sec. 11. 16 V.S.A. § 2857 is amended to read:

§ 2857. VERMONT NATIONAL GUARD TUITION BENEFIT PROGRAM

(a) Program creation. The Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program (Program) is created, under which a member of the Vermont National Guard (member) who meets the eligibility requirements in subsection (c) of this section is entitled to the following tuition benefit for up to full-time attendance:

(1) For courses at any Vermont State College institution or the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College (UVM), the benefit shall be the in-state residence tuition rate for the relevant institution.

(2) For courses at any eligible Vermont private postsecondary institution, the benefit shall be the in-state tuition rate charged by UVM.

(3) For courses at an eligible training institution offering nondegree, certificate training, or continuing education programs, the benefit shall be the lower of the institution's standard tuition or the in-state tuition rate charged by UVM.

(4) For courses at a non-Vermont approved postsecondary education institution approved for federal Title IV funding where the degree program is not available in Vermont, the benefit shall be the in-state tuition rate charged by UVM.

(b) Tuition benefit.

(1) The tuition benefit provided under the Program shall be paid on behalf of the member by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC), subject to the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly specifically for this purpose. An eligible Vermont postsecondary institution that accepts or receives the tuition benefit on behalf of a member shall charge the member the tuition rate for an in-state student. The amount of tuition for a member who attends an educational institution under the Program on less than a full-time basis shall be reduced to reflect the member's course load in a manner determined by VSAC under subdivision (f)(1) of this section.

(2) The tuition benefit shall be conditioned upon the member's executing a promissory note obligating the member to repay the member's tuition benefit, in whole or in part, if the member fails to complete the period of Vermont National Guard service required in subsection (d) of this section, or if the member's benefit is terminated pursuant to subdivision (e)(1) of this section.

(c) Eligibility.

(1) To be eligible for the Program, an individual, whether a resident or nonresident, shall satisfy all of the following requirements:

(A) be an active member of the Vermont National Guard;

(B) have successfully completed basic training;

(C) be enrolled;

(i) at UVM, a Vermont State College, or any other college or university located in Vermont in a program that leads to an undergraduate certificate ~~or, an undergraduate degree, or a graduate degree;~~

(ii) at an eligible training institution in a program that leads to a certificate or other credential recognized by VSAC; ~~or~~

(iii) ~~at a non-Vermont approved postsecondary education institution approved for Title IV funding only when the degree program is not available in Vermont;~~

(D) ~~have not previously earned an undergraduate bachelor's degree;~~
[Repealed.]

(E) continually demonstrate satisfactory academic progress as determined by criteria established by the Vermont National Guard and VSAC, in consultation with the educational institution at which the individual is enrolled under the Program;

(F) have used available post-September 11, 2001 tuition benefits and other federally funded military tuition assistance; provided, however, that this subdivision shall not apply to:

(i) tuition benefits and other federally funded military tuition assistance for which the individual has not yet earned the full amount of the benefit or tuition;

(ii) Montgomery GI Bill benefits;

(iii) post-September 11, 2001 educational program housing allowances;

- (iv) federal educational entitlements;
- (v) National Guard scholarship grants;
- (vi) loans under section 2856 of this title; and
- (vii) other nontuition benefits; and

(G) have submitted a statement of good standing to VSAC signed by the individual's commanding officer within 30 days prior to the beginning of each semester.

(2) An individual may receive more than one undergraduate certificate, undergraduate degree, graduate degree, or other credential recognized by VSAC under the Program, provided that the cost of all certificates, degrees, and credentials received by the individual under the Program does not exceed an amount equal to twice the full-time in-state tuition rate charged by UVM for completion of an undergraduate baccalaureate degree.

(d) Service commitment.

(1) For each full academic year of attendance under the Program, a member shall be required to serve two years in the Vermont National Guard in order to receive the full tuition benefit under the Program.

(2) If a member's service with the Vermont National Guard terminates before the member fulfills this two-year service commitment, other than for good cause as determined by the Vermont National Guard, the individual shall reimburse VSAC a pro rata portion of the tuition paid under the Program pursuant to the terms of an interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering the Program.

(3) For members participating in the Program on a less than full-time basis, the member's service commitment shall be at the rate of one month of Vermont National Guard service commitment for each credit hour, not to exceed 12 months of service commitment for a single semester.

(e) Termination of tuition benefit.

(1) The Office of the Vermont Adjutant and Inspector General may terminate the tuition benefit provided an individual under the Program if:

(A) the individual's commanding officer revokes the statement of good standing submitted pursuant to subdivision (c)(7) of this section as a result of an investigation or disciplinary action that occurred after the statement of good standing was issued;

(B) the individual is dismissed from the educational institution in which the individual is enrolled under the Program for academic or disciplinary reasons; or

(C) the individual withdraws without good cause from the educational institution in which the individual is enrolled under the Program.

(2) If an individual's tuition benefit is terminated pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, the individual shall reimburse VSAC for the tuition paid under the Program, pursuant to the terms of an interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the individual at the time of entering the Program; shall be responsible on a pro rata basis for the remaining tuition cost for the current semester or any courses in which the individual is currently enrolled; and shall be ineligible to receive future tuition benefits under the Program.

(3) If an individual is dismissed for academic or disciplinary reasons from any postsecondary educational institution before receiving tuition benefits under the Program, the Office of the Adjutant and Inspector General may make a determination regarding the individual's eligibility to receive tuition benefits under the Program.

(f) Adoption of policies, procedures, and guidelines.

(1) VSAC, in consultation with the Office of the Adjutant and Inspector General, shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines necessary to implement the provisions of this section, which shall include eligibility, application, and acceptance requirements, proration of service requirements for academic semesters or attendance periods shorter than one year, data sharing guidelines, and the criteria for determining "good cause" as used in subdivisions (d)(2) and (e)(1)(C) of this section.

(2) Each educational institution participating in the Program shall adopt policies and procedures for the enrollment of members under the Program. These policies and procedures shall be consistent with the policies, procedures, and guidelines adopted by VSAC under subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(g) Reports.

(1) On or before November 1 of each year, the President, Chancellor, or equivalent position of each educational institution that participated in the Program during the immediately preceding school year shall report to the Vermont National Guard and VSAC regarding the number of members enrolled at its institution during that school year who received tuition benefits under the Program and, to the extent available, the courses or program in which the members were enrolled.

(2) On or before January 15 of each year, the Vermont National Guard and VSAC shall report these data and other relevant performance factors, including information pertaining to the achievement of the goals of this entitlement program and the costs of the Program to date, to the Governor, the House and Senate Committees on Education, and the House Committees on Appropriations and on ~~General, Housing, and Military Affairs~~ Government Operations and Military Affairs. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d), expiration of reports, shall not apply to the reports to be made under this subsection

* * * Cardiac Emergency Response Plans * * *

Sec. 12. 16 V.S.A. § 1480 is amended to read:

§ 1480. EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS

* * *

(d) The template maintained by the Vermont School Safety Center shall include, at a minimum, hazard-specific provisions for:

(1) acute cardiac events in schools, including protocols that address:

(A) the use and maintenance of automated external defibrillator (AED) devices;

(B) the specific steps to reduce death from cardiac arrest during school activities or within school or district facilities, which shall be consistent with nationally recognized, evidence-based standards;

(C) the appropriate use of school personnel to respond to incidents involving an individual experiencing sudden cardiac arrest or a similar life-threatening emergency while on school grounds;

(D) implementation of AED placement and routine maintenance within each school or district facility, which shall be consistent with applicable nationally recognized, evidence-based standards, and which shall include a requirement for clearly marked and easily accessible AEDs at each athletic venue where practices or competitions are held;

(E) required staff training in CPR and AED use and practice drills regarding the cardiac response plan; and

(2) an athletic emergency action plan (AEAP) for all public or approved and recognized independent schools with an athletic department or organized athletic program. The AEAP shall detail the steps to be taken in response to a serious or life-threatening injury of a student participating in sports or other athletic activities. The AEAP established by public and independent schools

pursuant to this subdivision shall be consistent with the athletic emergency action plans policy established by the Vermont Principals' Association.

Sec. 13. IMPLEMENTATION

School districts and independent schools shall have a cardiac emergency response plan developed and ready for implementation beginning in the 2026–2027 school year.

* * * Energy Performance Contracting * * *

Sec. 14. 16 V.S.A. § 3448f is amended to read:

§ 3448f. ENERGY PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING;
AUTHORIZATION; STATE AID

* * *

(b) Authorization. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, a district may enter into a performance contract pursuant to this section for a period not to exceed 20 years. Cost-saving measures implemented under the contract shall comply with all State and local building codes.

(c) Selection of qualified contractor.

(1) Request for proposals. The district shall issue a request for proposals from individuals or entities interested in entering into a performance contract (who shall become the “contractor”), shall consider the proposals, and shall select a qualified contractor to engage in final contract negotiations. In developing the request for proposals and in selecting a qualified contractor, the district should make use of any assistance available from Efficiency Vermont, the School Energy Management Program of the Vermont Superintendents Association, and other similar entities. Factors to be considered in the final selection shall include contract terms, comprehensiveness of the proposal, comprehensiveness of cost-saving measures, experience of the contractor, quality of technical approach, and overall benefits to the district.

(2) Financial grade audit. The person selected pursuant to this subsection shall prepare a financial grade energy audit that, upon acceptance by the district, shall be part of the final performance contract executed with the district. If after preparation of the financial grade energy audit the district decides not to execute a performance contract with the contractor, the district shall pay the qualified contractor for costs incurred in preparing the financial grade energy audit. If, however, the district decides to execute a performance contract with the contractor, the costs of the financial grade energy audit shall be part of the costs of the performance contract.

~~(3) Voter approval of proposed performance contract. If the terms of the proposed performance contract permit the district to make payments to the contractor over a period of time exceeding 10 years, then the district shall not enter into a final performance contract until it receives approval from the electorate to do so. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

* * * School Library Material Selection Procedures * * *

Sec. 15. 16 V.S.A. § 1624 is amended to read:

§ 1624. SCHOOL LIBRARY MATERIAL SELECTION POLICY

(a) Each school board and each approved independent school shall develop, adopt, ensure the enforcement of, and make available in the manner described under subdivision 563(1) of this title a library material selection policy and. Each superintendent and head of school of an approved independent school shall develop and implement procedures for the reconsideration and retention of materials. The policy and procedures shall affirm the importance of intellectual freedom and be guided by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Vermont laws prohibiting discrimination in places of public accommodation, the 2004 American Library Association's Freedom to Read Statement, Vermont's the 2024 Vermont Freedom to Read Statement, and reflect Vermont's diverse people and history, including diversity of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, and political beliefs.

* * *

* * * Exception to Moratorium on New Approved Independent Schools * * *

Sec. 16. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. E.511.1 is amended to read:

Sec. E.511.1 MORATORIUM ON APPROVAL OF NEW APPROVED
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

(a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the State Board of Education shall be prohibited from approving an application for initial approval of an approved independent school until further direction by the General Assembly.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, a change in either tax status or conversion to a nonprofit organization by a therapeutic approved independent school, absent any other changes, shall not effect the approval status of the school.

* * * Cell Phone and Social Media Use in Schools * * *

Sec. 17. 16 V.S.A. chapter 9, subchapter 7 is added to read:

Subchapter 7. Cell Phone, Personal Electronic Device, and Social Media Use
in Schools

§ 581. INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly for all students in Vermont to access the benefits of a phone- and social media-free school environment, which promotes focus, improved mental health, and increased social cohesion.

§ 582. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Cell phone” means any device capable of using cellular technology to facilitate voice service through a commercial telecommunications company, regardless of whether the device can access internet services and electronic mail.

(2) “Individualized health care plan” means a written document developed by a school nurse, in collaboration with parents, students, and other relevant professionals, to outline specific health care needs and management strategies tailored to the unique health condition of a student.

(3) “Parent” means a parent of a student and includes legal guardians who are legally authorized to make education decisions for the student.

(4) “School” means any public school, approved independent school, or career and technical education center located in Vermont.

(5) “Student” means an individual currently enrolled in or registered at a school located in Vermont, as defined under subdivision (4) of this section.

§ 583. STUDENT USE OF CELL PHONES AND PERSONAL
ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN SCHOOLS

(a) Model policy.

(1) The Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Independent School Association, and a representative from the Vermont Coalition for Phone and Social Media Free Schools, shall develop, and review at least annually, a policy to, subject to the exceptions in subdivision (2) of this subsection, prohibit student use of cell phones and non-school-issued personal electronic devices that connect to cellular networks, the internet, or have wireless capabilities at school from arrival to dismissal.

(2) The model policy shall provide exceptions for students to use a cell phone or personal electronic device if such use is:

(A) required as part of a student's individualized health care plan, individualized education program, or 504 plan, which shall be documented according to applicable State and federal law; provided, however, that if such use is required to meet an international student's special education needs or as part of a disability accommodation, and the international student does not have an individualized education program or 504 plan, the need for such use shall be documented in a manner the school deems appropriate;

(B) approved by an administrator for an academic, athletic, or co-curricular purpose, for the most limited use reasonably possible; or

(C) required for compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 11431–11435.

(b) Policy adoption.

(1) Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, each school board shall develop, adopt, ensure the enforcement of, and make available in the manner described under subdivision 563(1) of this title a student cell phone and personal electronic device use policy that shall be at least as stringent as the model policy developed by the Secretary. Any school board that fails to adopt a policy shall be presumed to have adopted the most current model policy published by the Secretary.

(2) Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, each approved independent school shall develop, adopt, and ensure the enforcement of a student cell phone and personal electronic device use policy that shall be at least as stringent as the model policy developed by the Secretary. Any approved independent school that fails to adopt a policy shall be presumed to have adopted the most current model policy published by the Secretary.

§ 584. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN EDUCATION

Schools, school districts, and supervisory unions shall be prohibited from:

(1) utilizing social media for communication with students directly unless the program or platform is approved for such communication by the school district or independent school; provided, however, that any approved communication program or platform shall allow school officials to archive all communications and prevent all communications from being edited or deleted once a communication has been sent; and

(2) requiring students to use social media for out-of-school academic work, school sports, extracurricular clubs, or any other out-of-school school-sponsored activities.

Sec. 18. CELL PHONE AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICE
POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

(a) On or before January 1, 2026, the Agency of Education shall develop and publish a model student cell phone and personal electronic device use policy pursuant to Sec. 2 of this act.

(b) On or before July 1, 2026, school boards and approved independent schools shall adopt student cell phone and personal electronic device use policies as required pursuant to Sec. 2 of this act, to be effective in the 2026–2027 school year.

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 19. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) Secs. 8 (military-related postsecondary opportunities) and 13 (cardiac emergency response plans implementation) shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(b) Sec. 12 (16 V.S.A. § 1480(d)) shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

(c) This section and the remainder of this act shall take effect on passage.

(Committee vote: 6-0-0)

(No House amendments)

Reported favorably by Senator Watson for the Committee on Appropriations.

The Committee recommends that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Education.

(Committee vote: 7-0-0)

Amendment to proposal of amendment of the Committee on Education to H. 480 to be offered by Senators Ram Hinsdale and Williams

Senators Ram Hinsdale and Williams move to amend the proposal of amendment of the Committee on Education in Sec. 17, 16 V.S.A. chapter 9, subchapter 7, cell phone and social media use in schools, in section 583, in subdivision (a)(2)(B), following “approved by an administrator for an academic,” by inserting “school-sponsored”

**Amendment to proposal of amendment of the Committee on Education to
H. 480 to be offered by Senators Hardy, Collamore, Heffernan, Weeks
and Williams**

Senators Hardy, Collamore, Heffernan, Weeks and Williams move to amend the proposal of amendment of the Committee on Education by adding a new section to be Sec. 18a and its reader assistance heading to read as follows:

* * * CTE Attendance Outside Service Region * * *

**Sec. 18a. STUDENTS ATTENDING A CTE CENTER OUTSIDE THEIR
SERVICE REGION**

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Receiving district” means a school district receiving tuition on behalf of a student to whom it provides career technical education.

(2) “Sending district” means a school district paying tuition on behalf of a student to a school district that provides CTE courses.

(b) Secondary students may apply for enrollment into programs offered at CTE centers outside their service region when the center in their service region does not offer the program in which they wish to enroll or they are not able to enroll in the program of their choice. The school district of the students’ residence shall pay tuition for that enrollment pursuant to an agreement between the sending district and the receiving district that specifies how costs for such enrollments shall be covered.

(c) Beginning in the 2025–2026 school year, a regional CTE center may provide transportation to and from the technical center for students residing outside the technical center’s service region if the student is attending pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

(d) Any changes in the tuition charged by a career and technical center due to the acceptance of students residing outside of the CTE center’s service region shall be reconciled through the tuition reconciliation process outlined in State Board of Education rule 2393, Agency of Education, Career and Technical Education State Board Regulations (22-000-007).

(e) A school district that maintains a secondary school shall provide the requested directory information of enrolled students to a CTE center located outside the school district’s assigned CTE service region, for the limited purpose of the CTE center providing information to students and their parents about CTE center offerings in the following situations:

(1) the school district’s assigned CTE center has a waitlist for enrollment;

(2) students were denied entry to their assigned CTE center or a program operated by their assigned CTE center; or

(3) when a student has interest in a program not offered at the student's assigned CTE center.

House Proposal of Amendment

S. 109.

An act relating to miscellaneous judiciary procedures.

The House proposes to the Senate to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 3 V.S.A. § 164 is amended to read:

§ 164. ADULT COURT DIVERSION PROGRAM

(a) Purpose.

(1) The Attorney General shall develop and administer an adult court diversion program, for both pre-charge and post-charge referrals, available in all counties.

(2) The program shall be designed to provide a restorative option for persons alleged to have caused harm in violation of a criminal statute or who have been charged with violating a criminal statute as well as for victims or those acting on a victim's behalf who have been allegedly harmed by the ~~responsible party person referred to the program~~. The diversion program can accept referrals to the program as follows:

* * *

(c) Adult diversion program policy and referral requirements.

* * *

(3) Adult post-charge diversion requirements. Each State's Attorney, in cooperation with the Office of the Attorney General and the adult post-charge diversion program, shall develop clear criteria for deciding what types of offenses and offenders will be eligible for diversion; however, the State's Attorney shall retain final discretion over the referral of each case for diversion. All adult post-charge diversion programs receiving financial assistance from the Attorney General shall adhere to the following:

(A) The post-charge diversion program for adults shall only accept persons against whom charges have been filed and the court has found probable cause, but are not adjudicated.

(B) A prosecutor may refer a person to diversion either before or after arraignment and shall notify in writing the diversion program and the court of the prosecutor's of the referral to diversion.

* * *

Sec. 2. 4 V.S.A. § 71 is amended to read:

§ 71. APPOINTMENT AND TERM OF SUPERIOR JUDGES

(a) ~~There shall be 34 Superior judges, whose term of office shall,~~ The number of Superior Judges shall be as determined by the General Assembly. The term of office of a Superior Judge shall, except in the case of an appointment to fill a vacancy or unexpired term, begin on April 1 in the year of their appointment or retention and continue for six years.

* * *

Sec. 3. 4 V.S.A. § 1102 is amended to read:

§ 1102. JUDICIAL BUREAU; JURISDICTION

(a) The Judicial Bureau is created within the Judicial Branch under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

(b) The Judicial Bureau shall have jurisdiction of the following matters:

* * *

(4) Violations of 7 V.S.A. § 1005, relating to possession and procurement of tobacco products by a person under 21 years of age.

* * *

Sec. 4. 4 V.S.A. § 1106 is amended to read:

§ 1106. HEARING

* * *

(d) A Unless otherwise provided by law, a law enforcement officer may void or amend a complaint issued by that officer by so marking the complaint and returning it to the Bureau, regardless of whether the amended complaint is a lesser included violation. At the hearing, a law enforcement officer may, unless otherwise provided by law, void or amend a complaint issued by that officer in the discretion of that officer.

* * *

Sec. 5. 7 V.S.A. § 1005(c) is amended to read:

(c) A person under 21 years of age who misrepresents ~~his or her~~ the person's age by presenting false identification to purchase tobacco products, tobacco substitutes, or tobacco paraphernalia shall be ~~fin~~ subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$50.00 or provide up to 10 hours of community service, or both.

Sec. 6. 12 V.S.A. § 5 is amended to read:

§ 5. DISSEMINATION OF ELECTRONIC CASE RECORDS

(a) The Court shall not permit public access via the ~~Internet~~ internet to criminal, family, or probate case records. The Court may permit criminal justice agencies, as defined in 20 V.S.A. § 2056a, ~~Internet~~ internet access to criminal case records for criminal justice purposes, as defined in 20 V.S.A. § 2056a.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the Court shall provide licensed Vermont attorneys in good standing with access via the internet, through the Judiciary's public portal website or otherwise, to nonconfidential criminal, family, and probate case records.

(c) This section shall not be construed to prohibit the Court from providing electronic access to:

(1) court schedules of the Superior Court or opinions of the Criminal Division of the Superior Court;

(2) State agencies in accordance with data dissemination contracts entered into under Rule 12 of the Vermont Rules for Public Access to Court Records; or

(3) decisions, recordings of oral arguments, briefs, and printed cases of the Supreme Court.

Sec. 7. 12 V.S.A. § 4937 is amended to read:

§ 4937. ATTORNEY'S FEES

When a mortgage contains an agreement on the part of the mortgagor to pay the mortgagee, in the event of foreclosure, the attorney's fees incident thereto, and claim is made therefor in the complaint, ~~upon hearing,~~ the court in which the complaint is brought shall allow such fee as in its judgment is just.

Sec. 8. 13 V.S.A. § 4013 is amended to read:

§ 4013. ZIP GUNS; ~~SWITCHBLADE KNIVES~~

A person who possesses, sells, or offers for sale a weapon commonly known as a “zip” gun, ~~or a weapon commonly known as a switchblade knife, the blade of which is three inches or more in length,~~ shall be imprisoned not more than 90 days or fined not more than \$100.00, or both.

Sec. 9. EXPUNGEMENT OF CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS

The court shall order the expungement of criminal history records of convictions of 13 V.S.A. § 4013 for possessing, selling, or offering for sale a switchblade knife that occurred prior to July 1, 2025. The process and effect for expungement of these records shall be as provided for in 13 V.S.A. § 7606 and shall be completed by the court and all entities subject to the order not later than July 1, 2026.

Sec. 10. 13 V.S.A. § 5351(7) is amended to read:

(7) “Victim” means:

(A) a person who sustains injury or death as a direct result of the commission or attempted commission of a crime;

(B) an intervenor who is physically injured or killed in an attempt to assist the person described in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (7) or ~~the~~ police a protected professional as defined in subdivision 1028(d)(1) of this title;

(C) a surviving immediate family member of a homicide victim, including a spouse, domestic partner, parent, sibling, child, grandparent, or other survivor who may suffer severe emotional harm as a result of the victim’s death as determined on a case-by-case basis in the discretion of the Board; or

(D) a resident of this State who is injured or killed as the result of a crime committed outside the United States.

Sec. 11. 13 V.S.A. § 7282 is amended to read:

§ 7282. SURCHARGE

* * *

(c) ~~SIU-surecharge.~~ In addition to any penalty or fine imposed by the court for a criminal offense committed after July 1, 2009, the clerk of the court shall levy an additional surcharge of \$100.00 to be deposited in the General Fund, in support of the Specialized Investigative Unit Grants Board created in 24 V.S.A. § 1940(c), and used to pay for the costs of Specialized Investigative Units.

Sec. 12. 14 V.S.A. § 2 is amended to read:

§ 2. DEPOSIT OF WILL FOR SAFEKEEPING; DELIVERY; FINAL DISPOSITION

(a) A will may be deposited for safekeeping in the Probate Division of the Superior Court for the district in which the testator resides on payment to the court of the applicable fee required by ~~32 V.S.A. § 1434(a)(17)~~ 32 V.S.A. § 1434(a)(18). The register shall give to the testator a receipt, shall safely keep each will so deposited, and shall keep an index of the wills so deposited.

* * *

Sec. 13. 14 V.S.A. § 3068 is amended to read:

§ 3068. HEARING

* * *

(e)(1) If upon completion of the hearing and consideration of the record the court finds that the respondent is not a person in need of guardianship, it shall dismiss the petition and seal the records of the proceeding.

(2) If a motion to withdraw the petition is made before the final hearing, the court shall dismiss the petition and seal the records of the proceeding.

(f) If upon completion of the hearing and consideration of the record the court finds that the petitioner has proved by clear and convincing evidence that the respondent is a person in need of guardianship or will be a person in need of guardianship on attaining 18 years of age, it shall enter judgment specifying the powers of the guardian pursuant to sections 3069 and 3070 of this title and the duties of the guardian pursuant to section 3071 of this title.

(g) Any party to the proceeding before the court may appeal the court's decision in the manner provided in section 3080 of this title.

Sec. 14. 14 V.S.A. § 4051 is amended to read:

§ 4051. STATUTORY FORM POWER OF ATTORNEY

A document substantially in the following form may be used to create a statutory form power of attorney that has the meaning and effect prescribed by this chapter.

VERMONT STATUTORY FORM POWER OF ATTORNEY IMPORTANT INFORMATION

* * *

GRANT OF SPECIFIC AUTHORITY (OPTIONAL)

My agent MAY NOT do any of the following specific acts for me UNLESS I have INITIALED the specific authority listed below:

(CAUTION: Granting any of the following will give your agent the authority to take actions that could significantly reduce your property or change how your property is distributed at your death. INITIAL ONLY the specific authority you WANT to give your agent.)

() An agent who is not an ancestor, spouse, or descendant may exercise authority under this power of attorney to create in the agent or in an individual to whom the agent owes a legal obligation of support an interest in my property whether by gift, rights of survivorship, beneficiary designation, disclaimer, or otherwise

() Create, amend, revoke, or terminate an inter vivos, family, living, irrevocable, or revocable trust

() Consent to the modification or termination of a noncharitable irrevocable trust under 14A V.S.A. § 411

() Make a gift, subject to the limitations of 14 V.S.A. § 4047 (gifts) and any special instructions in this power of attorney

~~() Consent to the modification or termination of a noncharitable irrevocable trust under 14A V.S.A. § 411~~

() Create, amend, or change rights of survivorship

() Create, amend, or change a beneficiary designation

() Waive the principal's right to be a beneficiary of a joint and survivor annuity, including a survivor benefit under a retirement plan

() Exercise fiduciary powers that the principal has authority to delegate

() Authorize another person to exercise the authority granted under this power of attorney

() Disclaim or refuse an interest in property, including a power of appointment

() Exercise authority with respect to elective share under 14 V.S.A. § 319

() Exercise waiver rights under 14 V.S.A. § 323

() Exercise authority over the content and catalogue of electronic communications and digital assets under 14 V.S.A. chapter 125 (Vermont Revised Uniform Fiduciary Access to Digital Assets Act)

() Exercise authority with respect to intellectual property, including, without limitation, copyrights, contracts for payment of royalties, and trademarks

() Convey, or revoke or revise a grantee designation, by enhanced life estate deed pursuant to 27 V.S.A. chapter 6 or under common law.

* * *

Sec. 15. 14A V.S.A. § 1316 is amended to read:

§ 1316. OFFICE OF TRUST DIRECTOR

Unless the terms of a trust provide otherwise, the rules applicable to a trustee apply to a trust director regarding the following matters:

- (1) acceptance under section 701 of this title;
- (2) giving of bond to secure performance under section 702 of this title;
- (3) reasonable compensation under section 708 of this title;
- (4) resignation under section 705 of this title;
- (5) removal under section 706 of this title; and
- (6) vacancy and appointment of successor under section 704 of this title.

Sec. 16. 33 V.S.A. § 5204(b)(2)(A) is amended to read:

(2)(A)(i) The Family Division of the Superior Court shall hold a hearing under subsection (c) of this section to determine whether jurisdiction should be transferred to the Criminal Division under subsection (a) of this section if the delinquent act set forth in the petition is:

- (I) [Repealed.]
 - (II) human trafficking or aggravated human trafficking in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2652 or 2653;
 - (III) defacing a firearm's serial number in violation of ~~43 V.S.A. § 4024~~ 13 V.S.A. § 4026; or
 - (IV) straw purchasing of firearm in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 4025; and
- (ii) the child had attained 16 years of age but not 19 years of age at the time the act was alleged to have occurred.

Sec. 17. 33 V.S.A. § 5225 is amended to read:

§ 5225. PRELIMINARY HEARING; RISK ASSESSMENT

(a) Preliminary hearing. A preliminary hearing shall be held at the time and date specified on the citation or as otherwise ordered by the court. If a child is taken into custody prior to the preliminary hearing, the preliminary

hearing shall be at the time of the temporary care hearing. Counsel for the child shall be assigned prior to the preliminary hearing.

(b) Risk and needs screening.

(1) Prior to the preliminary hearing, the child shall be afforded an opportunity to undergo a risk and needs screening, which shall be conducted by the Department or by a community provider that has contracted with the Department to provide risk and need screenings for children alleged to have committed delinquent acts.

(2) If the child participates in such a screening, the Department or the community provider shall report the risk level result of the screening, the number and source of the collateral contacts made, and the recommendation for charging or other alternatives to the State's Attorney. The State's Attorney shall consider the results of the risk and needs screening in determining whether to file a charge. In lieu of filing a charge, the State's Attorney may refer a child directly to a youth-appropriate community-based provider that has been approved by the Department, which may include pre-charge diversion pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 163, a community justice center, or a balanced and restorative justice program. Referral to a community-based provider pursuant to this subsection shall not require the State's Attorney to file a charge. If the community-based provider does not accept the case or if the child fails to complete the program in a manner deemed satisfactory and timely by the provider, the child's case shall return to the State's Attorney for charging consideration.

* * *

Sec. 18. 27 V.S.A. § 348 is amended to read:

§ 348. INSTRUMENTS CONCERNING REAL PROPERTY VALIDATED

(a) When an instrument of writing shall have been on record in the office of the clerk in the proper town for a period of 15 years, and there is a defect in the instrument because it omitted to state any consideration or was not sealed, witnessed, acknowledged, validly acknowledged, or because a license to sell was not issued or is defective, the instrument shall, from and after the expiration of 15 years from the filing thereof for record, be valid. Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect any rights acquired by grantees, assignees, or encumbrancers under the instruments described in the preceding sentence, nor shall this section apply to conveyances or other instruments of writing, the validity of which is brought in question in any suit now pending in any courts of the State.

* * *

(d) A release, discharge, or assignment of mortgage interest executed by a commercial lender with respect to a one- to four-family residential real property, including a residential unit in a condominium or in a common interest community as defined in Title 27A, that recites authority to act on behalf of the record holder of the mortgage under a power of attorney but where the power of attorney is not of record shall have the same effect as if executed by the record holder of the mortgage unless, within three years after the instrument is recorded, an action challenging the release, discharge, or assignment is commenced and a copy of the complaint is recorded in the land records of the town where the release, discharge, or assignment is recorded. This subsection shall not apply to releases, discharges, or assignments obtained by fraud or forgery.

(e) A power of attorney made for the purpose of conveying, leasing, mortgaging, or affecting any interest in real property that has been acknowledged and signed in the presence of at least one witness shall be valid, notwithstanding its failure to comply with 14 V.S.A. § 3503 or the requirements of the Emergency Administrative Rules for Remote Notarial Acts adopted by the Vermont Secretary of State, unless within three years after recording, an action challenging its validity is commenced and a copy of the complaint is recorded in the land records of the town where the power of attorney is recorded. This subsection shall not apply to a power of attorney obtained by fraud or forgery.

(f) Notwithstanding section 305 of this title, a deed, mortgage, lease, or other instrument executed for the purpose of conveying or encumbering real property executed by a person purporting to act as the agent or attorney-in-fact for the party named in the deed, mortgage, lease, or other instrument that has been recorded for at least 15 years in the land records where the real property is located shall be valid even if no power of attorney authorizing and empowering an agent or attorney-in-fact appears of record, unless, within 15 years after recording, an action challenging the validity of the deed, mortgage, lease, or other instrument is commenced and a copy of the complaint is recorded in the land records of the town where the property is located. This subsection shall not apply to an instrument obtained by fraud or forgery.

Sec. 19. 32 V.S.A. § 1003 is amended to read:

§ 1003. STATE OFFICERS

* * *

(c) The officers of the Judicial Branch named in this subsection shall be entitled to annual salaries as follows:

	Annual Salary as of July 14, 2024	Annual Salary as of July 13, 2025
(1) Chief Justice of Supreme Court	\$214,024	\$225,581
(2) Each Associate Justice	\$204,264	\$215,294
(3) Administrative Chief Superior Judge	\$204,264	\$215,294
(4) Each Superior Judge	\$194,185	\$204,671
(5) [Repealed.]		
(6) Each Magistrate	\$146,413	\$154,319
(7) Each Judicial Bureau hearing officer	\$146,413	\$154,319

* * *

Sec. 20. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. 5 (forensic facility report) is amended to read:

Sec. 5. [Deleted.]

Sec. 21. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 40, Sec. 4 is amended to read:

Sec. 4. REPEALS

* * *

(c) 28 V.S.A. § 126 (Coordinated Justice Reform Advisory Council) is repealed on ~~July 1, 2028~~ July 1, 2025.

Sec. 22. [Deleted.]

Sec. 23. [Deleted.]

Sec. 24. FIREARM SURRENDER ORDER COMPLIANCE WORKING GROUP; REPORT

(a) Creation. The Office of the Attorney General shall convene a Firearm Surrender Order Compliance Working Group to develop a uniform process to ensure compliance with court orders to surrender firearms. The Working Group shall examine the statutory or policy changes necessary to create a uniform process to monitor compliance, support entities charged with storing and returning surrendered firearms pursuant to court orders, and identify a

stable and reliable funding source for any additional resources needed to monitor compliance.

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

(1) the Attorney General or designee, who shall be the chair;

(2) the Chief Superior Court Judge or designee;

(3) the Defender General or designee;

(4) one State's Attorney or designee, appointed by the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs;

(5) a member, appointed by the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence;

(6) a member of the Vermont State Police, appointed by the Commissioner of Public Safety;

(7) a police chief, appointed by the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police; and

(8) a federal firearms licensee, appointed by the Attorney General.

(c) Consultation. The Working Group shall consult with stakeholders including:

(1) the Commissioner of Corrections;

(2) family law practitioners;

(3) victim advocates;

(4) advocates from culturally specific advocacy organizations that work with domestic violence victims;

(5) the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs;

(6) the Vermont Office of the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms;

(7) the Vermont Medical Society;

(8) the Commissioner of Mental Health;

(9) the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services;

(10) the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence; and

(11) the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife.

(d) Report. On or before November 15, 2025, the Working Group shall report its recommendations to the House and Senate Committees on Judiciary

and to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee. The report shall include:

(1) a workable statewide compliance model that is adaptable to both the Family and Criminal Divisions of the Superior Courts and that ensures:

(A) accountability of respondents and defendants while addressing safety needs of the plaintiffs and victims; and

(B) proper storage and return of firearms surrendered pursuant to court orders; and

(2) recommendations for any legislative changes necessary to support the model.

(e) Meetings. The Working Group shall meet not more than six times.

(f) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Working Group who are not employees of the State of Vermont or who are not otherwise compensated or reimbursed for their attendance shall be entitled to compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than six meetings.

Sec. 25. 15A V.S.A. § 3-504 is amended to read:

§ 3-504. GROUNDS FOR TERMINATING RELATIONSHIP OF PARENT
AND CHILD

(a) If a respondent answers or appears at the hearing and asserts parental rights, the court shall proceed with the hearing expeditiously. If the court finds, upon clear and convincing evidence, that any one of the following grounds exists and that termination is in the best interests of the minor, the court shall order the termination of any parental relationship of the respondent to the minor:

* * *

(2) In the case of a minor over six months of age at the time the petition is filed, the respondent did not exercise parental responsibility for a period of at least six months immediately preceding the filing of the petition. In making a determination under this subdivision, the court shall consider all relevant factors, which may include the respondent's failure to:

(A) make reasonable and consistent payments, in accordance with the respondent's financial means, for the support of the minor, although legally obligated to do so;

(B) regularly communicate or visit with the minor; or

(C) during any time the minor was not in the physical custody of the other parent, manifest an ability and willingness to assume legal and physical custody of the minor.

* * *

Sec. 25a. 33 V.S.A. § 5231(d) is amended to read:

(d) Termination of parental rights. If the Commissioner or the attorney for the child seeks an order terminating parental rights of one or both parents and transfer of custody to the Commissioner without limitation as to adoption, the court shall consider the best interests of the child in accordance with section 5114 of this title. The Department's Family Services Division shall not consider payment of child support to the Family Services Division to offset the cost of foster care as a factor in a petition to terminate parental rights.

Sec. 25b. 33 V.S.A. § 5317(d) is amended to read:

(d) Termination of parental rights. If the Commissioner or the attorney for the child seeks an order at disposition terminating the parental rights of one or both parents and transfer of legal custody to the Commissioner without limitation as to adoption, the court shall consider the best interests of the child in accordance with section 5114 of this title. The Department's Family Services Division shall not consider payment of child support to the Family Services Division to offset the cost of foster care as a factor in a petition to terminate parental rights.

Sec. 26. Sec. 1. 15 V.S.A. § 202 is amended to read:

§ 202. PENALTY FOR DESERTION OR NONSUPPORT

A married person who, without just cause, shall desert or willfully neglect or refuse to provide for the support and maintenance of ~~his or her~~ the person's spouse and children, leaving them in destitute or necessitous circumstances or a parent who, without lawful excuse, shall desert or willfully neglect or refuse to provide for the support and maintenance of ~~his or her~~ the child ~~or an adult child possessed of sufficient pecuniary or physical ability to support his or her parents, who unreasonably neglects or refuses to provide such support when the parent is destitute, unable to support himself or herself, and resident in this State,~~ shall be imprisoned not more than two years or fined not more than \$300.00, or both. Should a fine be imposed, the court may order the same to be paid in whole or in part to the needy spouse, ~~parent,~~ or to the guardian, custodian, or trustee of the child. The Office of Child Support attorneys, in addition to any other duly authorized person, may prosecute cases under this section in Vermont Superior Court.

Sec. 27. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 19, Sec. 5 is amended to read:

Sec. 5. [Deleted.]

Sec. 28. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 19, Sec. 6 is amended to read:

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATES

* * *

(b) ~~Sec. 5 (marriage licenses; 32 V.S.A. § 1712) shall take effect on July 1, 2025.~~ [Deleted.]

* * *

Sec. 29. 13 V.S.A. § 7556 is amended to read:

§ 7556. APPEAL FROM CONDITIONS OF RELEASE OR BAIL
REVOCATION DENIAL

(a) A person who is detained, or whose release on a condition requiring ~~him or her~~ the person to return to custody after specified hours is continued, after review of ~~his or her~~ the person's application pursuant to subsection 7554(d) or (e) of this title by a judicial officer, other than a judge of the court having original jurisdiction over the offense with which ~~he or she~~ the person is charged or a Justice of the Supreme Court, may move the court having original jurisdiction over the offense with which ~~he or she~~ the person is charged to amend the order. The motion shall be determined promptly.

(b) When a person is detained after a court denies a motion under subsection (a) of this section or when conditions of release have been imposed or amended by the judge of the court having original jurisdiction over the offense charged, an appeal may be taken to a single Justice of the Supreme Court who may hear the matter or at ~~his or her~~ the Justice's discretion refer it to the entire Supreme Court for hearing. No further appeal may lie from the ruling of a single Justice in matters to which this subsection applies. Any order so appealed shall be affirmed if it is supported by the proceedings below. If the order is not supported, the Supreme Court or single Justice hearing the matter may remand the case for a further hearing or may, with or without additional evidence, order the person released. The appeal shall be determined forthwith.

(c)(1) When a person is released, with or without bail or other conditions of release, an appeal may be taken by the State to a single Justice of the Supreme Court who may hear the matter or at ~~his or her~~ the Justice's discretion refer it to the entire Supreme Court for hearing. No further appeal may lie from the ruling of a single Justice in matters to which this subsection applies. Any order so appealed shall be affirmed if it is supported by the

proceedings below. If the order is not supported, the Supreme Court or single Justice hearing the matter may remand the case for a further hearing or may, with or without additional evidence, modify or vacate the order. The appeal shall be determined ~~forthwith~~ promptly.

(2) When a request to revoke bail pursuant to section 7575 of this title is denied, a prosecutor may appeal the court's order in accordance with the procedure outlined in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(d) A person held without bail under section 7553a of this title prior to trial shall be entitled to an independent, second evidentiary hearing on the merits of the denial of bail, which shall be a hearing de novo by a single Justice of the Supreme Court forthwith. Pursuant to 4 V.S.A. § 22 the Chief Justice may appoint and assign a retired justice or judge with ~~his or her~~ the retired justice's or judge's consent or a Superior judge or District judge to a special assignment on the Supreme Court to conduct that de novo hearing. Such hearing de novo shall be an entirely new evidentiary hearing without regard to the record compiled before the trial court; except, the parties may stipulate to the admission of portions of the trial court record.

(e) A person held without bail prior to trial shall be entitled to review of that determination by a panel of three Supreme Court Justices within seven business days after bail is denied.

Sec. 30. 28 V.S.A. § 818 is amended to read:

§ 818. EARNED TIME; REDUCTION OF TERM

* * *

(b) The earned time program implemented pursuant to this section shall comply with the following standards:

* * *

(4) The Department shall:

(A) ensure that all victims of record are notified of the earned time program at its outset and made aware of the option to receive notifications from the Department pursuant to this subdivision;

(B) provide timely notice not less frequently than every 90 days to the offender, and to any victim who opts to receive the notice, any time the offender receives a reduction in ~~his or her~~ the offender's term of supervision pursuant to this section;

(C) maintain a system that documents and records all such reductions in each offender's permanent record; and

(D) record any reduction in an offender's term of supervision pursuant to this section on a monthly basis and ensure that victims who want information regarding changes in scheduled an offender's minimum release dates date have access to such information.

* * *

Sec. 31. VICTIM NOTIFICATION SYSTEM TASK FORCE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Victim Notification System Task Force to review and improve the responsiveness of Vermont's victim notification system.

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

(1) the Commissioner of Corrections or designee;

(2) the Executive Director of the Center for Crime Victim Services or designee;

(3) the Executive Director of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs or designee;

(4) a member, appointed by the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence;

(5) the Victims Service Director of the Vermont State Police;

(6) two persons who are either victims or survivors of crimes, appointed by the Center for Crime Victim Services; and

(7) a member, appointed by the Commissioner of Corrections, who is familiar with the capability and technical operations of the VINE system.

(c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall study the current state of Vermont's victim notification system, including:

(1) improving victims' accessibility to information;

(2) ensuring that the entire notification process is trauma-informed, including all notifications, communications, and informational materials;

(3) expanding the use of automated notification systems in order to increase options and maximize communication choices for victims and survivors; and

(4) recommendations for necessary training and resources.

(d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Department of Corrections.

(e) Report. On or before November 15, 2025, the Task Force shall submit its findings and recommendations as a written report in the form of proposed legislation to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee, the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on Judiciary, and the Senate Committees on Institutions and on Judiciary.

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Commissioner of Corrections or designee shall call the first meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before August 1, 2025.

(2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at the first meeting.

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

(4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on February 15, 2026.

Sec. 32. ADULT INVOLUNTARY GUARDIANSHIP WORKING GROUP; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Adult Involuntary Guardianship Working Group to study jurisdiction of proceedings involving the involuntary guardianship of adults. The Working Group shall examine the advisability of consolidating adult involuntary guardianships under 14 V.S.A. chapter 111, subchapter 12 (“Title 14 involuntary guardianships”) with guardianships for persons with developmental disabilities under 18 V.S.A. chapter 215 (“Title 18 guardianships”), or otherwise amending the statutes to ensure that respondents under Title 18 guardianships have access to voluntary guardianships that is equal to the access to voluntary guardianships available under Title 14.

(b) Membership. The Adult Involuntary Guardianship Working Group shall be composed of the following members:

(1) the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living or designee;

(2) the Chief Superior Court Judge or designee;

(3) the Court Administrator or designee;

(4) a superior judge with experience in Title 18 guardianships, appointed by the Chief Justice;

(5) a probate judge, appointed by the Chief Justice;

(6) a guardian ad litem, appointed by the Court Administrator;

(7) an attorney with experience in adult guardianships, appointed by the Vermont Bar Association;

(8) an attorney with experience in adult guardianships, appointed by Vermont Legal Aid;

(9) an independent mental health evaluator, appointed by the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living; and

(10) a member, appointed by the Vermont Center for Independent Living.

(c) Meetings.

(1) The Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living shall call the first meeting of the Working Group to occur on or before August 1, 2025.

(2) The Working Group shall select a chair from among its members at the first meeting.

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

(d) Report.

(1)(A) On or before December 15, 2025, the Working Group shall report its recommendations, including any proposed legislative changes, to the House and Senate Committees on Judiciary, the House Committee on Human Services, and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.

(B) The report shall recommend whether:

(i) Title 14 involuntary guardianship proceedings and Title 18 guardianship proceedings should be consolidated in one division of the Superior Court; or

(ii) Title 14 involuntary guardianship proceedings and Title 18 guardianship proceedings should remain in separate divisions of the Superior Court as provided for in existing law.

(2) With respect to subdivisions (1)(B)(i) and (ii) of this subsection (d), the report shall address:

(A) the judicial resources and oversight that would be required;

(B) whether, notwithstanding 12 V.S.A. § 2553 or 2555, the Vermont Supreme Court should have appellate jurisdiction over guardianship proceedings;

(C) the relationship between guardianships under subdivisions (1)(B)(i) and (ii) of this subsection (d) and voluntary guardianships under 14 V.S.A. § 2671;

(D) any legislative changes that would need to be made under either recommendation to ensure that respondents under Title 18 guardianships have access to voluntary guardianships that is equal to the access to voluntary guardianships available under Title 14; and

(E) any other matters deemed relevant by the Working Group, including any matters not currently under the jurisdiction of Title 14 guardianships or Title 18 guardianships.

Sec. 33. 4 V.S.A. § 39 is amended to read:

§ 39. CAPITAL BUDGET REQUESTS; COUNTY COURTHOUSES

(a) On or before October 1 each year, any county requesting capital funds for its courthouse, or court operations, shall submit a request to the Court Administrator. As used in this subsection, “court operations” does not include operating expenses.

(b) The Court Administrator shall evaluate requests based on the following criteria:

(1) whether the funding request is consistent with a capital program developed pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 133(e)(3);

(2) whether the project that is the subject of the request has been included in the list of capital projects in the county’s budget pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 133(e)(1), and, if so, the description of the project included in the budget;

(3) whether the county has established a capital reserve fund pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 133(e)(3), and, if so, the amount of annual contributions the county has made to the fund;

(4) whether the funding request relates to an emergency that will affect the court operations and the administration of justice;

~~(2)~~(5) whether there is a State-owned courthouse in the county that could absorb court activities in lieu of this capital investment;

~~(3)~~(6) whether the county consistently has invested in major maintenance in the courthouse;

~~(4)~~(7) whether the request relates to a State-mandated function;

~~(5)~~(8) whether the request diverts resources of other current Judiciary capital priorities;

~~(6)~~(9) whether the request is consistent with the long-term capital needs of the Judiciary, including providing court services adapted to modern needs and requirements; and

~~(7)~~(10) any other criteria as deemed appropriate by the Court Administrator.

(c) Based on the criteria described in subsection (b) of this section, the Court Administrator shall make a recommendation to the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services regarding whether the county's request should be included as part of the Judiciary's request for capital funding in the Governor's annual proposed capital budget request.

(d) On or before January 15 of each year, the Court Administrator shall advise the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions of all county requests received and the Court Administrator's recommendations for the proposed capital budget request.

Sec. 34. REPORT

On or before January 15, 2026, the Court Administrator and a representative of the Association of County Judges appointed by the President of that Association shall jointly report to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions on the progress made to implement the provisions of Sec. 33 of this act. The report shall include a description of the steps taken and processes considered, and any proposed legislative changes necessary, to ensure that capital budget requests for county courthouses include the information required by Sec. 33 of this act.

Sec. 35. 23 V.S.A. § 1210(c) is amended to read:

(c) Second offense. A person convicted of violating section 1201 of this title who has been convicted of another violation of that section within the last 20 years shall be fined not more than \$1,500.00 or imprisoned not more than two years, or both. At least ~~200~~ 80 hours of community service shall be performed, or 60 consecutive hours of the sentence of imprisonment shall be served and may not be suspended or deferred or served as a supervised sentence, except that credit for a sentence of imprisonment may be received for time served in a residential alcohol facility pursuant to sentence if the program is successfully completed.

Sec. 36. REPEAL

Sec. 35 of this act shall be repealed on July 1, 2028.

Sec. 37. FAMILY FORENSIC EVALUATOR RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) The General Assembly requests that the Chief Superior Judge, the Director of the Office of Professional Regulation, and the Executive Director of the Vermont Psychological Association work collaboratively to examine the following:

(1) the extent of the need for and geographic distribution of family forensic evaluators in complex parental rights and responsibilities cases heard in the Family Division;

(2) barriers to increasing the availability of family forensic evaluators in Vermont and whether protections regarding ethical complaints are warranted; and

(3) strategies for increasing the number of family forensic evaluators in Vermont.

(b) The General Assembly requests that the parties listed in subsection (a) of this section submit their recommendations to the General Assembly on or before November 1, 2025.

Sec. 38. CHILD AND PARENT LEGAL REPRESENTATION; TASK FORCE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Child and Parent Legal Representation Task Force to study the need and viability of an improved legal representation system for children and families who are involved in judicial or administrative proceedings concerning Children in Need of Care or Supervision (CHINS) or substantiations of abuse or neglect.

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

(1) the Chief Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court or designee, who shall be the chair;

(2) the Court Administrator or designee;

(3) the Commissioner for Children and Families or designee;

(4) the Defender General or designee;

(5) the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate or designee;

(6) the Executive Director of Voices for Vermont's Children or designee;

(7) the Executive Director of the Vermont Parent Representation Center, Inc.;

(8) the Attorney General or designee; and

(9) the Executive Director of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs or designee.

(c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall assess and determine whether reform of Vermont's legal representation for children and families is necessary by exploring the following topics:

(1) standards recommended by the American Bar Association, U.S. Children's Bureau, and the *Study of CHINS Case Processing in Vermont* authored by the National Center for State Courts and published in May of 2021;

(2) compliance with funding and reporting requirements in order for Vermont to leverage funding under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act;

(3) identifying the processes and amounts of Title IV-E funds and other funding sources to support any reformed system;

(4) using an interdisciplinary model of representation, including pay scales, performance measures, supervision and evaluation processes, and recommended caseloads for attorneys, social workers, and other child and family representatives; and

(5) other topics relevant to creating a reformed child and parent representation system.

(d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Court Administrator's Office.

(e) Report. On or before December 15, 2025, the Task Force shall submit a report that proposes any necessary reforms to the legal representation system for children and families who are involved in CHINS proceedings or substantiations of abuse or neglect, along with proposed legislation to implement such reforms to the Senate Committees on Judiciary and on Health and Welfare and the House Committees on Judiciary and on Human Services.

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court or designee shall call the first meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before August 1, 2025.

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

(3) The Task Force shall cease to exist on May 15, 2026.

Sec. 39. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on passage, except that Sec. 1 shall take effect on July 2, 2025 and Sec. 33 shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

Joint Resolution For Action

H.C.R. 151.

House concurrent resolution congratulating Casella Waste Systems, Inc. on the company's 50th anniversary.

PENDING QUESTION: Shall the resolution be adopted in concurrence?

Text of the resolution is as follows:

Whereas, on a chilly day in April 1975, Doug Casella took a pickup truck, which he had purchased with money from jobs he held as a teenager, and began collecting garbage from a few customers in Rutland and the Killington region, and in 1976, his younger brother, John Casella, joined the company (Casella), and

Whereas, in 1977, Casella inaugurated Vermont's first recycling facility, and this bold decision triggered the development of a waste and resource management infrastructure throughout the northeastern states, and

Whereas, in 1997, on an inauspicious morning immediately following a major stock market downturn, Casella launched an extremely successful public stock offering, and today, the corporation is listed on the NASDAQ exchange under the symbol "CWST," and

Whereas, since 2000, resource management and sustainability have become increasingly important corporate objectives, and

Whereas, in 2025, Casella, now officially known as Casella Waste Systems, Inc., has over 5,000 employees, maintains operations in 10 states, and serves more than 1 million customers in 46 states, and

Whereas, Casella was a charter member of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2005 Climate Leaders program, and today, it includes EV collection trucks in its fleet, and

Whereas, in partnership with the University of Vermont, Casella established the Casella Center for Circular Economy and Sustainability, an internationally recognized research program for the study of sustainable waste and materials management, and

Whereas, Casella was delighted to be listed as one of *Forbes Magazine's* 2025 America's Best Midsized Employers; the only honoree in the waste management-recycling industry and the only Vermont headquartered company, so recognized, and

Whereas, in 2020, the company established the Kenneth A. Heir Sr. CDL Training Center, named after Casella's first employee, which has trained over 300 employees as commercially licensed drivers, and

Whereas, the Casella Foundation supervises the company's giving initiatives and annually contributes over \$2 million to local communities, and the company's employees volunteer more than 14,000 hours each year towards worthy causes, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly congratulates Casella Waste Systems, Inc. on the company's 50th anniversary, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Casella Waste Systems, Inc.

NOTICE CALENDAR

Second Reading

Favorable with Proposal of Amendment

H. 231.

An act relating to technical corrections to fish and wildlife statutes.

Reported favorably with recommendation of proposal of amendment by Senator Hardy for the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

The Committee recommends that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. § 4001 is amended to read:

§ 4001. DEFINITIONS

Words and phrases used in this part, unless otherwise provided, shall be construed to mean as follows:

* * *

(6) ~~Pickereel: the great northern pike, chain pickerel, or muskellunge.~~
[Repealed.]

(7) ~~Pike perch: walleyed or yellow pike.~~ [Repealed.]

* * *

Sec. 2. 10 V.S.A. § 4905 is amended to read:

§ 4905. BIRDS' NESTS AND EGGS; DESTROYING OR ROBBING

A person shall not take or ~~wilfully~~ willfully destroy the nests or eggs of wild birds, other than rock pigeons, the English sparrow, starling, or purple grackle house sparrows, or European starlings, except when necessary to protect buildings and the nests to be removed contain no eggs or chicks and are no longer being used by birds for feeding, or when taken as provided in section 4152 of this title.

Sec. 3. 10 V.S.A. § 4502 is amended to read:

§ 4502. UNIFORM POINT SYSTEM; REVOCATION OF LICENSE

(a) A uniform point system that assigns points to those convicted of a violation of a provision of this part is established. The conviction report from the court shall be prima facie evidence of the points assessed. In addition to other penalties assessed for violation of fish and wildlife statutes, the Commissioner shall suspend licenses issued under this part that are held by a person who has accumulated 10 or more points in accordance with the provisions of subsection (c) of this section.

(b) A person violating provisions of this part shall receive points for convictions in accordance with the following schedule (all sections are in this title of the Vermont Statutes Annotated):

(1) Except for biological collection violations determined to be nonpoint violations under the rules of the Board, five points shall be assessed for any violation of statutes or rules adopted under this part except those listed in subdivisions (2) and (3) of this subsection.

(2) Ten points shall be assessed for:

* * *

(I) ~~§ 4706. Snaring animals~~ [Repealed.]

* * *

(Y) ~~Appendix § 2; Appendix § 33, section 14.3.~~ Reporting of big game

* * *

(II) ~~Appendix § 37, as it applies to annual deer limits~~ section 10. Novice season

(JJ) § 4742a. Youth deer hunting weekend. The points shall be assessed solely against the adult who is accompanying the youth hunter.

(KK) § 4908. Youth turkey hunting weekend. The points assessed against the adult accompanying the youth hunter.

(LL) § 4256. Mentored hunting license. The points shall be assessed against the licensed adult who is accompanying the individual holding the mentored hunting license.

(MM) § 4827a. Feeding a black bear

(NN) § 4826. Taking deer doing damage

(OO) § 22a. Taking turkey doing damage

(PP) § 35. Taking moose doing damage

(QQ) ~~Appendix § 22, section 6.7; Appendix § 33, section 13.1(g); Appendix § 37, section 7.7. Possession or transport of a cocked crossbow in or on a motor vehicle, motorboat, airplane, snowmobile, or other motor-propelled vehicle [Repealed.]~~

(RR) ~~Appendix § 7, section 6.3(b). Hunting bear with any dog not listed on the permit [Repealed.]~~

* * *

(3) Twenty points shall be assessed for:

(A) ~~§ 4192. General powers and duties; failure to obey warden [Repealed.]~~

* * *

(I) § 4745. Taking deer big game out of season prohibited

* * *

(O) Appendix § 7, sections 4.2, ~~5.1, 5.2,~~ 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3(b), 6.3(d), 6.3(e), ~~6.4, 6.5(c), 6.5(d),~~ 7.1, and 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4. Bear, unauthorized taking

(P) Appendix § 22. Turkey season, excluding: requirements for youth turkey hunting season; ~~section 6.2, and~~ size of shot used or possessed; ~~and section 6.7, transport of cocked crossbow~~

* * *

(U) Appendix § 37. Deer management rule, excluding requirements for youth deer hunting weekend; requirements for novice season; limitations on feeding of deer; ~~section 7.7, transport of cocked crossbow;~~ reporting big game; and section 11.0, ban of urine and other natural lures

* * *

(W) ~~§ 4711. Crossbow hunting~~ [Repealed.]

(X) ~~Appendix § 4. Hunting with a crossbow without a permit or license~~ [Repealed.]

* * *

(Z) ~~Appendix § 44, section 4.6.~~ Use of tooth jawed traps

(AA) ~~Appendix § 44, section 4.11.~~ Taking furbearers with poison

(BB) ~~Appendix § 44, section 4.12.~~ Taking furbearers from a den

(CC) § 4716. Holding or conducting a coyote-hunting competition

(DD) § 4706. Snaring animals

* * *

Sec. 4. 10 V.S.A. § 4705 is amended to read:

§ 4705. SHOOTING FROM MOTOR VEHICLES OR AIRCRAFT;
SHOOTING FROM OR ACROSS HIGHWAY; PERMIT

(a) A person shall not take or attempt to take a wild animal by shooting from a motor vehicle, motorboat, airplane, snowmobile, or other motor-propelled craft or any vehicle drawn by a motor-propelled vehicle except as permitted under subsection (e) of this section.

(b)(1) A person shall not carry or possess while in or on a vehicle propelled by mechanical power or drawn by a vehicle propelled by mechanical power within the right-of-way of a public highway any of the following:

(A) a rifle, air rifle, arrow rifle, pre-charged pneumatic rifle, or shotgun containing a loaded cartridge or, shell, or other projectile in the chamber, mechanism, or in a magazine, or clip within a rifle or shotgun, or;

(B) a muzzle-loading rifle or muzzle-loading shotgun that has been charged with powder and projectile and the ignition system of which has been enabled by having an affixed or attached percussion cap, primer, battery, or priming powder, except as permitted under subsections (d) and (e) of this section; and

(C) unless it is uncocked, a crossbow in or on a motor vehicle, motorboat, airplane, snowmobile, or other motor-propelled craft or any vehicle drawn by a motor-propelled vehicle except as permitted under subsection (e) of this section.

(2) A person who possesses a rifle, crossbow, or shotgun, including a muzzle-loading rifle or muzzle-loading shotgun, in or on a vehicle propelled by mechanical power, or drawn by a vehicle propelled by mechanical power

within a right-of-way of a public highway shall upon demand of an enforcement officer exhibit the firearm for examination to determine compliance with this section.

(3) As used in this subsection:

(A) "Air rifle" means a .22 or larger caliber device that fires a bullet solely by the use of unignited compressed gas as the propellant.

(B) "Arrow rifle" means a device that fires an arrow or bolt solely by the use of unignited compressed gas as the propellant.

(C) "Pre-charged pneumatic rifle" means an air rifle or arrow rifle for which the propellant is supplied or introduced by means of a source that is physically separate from the air gun or arrow gun.

* * *

Sec. 5. 23 V.S.A. § 3317(b) is amended to read:

(b) Penalty or fine; \$300.00 or \$1,000.00 maximum. A person who violates a requirement under 10 V.S.A. § 1454 shall be subject to enforcement under 10 V.S.A. § 8007 or 8008 or a fine under this chapter, provided that the person shall be assessed a penalty or fine of not more than \$1,000.00 for each violation. A person who violates a rule adopted under 10 V.S.A. § 1424 shall be subject to enforcement under 10 V.S.A. chapter 201 or a fine under this chapter, provided that the person shall be assessed a penalty of not more than \$300.00 for each violation. A person who violates any of the following sections of this title shall be subject to a penalty of not more than \$300.00 for each violation:

* * *

Sec. 6. 4 V.S.A. § 1102 is amended to read:

§ 1102. JUDICIAL BUREAU; JURISDICTION

(a) The Judicial Bureau is created within the Judicial Branch under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

(b) The Judicial Bureau shall have jurisdiction of the following matters:

* * *

(19) Violations of rules adopted under 10 V.S.A. § 1424, relating to the use of public waters.

Sec. 7. 10 V.S.A. § 4255 is amended to read:

§ 4255. LICENSE FEES

(a) Vermont residents may apply for licenses on forms provided by the Commissioner. Fees for each license shall be:

* * *

(c) A permanent or free license may be secured on application to the Department by a person qualifying as follows:

* * *

(2) A person who is legally blind who is a Vermont resident may receive a free permanent fishing license upon submittal of proper proof of blindness as the Commissioner shall require. A person who is legally blind who is a resident in a state that provides a reciprocal privilege for Vermont residents may receive a free one-year fishing license.

(3) A Vermont resident with paraplegia as defined in subdivision 4001(30) of this title or a permanent, severe, physical mobility disability certified by a physician may receive a free permanent fishing license or, if the person qualifies for a hunting license, a free combination hunting and fishing license. A person with paraplegia or a person certified by a physician to have permanent, severe, physical mobility disability who is a resident of a state that provides a reciprocal privilege for Vermont residents may receive a free one-year fishing license or, if the person qualifies for a hunting license, a free one-year combination fishing and hunting license.

(4) A Vermont resident who is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces and who is, or ever has been, 60 percent disabled as a result of a service-connected disability may receive a free fishing, hunting, or combination hunting and fishing license that shall include all big game licenses, except for a moose license, upon presentation of a certificate issued by the veterans' administration so certifying. A resident of a state that provides a reciprocal privilege for Vermont veterans and who would qualify for a free license under this subdivision if the person were a Vermont resident may receive a free one-year fishing, hunting, or combination hunting and fishing license.

(5) A person participating in a fishing tournament for Special Olympics may receive a free fishing license valid for that event.

* * *

(7) A certified citizen of a Native American Indian tribe that has been recognized by the State pursuant to 1 V.S.A. chapter 23 may receive free of charge one or all of the permanent fishing, hunting, or trapping licenses set

forth in subdivisions (1)(A)–(D) of this subsection if qualified for the license and upon submission of a current and valid tribal identification card.

(8) A person with developmental disabilities who is a Vermont resident may receive a free permanent fishing license upon submission to the Commissioner of a statement signed by the person’s treating health care provider, as that term is defined in 18 V.S.A. § 9402, certifying that the person meets the definition of a person with development disabilities. “A person with developmental disabilities” has the same meaning as in 18 V.S.A. § 9302.

* * *

(n) The Commissioner shall maintain an accounting of lost revenue due to the issuance of free licenses. The Commissioner annually on or before January 15 shall submit to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Finance and the House Committees on Appropriations and on Ways and Means an accounting of lost revenue from the previous calendar year due to the issuance of free licenses.

Sec. 8. 10 V.S.A. § 4251 is amended to read:

§ 4251. TAKING WILD ANIMALS AND FISH; LICENSE

(a) Except as provided in sections 4253 and 4254b of this title, a person shall not take wild animals or fish without first having procured a license therefor; provided, however, that a person under 15 years of age may take fish in accordance with this part and regulations of the Board, without first having procured a license therefor.

(b) The Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife may designate two days each calendar year as “free fishing days” for which no license shall be required. One day shall occur in the open water fishing season and one day shall occur during the ice fishing season.

(c) The Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife may designate Labor Day weekend each year as “free mentored fishing weekend,” during which one unlicensed angler can fish with one licensed angler throughout this three-day period.

Sec. 9. 10 V.S.A. § 4613 is amended to read:

§ 4613. FISHING TOURNAMENTS

(a) No person or organization shall hold a fishing tournament on the waters of the State without first obtaining a permit from the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Tournaments held on the Connecticut River, excluding Moore and Comerford Reservoirs, that do not utilize an access area in Vermont are not required to obtain a permit from the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

(b) A fishing tournament means a contest in which anglers pay a fee to enter and in which the entrants compete for a prize based on the quality or size of the fish they catch. A contest may run multiple days, but the days must be consecutive for that contest to be considered a single event. A tournament that limits the entrants to people below 15 years of age or a tournament held as part of a Special Olympics program shall be exempt from paying the fee required under subsection (d) of this section.

(c) The Commissioner shall adopt rules that establish the procedure for implementation of this section. The rules shall include a provision that an angler may not enter a fish that was caught and confined to an enclosed area prior to the beginning of the tournament.

(d) The Commissioner shall charge a fee ~~of \$50.00~~ based on the number of participants for each permit issued under this section and shall deposit the fee collected into the Fish and Wildlife Fund. Tournaments with up to 25 participants shall pay a fee of \$10.00; tournaments with 26 to 50 participants shall pay a fee of \$30.00; and tournaments with more than 50 participants shall pay a fee of \$100.00.

Sec. 10. 10 V.S.A. § 4518 is amended to read:

§ 4518. BIG GAME VIOLATIONS; THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES; SUSPENSION; VIOLATIONS

(a) Whoever violates a provision of this part or orders or rules of the Board relating to taking, possessing, transporting, buying, or selling of big game; relating to threatened or endangered species; or relating to the trade in covered animal parts or products that constitutes a big game violation shall be fined not more than \$1,000.00 \$2,000.00 nor less than \$400.00 \$500.00 or imprisoned for not more than 60 days, or both. Upon a second and all subsequent convictions or any conviction while under license suspension related to the requirements of part 4 of this title, the violator shall be fined not more than \$4,000.00 \$5,000.00 nor less than \$2,000.00 or imprisoned for not more than 60 180 days, or both.

(b) As used in this section, “big game violation” means:

(1) violations relating to taking, possessing, transporting, buying, or selling of big game;

(2) violations of chapter 123 of this title and the rules related to threatened and endangered species;

(3) violation of section 4280 of this title relating to criminal suspensions;

(4) violations of chapter 124 of this title relating to the trade in covered animal parts or products;

(5) interference with hunting, fishing, or trapping in violation of section 4708 of this title; or

(6) illegal commercial importation or possession of wild animals in violation of section 4709 of this title.

Sec. 11. 10 V.S.A. § 4552 is amended to read:

§ 4552. JURISDICTION; VENUE

The Vermont Criminal Division of the Superior Court shall have exclusive jurisdiction over fish and wildlife violations with the exception of violations related to section 4572 and chapters 123 and 124 of this title. Venue for adjudicating fish and wildlife violations shall be the unit of the Criminal Division of the Superior Court having jurisdiction over the geographical area where the offense is stated to have occurred.

Sec. 12. 10 V.S.A. § 4572 is amended to read:

§ 4572. DEFINITIONS

(a) As used in this subchapter, a minor fish and wildlife violation means:

(1) a violation of 10 V.S.A. § 4145 (violation of access and landing area rules);

(2) a violation of 10 V.S.A. § 4251 (taking wild animals and fish without a license);

(3) a violation of 10 V.S.A. § 4266 (failure to carry a license on person or failure to exhibit license);

(4) a violation of 10 V.S.A. § 4267 (false statements in license application; altering license; transferring license to another person; using another person's license; or guiding an unlicensed person);

(5) a violation of 10 V.S.A. § 4713 (tree or ground stands or blinds); or

(6) [Repealed.]

(7) a violation of a biological collection rule adopted by the Board under part 4 of this title; or

(8) except for big game offenses and under revocation offenses, any fish and wildlife violation as defined by 10 V.S.A. § 4551 and not otherwise listed in this section shall be charged as a minor violation, provided that:

(A) the offender has no prior history of fish and wildlife violations;

(B) no evidence was seized in relation to the violation;

(C) a criminal warrant was not used in relation to the violation; and

(D) there is no possibility of forfeiture.

(b) “Bureau” means the Judicial Bureau as created in 4 V.S.A. § 1102.

Sec. 13. 10 V.S.A. § 4085 is added to read:

§ 4085. REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS; TAKING; POSSESSION

(a) A person shall not intentionally take a reptile or amphibian in the State unless authorized by rules adopted under subsection (b) of this section.

(b) The Commissioner may establish requirements for the following by rule:

(1) the collection or possession for commercial use, export, or sale of reptiles and amphibians specified by the Commissioner;

(2) the taking of reptiles or amphibians that have been classified as common, widespread, and abundant, known as S5 ranked species, with stable or increasing populations indicated by data collected or compiled by the Department of Fish and Wildlife;

(3) the taking of a reptile or amphibian that due to population, risk to other native species, or risk to ecosystems has been identified as requiring a reduction in population; or

(4) under specified criteria, the taking, collection, or possession of a specified reptile or amphibian for scientific, educational, or noncommercial cultural or ceremonial purposes.

(c) Rules adopted by the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife under this section shall be designed to maintain the best health, population, and utilization levels of the regulated reptile or amphibian.

Sec. 14. IMPORT, POSSESSION, AND SALE OF REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS; ENDORSEMENTS

(a)(1) A person shall not import, possess, or sell in the State a pond slider turtle (Trachemys scripta), provided that:

(A) a person may continue to possess a turtle that was legally acquired as a pet prior to July 1, 2025 or that was legally acquired from a pet dealer or commercial collection permittee authorized to sell turtles under subdivision (1)(B) of this subsection; or

(B) a person with a valid pet dealer permit or commercial collection permit may possess and sell a turtle that the person can document they had possession of prior to July 1, 2025.

(2) A person is prohibited from releasing to the wild a pond slider retained as a pet under this subsection. A violation of the prohibition under this section shall be subject to enforcement as a fish and wildlife violation under Title 10 part 4.

(b) Subsection (a) of this section shall be repealed on the effective date of a rule adopted by the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife under 10 V.S.A. § 4085 regulating the import, possession, or sale of the pond slider turtle (*Trachemys scripta*).

(c) When the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife under 10 V.S.A. § 4085(b) authorizes the taking of a reptile or amphibian by hunting, a hunting license issued under 10 V.S.A. part 4 that authorizes the taking of reptiles and amphibians under the license shall include an endorsement indicating the authorized taking.

Sec. 15. 10 V.S.A. § 4709 is amended to read:

§ 4709. TRANSPORT, IMPORTATION, POSSESSION, AND STOCKING
OF WILD ANIMALS; POSSESSION OF WILD BOAR OR FERAL
SWINE

(a) A person shall not bring into, transport into, transport within, transport through, or possess in the State any live wild bird or animal of any kind, including reptiles, amphibians, or any manner of feral swine, without authorization from the Commissioner or ~~his or her~~ the Commissioner's designee. The importation permit may be granted under ~~such regulations therefor as~~ rules, requirements, or conditions that the Commissioner shall prescribe and only after the Commissioner has made such investigation and inspection of the birds or animals as ~~she or he~~ the Commissioner may deem necessary. The Department may dispose of unlawfully possessed or imported wildlife as it may judge best, and the State may collect treble damages from the violator of this subsection for all expenses incurred.

(b) No person shall bring into the State from another country, state, or province wildlife illegally taken, transported, or possessed contrary to the laws governing the country, state, or province from which the wildlife originated.

(c) No person shall place a Vermont-issued tag on wildlife taken outside the State. No person shall report big game in Vermont when the wildlife is taken outside the State.

(d) Nothing in this section shall prohibit the Commissioner or duly authorized agents of the Department of Fish and Wildlife from bringing into the State for the purpose of planting, introducing, or stocking or from planting, introducing, or stocking in the State any wild bird or animal.

(e) Any person who violates this section may be subject to the penalties set forth in section 4518 of this title and also may be required to pay additional penalties based on reasonable mitigation and potential economic benefit associated with commercial trade.

(f) The Commissioner may bring an action in the unit of the Criminal Division of the Superior Court having jurisdiction over the geographical area where the offense is stated to have occurred, or the Environmental Division of the Superior Court, to compel reasonable mitigation and recover economic benefits for commercial collection and trade violations under this subsection.

(g) Applicants shall pay a permit fee of \$100.00.

~~(f)(i)~~(1) The Commissioner shall not issue a permit under this section for the importation or possession of the following live species, a hybrid or genetic variant of the following species, offspring of the following species, or offspring or a hybrid of a genetically engineered variant of the following species: feral swine, including wild boar, wild hog, wild swine, feral pig, feral hog, old world swine, razorback, Eurasian wild boar, or Russian wild boar (*Sus scrofa* Linnaeus). A feral swine is:

* * *

Sec. 16. 10 V.S.A. § 5403(a) is amended to read:

(a) Except as authorized under this chapter, a person shall not:

(1) take, possess, or transport wildlife or wild plants that are members of a threatened or endangered species; ~~or~~

(2) destroy or adversely impact critical habitat;

(3) sell or offer for sale in intrastate commerce a threatened or endangered species;

(4) deliver, receive, carry, transport, or ship a threatened or endangered species in intrastate commerce; or

(5) import a threatened or endangered species into or export a threatened or endangered species from Vermont.

Sec. 17. 10 V.S.A. § 5408 is amended to read:

§ 5408. AUTHORIZED TAKINGS; INCIDENTAL TAKINGS;
DESTRUCTION OF CRITICAL HABITAT

(a) Authorized taking. Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter, after obtaining the advice of the Endangered Species Committee, the Secretary may permit, under such terms and conditions as the Secretary may require as necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter, the taking of a threatened or endangered species, the destruction of or adverse impact on critical habitat, or any act otherwise prohibited by this chapter if done for any of the following purposes:

- (1) scientific purposes;
- (2) to enhance the propagation or survival of a threatened or endangered species;
- (3) zoological exhibition;
- (4) educational purposes;
- (5) noncommercial cultural or ceremonial purposes; or
- (6) special purposes consistent with the purposes of the federal Endangered Species Act.

(b) Incidental taking. After obtaining the advice of the Endangered Species Committee, the Secretary may permit, under such terms and conditions as necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter, the incidental taking of a threatened or endangered species or the destruction of or adverse impact on critical habitat if:

- (1) the taking is necessary to conduct an otherwise lawful activity;
- (2) the taking is attendant or secondary to, and not the purpose of, the lawful activity;
- (3) the impact of the permitted incidental take is minimized; and
- (4) the incidental taking will not impair the conservation or recovery of any endangered species or threatened species.

* * *

(k) Public notice. ~~Prior~~ Except for threatened and endangered species listed by the Secretary in accordance with subsection 5410(b) of this title, prior to issuing a permit for an incidental taking and prior to the initial issuance or amendment of a general permit under this section, the Secretary shall provide for public notice of ~~no~~ not fewer than 30 days; opportunity for written

comment, and opportunity to request a public informational hearing. ~~The Except for threatened and endangered species listed by the Secretary in accordance with subsection 5410(b) of this title, the~~ Secretary shall post permit applications, permit decisions, and the initial or amended general permits on the website of the Agency of Natural Resources. ~~The Except for threatened and endangered species listed by the Secretary in accordance with subsection 5410(b) of this title, the~~ Secretary also shall provide notice to interested persons who request notice of permit applications, permit decisions, and proposed general permits or proposed amendments to general permits.

(l) General permits.

(1) The Secretary may issue general permits for activities that will not affect the continued survival or recovery of a threatened or endangered species.

* * *

(6) ~~Prior~~ Except for threatened and endangered species listed by the Secretary in accordance with subsection 5410(b) of this title, prior to issuing an initial or amended general permit under this subsection, the Secretary shall:

- (A) post a draft of the general permit on the Agency website;
- (B) provide public notice of at least 30 days; and
- (C) provide for written comments or a public hearing, or both.

(7) For applications for coverage under the terms of an issued general permit, the applicant shall provide notice on a form provided by the Secretary. ~~The Except for threatened and endangered species listed by the Secretary in accordance with subsection 5410(b) of this title, the~~ Secretary shall post notice of the application on the Agency website and shall provide an opportunity for written comment, regarding whether the application complies with the terms and conditions of the general permit, for ~~ten~~ 10 days following receipt of the application.

* * *

Sec. 18. 10 V.S.A. § 5410 is amended to read:

§ 5410. LOCATION CONFIDENTIAL

(a) The Secretary shall not disclose information regarding the specific location of threatened or endangered species sites or habitats ~~except that the Secretary shall disclose information regarding the location of the threatened or endangered species to:~~

- (1) to the owner of land upon which the species is located;

(2) to a potential buyer of land upon which the species is located who has a bona fide contract to buy the land and applies to the Secretary for disclosure of threatened or endangered species information; or

(3) to qualified individuals or organizations, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations for scientific research or for preservation and planning purposes when the Secretary determines that the preservation of the species is not further endangered by the disclosure; or

(4) during regulatory processes with the exception of threatened or endangered species listed under subsection (b) of this section.

(b) The Secretary shall maintain a subset list of threatened and endangered species whose specific names shall not be included in regulatory planning. The subset list shall include threatened or endangered species for which the species names and locations shall not be disclosed because of the risk that the species will be significantly harmed by unauthorized take, such as illegal collection, commercial trade, human-caused mortality, or destruction of habitat. The list shall be based on the rarity of the species, known collection and commercial trade activities in Vermont and other states or countries, incidents of human-caused mortality or destruction of habitat, and other factors that present a threat to the continued existence of the species.

(c) When the Secretary issues a permit under this chapter to take a threatened or endangered species or destroy or adversely impact critical habitat and when the Secretary designates critical habitat by rule under section 5402a of this title, the Secretary shall disclose only the municipality and general location where the threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat is located. When the Secretary designates critical habitat under section 5402a of this title, the Secretary shall notify the municipality in which the critical habitat is located and shall disclose the general location of the designated critical habitat.

Sec. 19. 10 V.S.A. § 4829 is amended to read:

§ 4829. ~~PERSON SUFFERING DAMAGE BY DEER OR BLACK BEAR~~

~~(a) A person engaged in the business of farming who suffers damage by deer to the person's crops, fruit trees, or crop-bearing plants on land not posted against the hunting of deer, or a person engaged in the business of farming who suffers damage by black bear to the person's cattle, sheep, swine, poultry, or bees or bee hives on land not posted against hunting or trapping of black bear is entitled to reimbursement for the damage up to an amount not to exceed \$5,000.00 per year, and may apply to the Department of Fish and Wildlife within 72 hours of the occurrence of the damage for reimbursement~~

~~for the damage. As used in this section, “post” means any signage that would lead a reasonable person to believe that hunting is prohibited on the land.~~

~~(b) As used in this section, a person is “engaged in the business of farming” if he or she earns at least one-half of the farmer’s annual gross income from the business of farming, as that term is defined in the Internal Revenue Code, 26 C.F.R. § 1.175-3. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 20. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025, except that:

(1) Sec. 7 (free fishing license; person with developmental disabilities) shall take effect on January 1, 2026; and

(2) in Sec. 13, 10 V.S.A. § 4085(a) (related to the taking of reptiles and amphibians) shall take effect on January 1, 2027.

(Committee vote: 5-0-0)

(For House amendments, see House Journal of March 18, 2025, pages 442 to 448)

Reported favorably by Senator Mattos for the Committee on Finance.

The Committee recommends that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

(Committee vote: 4-0-3)

Reported favorably with recommendation of proposal of amendment by Senator Norris for the Committee on Appropriations.

The Committee recommends that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, with further recommendation of proposal of amendment by striking out Sec. 20, effective dates, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof six new sections to be Secs. 20–25 to read as follows:

Sec. 20. 10 V.S.A. § 599a is amended to read:

§ 599a. REPORTS; RULEMAKING

(a) On or before January 15, 2025, the Agency, in consultation with the State Treasurer, shall submit a report to the General Assembly detailing the feasibility and progress of carrying out the requirements of this chapter, including any recommendations for improving the administration of the Program.

(b) The Agency shall adopt rules necessary to implement the requirements of this chapter, including:

(1) adopting methodologies using available science and publicly available data to identify responsible parties and determine their applicable share of covered greenhouse gas emissions; and

(2) requirements for registering entities that are responsible parties and issuing notices of cost recovery demands under the Program; and

~~(3) the Resilience Implementation Strategy, which shall include:~~

~~(A) practices utilizing nature-based solutions intended to stabilize floodplains, riparian zones, lake shoreland, wetlands, and similar lands;~~

~~(B) practices to adapt infrastructure to the impacts of climate change;~~

~~(C) practices needed to build out early warning mechanisms and support fast, effective response to climate-related threats;~~

~~(D) practices that support economic and environmental sustainability in the face of changing climate conditions; and~~

~~(E) criteria and procedures for prioritizing climate change adaptation projects eligible to receive monies from the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program.~~

(c) On or before September 15, 2025, the Secretary shall submit to the House Committee on Environment and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy a report summarizing the Agency of Natural Resources' adoption of the Resilience Implementation Strategy. The Strategy shall include:

(1) practices utilizing nature-based solutions intended to stabilize floodplains, riparian zones, lake shoreland, wetlands, and similar lands;

(2) practices to adapt infrastructure to the impacts of climate change;

(3) practices needed to build out early warning mechanisms and support fast, effective response to climate-related threats;

(4) practices that support economic and environmental sustainability in the face of changing climate conditions; and

(5) criteria and procedures for prioritizing climate change adaptation projects eligible to receive monies from the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program.

(d) In adopting the Strategy, the Agency shall:

(1) consult with the Environmental Justice Advisory Council;

(2) in consultation with other State agencies and departments, including the Department of Public Safety's Division of Vermont Emergency Management, assess the adaptation needs and vulnerabilities of various areas vital to the State's economy, normal functioning, and the health and well-being of Vermonters;

(3) identify major potential, proposed, and ongoing climate change adaptation projects throughout the State;

(4) identify opportunities for alignment with existing federal, State, and local funding streams;

(5) consult with stakeholders, including local governments, businesses, environmental advocates, relevant subject area experts, and representatives of environmental justice focus populations;

(6) consider components of the Vermont Climate Action Plan required under section 592 of this title that are related to adaptation or resilience, as defined in section 590 of this title; and

(7) conduct public engagement in areas and communities that have the most significant exposure to the impacts of climate change, including disadvantaged, low-income, and rural communities and areas.

~~(d)~~(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the existing authority of a State agency, department, or entity to regulate greenhouse gas emissions or establish strategies or adopt rules to mitigate climate risk and build resilience to climate change.

Sec. 21. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 122, Sec. 3 is amended to read:

Sec. 3. IMPLEMENTATION

~~(a) On or before July 1, 2025, the Agency of Natural Resources pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 837 shall file with the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules the proposed rule for the adoption of the Resilience Implementation Strategy required pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 599a(b)(3). On or before January 1, 2026, the Agency of Natural Resources shall adopt the final rule establishing the Resilience Implementation Strategy required pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 599a(b)(3). [Repealed.]~~

(b) On or before July 1, 2026 2027, the Agency of Natural Resources pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 837 shall file with the Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules the proposed rules required pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 599a(b)(1) and (b)(2). On or before January 1, 2027 2028, the Agency of Natural Resources shall adopt the final rule rules required pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 599a(b)(1) and (b)(2).

Sec. 22. 10 V.S.A. § 596 is amended to read:

§ 596. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(7) “Covered greenhouse gas emissions” means the total quantity of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere ~~during the covered period~~, expressed in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, resulting from the use of fossil fuels extracted or refined by an entity during the covered period.

* * *

(22) “Responsible party” means any entity or a successor in interest to an entity that during any part of the covered period was engaged in the trade or business of extracting fossil fuel or refining crude oil and is determined by the Agency attributable to for more than one billion metric tons of covered greenhouse gas emissions ~~during the covered period~~. The term responsible party does not include any person who lacks sufficient connection with the State to satisfy the nexus requirements of the U.S. Constitution.

* * *

Sec. 23. 10 V.S.A. § 598(b) is amended to read:

(b) With respect to each responsible party, the cost recovery demand shall be equal to an amount that bears the same ratio to the cost to the State of Vermont and its residents, as calculated by the State Treasurer pursuant to section 599c of this title, from ~~the emission of covered greenhouse gases during the covered period gas emissions~~ as the responsible party’s applicable share of covered greenhouse gas emissions bears to the aggregate applicable shares of covered greenhouse gas emissions ~~resulting from the use of fossil fuels extracted or refined during the covered period~~.

Sec. 24. 10 V.S.A. § 599c is amended to read:

§ 599c. STATE TREASURER REPORT ON THE COST TO VERMONT OF COVERED GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

On or before January 15, ~~2026~~ 2027, the State Treasurer, after consultation with the Interagency Advisory Board to the Climate Action Office, and with any other person or entity whom the State Treasurer decides to consult for the purpose of obtaining and utilizing credible data or methodologies that the State Treasurer determines may aid the State Treasurer in making the assessments and estimates required by this section, shall submit to the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Finance, on Agriculture, and on Natural Resources and

Energy and the House Committees on Appropriations; on Ways and Means; on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry; and on Environment and Energy an assessment of the cost to the State of Vermont and its residents of the emission of covered greenhouse gases ~~for the period that began on January 1, 1995 and ended on December 31, 2024~~ gas emissions. The assessment shall include:

* * *

(3) a categorized calculation of the costs that have been incurred and are projected to be incurred in the future within the State of Vermont to abate the effects of covered greenhouse gas emissions ~~from between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 2024~~ on the State of Vermont and its residents.

Sec. 25. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and Secs. 20–24 (climate superfund act) shall take effect on passage.

(b) All other sections shall take effect on July 1, 2025, except that:

(1) Sec. 7 (free fishing license; person with developmental disabilities) shall take effect on January 1, 2026; and

(2) in Sec. 13, 10 V.S.A. § 4085(a) (related to the taking of reptiles and amphibians) shall take effect on January 1, 2027.

(Committee vote: 6-1-0)

H. 397.

An act relating to miscellaneous amendments to the statutes governing emergency management and flood response.

Reported favorably with recommendation of proposal of amendment by Senator Collamore for the Committee on Government Operations.

The Committee recommends that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Division of Emergency Management; Plans and Reports * * *

Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 3a is amended to read:

§ 3a. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION; DUTIES; BUDGET

(a) In addition to other duties required by law, the Division of Emergency Management shall:

* * *

(3) Annually on or before the last legislative day in January, provide an update and presentation to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations concerning all action items in the all-hazards mitigation plan required by subdivision (1) of this subsection.

* * *

Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 41 is amended to read:

§ 41. STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

~~The Department of Public Safety's Vermont Division of~~ Emergency Management ~~Division, in consultation with stakeholders,~~ shall create, and republish as needed, but not less than every five years, a comprehensive State Emergency Management Plan. The Plan shall:

(1) detail response systems during all-hazards events, including communications, coordination among State, local, private, and volunteer entities, and the deployment of State and federal resources. ~~The Plan shall also;~~

(2) detail the State's emergency preparedness measures and goals, including those for the prevention of, protection against, mitigation of, and recovery from all-hazards events. ~~The Plan shall; and~~

(3) include templates and guidance for regional emergency management and for local emergency plans that support municipalities in their respective emergency management planning.

* * * Voluntary Buyouts * * *

Sec. 3. 20 V.S.A. § 48 is amended to read:

§ 48. COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND DISASTER MITIGATION
GRANT PROGRAM

* * *

(c) Administration; implementation.

(1) Grant awards. The Department of Public Safety, in coordination with the Department of Environmental Conservation, shall administer the Program, which shall award grants for the following:

* * *

(C) projects that implement disaster mitigation measures, adaptation, or repair, including watershed restoration, voluntary buyouts for flood-

impacted or -prone properties, and similar activities that directly reduce risks to communities, lives, public collections of historic value, and property; and

* * *

* * * Division of Emergency Management; Assistance to Municipalities * * *

Sec. 4. 20 V.S.A. § 51 is added to read:

§ 51. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; ALL-HAZARD
AND WEATHER ALERT SYSTEMS FOR MUNICIPAL
CORPORATIONS

Upon request of a municipal corporation, the Division of Emergency Management shall assist the municipal corporation with access to the following:

(1) a statewide river observation and modeling system that details current river level observations and models river flood outlooks; and

(2) a statewide enhanced weather forecasting and alert system that:

(A) predicts local and regional conditions using advanced modeling;
and

(B) issues real-time warnings for potentially dangerous weather through multiple communication channels.

* * * Needs Assessment Report * * *

Sec. 5. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; STATE
STAKEHOLDERS; NEEDS ASSESSMENT; REPORT

The Division of Emergency Management shall conduct a needs assessment to identify any additional staffing, resources, technical needs, or authority needed to carry out the provisions of this act. On or before November 15, 2025, the Division shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Government Operations containing the needs assessments conducted by the State agencies and departments identified in this section.

* * * Municipal Finances and Indebtedness * * *

Sec. 6. 24 V.S.A. § 1585 is added to read:

§ 1585. UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE

Monies from a budget approved by the voters at an annual or special meeting that are not expended by the end of a municipality's fiscal year shall be under the control and direction of the legislative body of the municipality

and may be carried forward from year to year as an unassigned fund balance. Unassigned fund balances may be invested and reinvested as are other monies received by a town treasurer and may be expended for any public purpose as established by the legislative body of the municipality.

Sec. 7. 24 V.S.A. § 1790 is added to read:

§ 1790. EMERGENCY BORROWING; ALL-HAZARD EVENT OR STATE OF EMERGENCY

The legislative body of a municipality may borrow money, in the name of the municipal corporation, by issuance of its notes or orders for the purpose of paying expenses of the municipal corporation or for public improvements associated with an all-hazards event or a declared state of emergency pursuant to 20 V.S.A. chapter 1. The notes or orders shall be for a period of not more than five years or a term not to exceed the reasonably anticipated useful life of the improvements or assets financed by the notes or orders.

Sec. 8. 24 V.S.A. § 1759 is amended to read:

§ 1759. DENOMINATIONS; PAYMENTS; INTEREST

(a)(1) Any bond issued under this subchapter shall draw interest at a rate not to exceed the rate approved by the voters of the municipal corporation in accordance with section 1758 of this title, or if no rate is specified in the vote under that section, at a rate approved by the legislative ~~branch~~ body of the municipal corporation, ~~such~~ the interest to be payable ~~semiannually as determined by the legislative body of the municipal corporation.~~ Such ~~The~~ bonds or bond shall be payable serially, the first payment to be deferred not later than from one to five years after the issuance of the bonds and subsequent principal payments or debt service payments, which include both principal and interest payments, to be continued annually in ~~equal~~ substantially level or diminishing declining amounts, as determined by the legislative body of the municipality, so that the entire debt will be paid in not more than 20 years from the date of issue.

(2) In the case of bonds issued for the purchase or development of a municipal forest, the first payment may be deferred not more than 30 years from the date of issuance ~~thereof of the bond.~~ Thereafter such ~~After any deferral period,~~ the bonds or bond shall be payable annually in ~~equal~~ substantially level or diminishing amounts declining annual debt service as the legislative body of the municipal corporation may determine, so that the entire debt will be paid in not more than 60 years from the date of issue.

* * *

(b) General obligation bonds authorized under this subchapter for the purpose of financing the improvement, construction, acquisition, repair, renovation, and replacement of a municipal plant as defined in 30 V.S.A. § 2901 shall be paid serially, the first payment to be deferred not later than from one to five years after the issuance of the bonds, and subsequent principal payments or debt service payments, which include both principal and interest payments, to be continued annually in substantially level or declining amounts, as determined by the legislative body of the municipal corporation, so that the entire debt will be paid ~~over a term equal to the useful life of the financed improvements, but~~ not more than 40 years from the date of issue, and ~~may be so arranged that beginning with the first year in which principal is payable, the amount of principal and interest in any year shall be as nearly equal as is practicable according to the denomination in which such bonds are issued,~~ notwithstanding other permissible payment schedules authorized by this section.

* * * Dam Drawdown During Emergency Flood Events * * *

Sec. 9. 20 V.S.A. § 9 is amended to read:

§ 9. EMERGENCY POWERS OF GOVERNOR

(a) Subject to the provisions of this chapter, in the event of an all-hazards event in or directed upon the United States or Canada that causes or may cause substantial damage or injury to persons or property within the State in any manner, the Governor may declare a state of emergency within the entire State or any portion or portions of the State. Thereafter, the Governor shall have and may exercise for as long as the Governor determines the emergency to exist the following additional powers within ~~such~~ the area or areas:

* * *

(b)(1) In consultation with the Secretary of Natural Resources or designee, the Governor may authorize the Agency of Natural Resources to waive applicable permits and restrictions under 10 V.S.A. chapter 47 or the Vermont Water Quality Standards to allow dams within the State to draw down water levels in anticipation of a flood event that is likely to cause substantial damage or injury to persons or property. Waivers may only be issued if the Director of the Division of Emergency Management, in consultation with the Secretary of Natural Resources or designee, has significant reason to believe that authorizing an advance drawdown will decrease the risk of substantial damage to persons or property within the State. The Secretary or designee shall, to the extent feasible, consult with applicable dam owners for federally licensed sites. Dam operators operating under a waiver shall be required to make every effort

to minimize the environmental impact of a water level drawdown under the authorized waiver.

(2) Dam owners authorized to use a waiver under this subsection shall be required to develop a drawdown plan that is approved by the Secretary prior to implementation of a drawdown. This subdivision shall not apply to dam owners that have other plans approved by the Secretary in effect that address emergency drawdowns. The drawdown plan shall at minimum include the following:

(A) hydrologic and hydraulic modeling of the dam, reservoir, and downstream channel performed by an engineer experienced in dam safety engineering that proves the public safety benefit of pre-event drawdown;

(B) dam owner communications with downstream communities and applicable regulators prior to and during drawdown operations;

(C) maximum safe reservoir drawdown rates and outflows, as well as ramping rates for drawdown operations;

(D) target drawdown elevation in the reservoir;

(E) refill plan if unable to achieve during storm event;

(F) monitoring and reporting requirements of drawdown operations;

and

(G) documentation of plan updates and revisions over time.

Sec. 10. [Deleted.]

* * * Local Option Tax; Amount Paid to Municipality * * *

Sec. 11. 24 V.S.A. § 138 is amended to read:

§ 138. LOCAL OPTION TAXES

* * *

(c)(1) Any tax imposed under the authority of this section shall be collected and administered by the Department of Taxes, in accordance with State law governing such State tax or taxes and subdivision (2) of this subsection; provided, however, that a sales tax imposed under this section shall be collected on each sale that is subject to the Vermont sales tax using a destination basis for taxation. Except with respect to taxes collected on the sale of aviation jet fuel, a per-return fee of \$5.96 shall be assessed, ~~70~~ 75 percent of which shall be borne by the municipality, and ~~30~~ 25 percent of which shall be borne by the State to be paid from the PILOT Special Fund. Notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 603 or any other provision of law or municipal

charter to the contrary, revenue from the fee shall be used to compensate the Department for the costs of administering and collecting the local option tax and of administering the State appraisal and litigation program established in 32 V.S.A. § 5413. The fee shall be subject to the provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 605.

* * *

(d)(1) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section and subdivision (2) of this subsection with respect to taxes collected on the sale of aviation jet fuel, of the taxes collected under this section, ~~70~~ 75 percent of the taxes shall be paid on a quarterly basis to the municipality in which they were collected, after reduction for the costs of administration and collection under subsection (c) of this section. Revenues received by a municipality may be expended for municipal services only, and not for education expenditures. Any remaining revenue shall be deposited into the PILOT Special Fund established by 32 V.S.A. § 3709.

* * *

* * * Municipal Charters; Local Option Tax Revenue Share * * *

Sec. 12. 24 App. V.S.A. chapter 3, § 102d is amended to read:

§ 102d. LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX AUTHORITY

The Burlington City Council is authorized to impose a one percent sales tax upon sales within the City that are subject to the State of Vermont sales tax with the same exemptions as the State sales tax. The City sales tax shall be effective beginning on the next tax quarter following 30 days' notice in 2006 to the Department of Taxes, or shall be effective on the next tax quarter following 90 days' notice to the Department of Taxes if notice is given in 2007 or after. Any tax imposed under the authority of this section shall be collected and administered by the Vermont Department of Taxes in accordance with State law governing the State sales tax. ~~Seventy percent of the~~ The taxes collected shall be paid to the City, ~~and the remaining amount of the taxes collected shall be remitted to the State Treasurer for deposit in the PILOT Special Fund first established in 1997 Acts and Resolves No. 60, Sec. 89. The cost of administration and collection of this tax shall be paid 70 percent by the City and 30 percent by the State from the PILOT Special Fund pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138.~~ The tax to be paid to the City, ~~less its obligation for 70 percent of the costs of administration and collection, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138~~ shall be paid to the City on a quarterly basis and may be expended by the City for municipal services only and not for education expenditures.

Sec. 13. 24 App. V.S.A. chapter 5, § 1214 is amended to read:

§ 1214. LOCAL OPTION TAXES

Local option taxes are authorized under this section for the purpose of affording the City an alternative method of raising municipal revenues. Accordingly:

* * *

(3) ~~Of the taxes reported under this section, 70 percent shall be paid to the City for calendar years thereafter. Such revenues~~ The City's local option tax revenue may be expended by the City for municipal services only and not for educational expenditures. The remaining amount of the taxes reported shall be remitted monthly to the State Treasurer for deposit in the PILOT Special Fund set forth in 32 V.S.A. § 3709. Taxes due to the City under this section shall be paid by the State on a quarterly basis.

Sec. 14. 24 App. V.S.A. chapter 127, § 1308a is amended to read:

§ 1308a. SALES, ROOMS, MEALS, AND ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES
TAX

* * *

(d) ~~Of the taxes collected under this section, 70 percent~~ The share of taxes due to the Town pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138 shall be paid to the Town on a quarterly basis ~~to the Town~~ after reduction for the costs of administration and collection under subsection (c) of this section. Revenues received by the Town may be expended for municipal services only and not for education expenditures. Any remaining revenues shall be deposited in the PILOT Special Fund established by 32 V.S.A. § 3709.

Sec. 15. 24 App. V.S.A. chapter 171, § 18 is amended to read:

§ 18. LOCAL OPTIONS TAX

The Selectboard is authorized to impose a one percent sales tax, a one percent meals and alcoholic beverages tax, and a one percent rooms tax upon sales within the Town that are subject to the State of Vermont tax on sales, meals, alcoholic beverages, and rooms. The Town tax shall be implemented in the event the State local options tax as provided for in 24 V.S.A. § 138 is repealed or the 70-percent allocation to the town is reduced. A tax imposed under the authority of this section shall be collected and administered by the Vermont Department of Taxes in accordance with State law governing the State tax on sales, meals, alcoholic beverages, and rooms. ~~The amount of 70 percent of the taxes collected shall be paid to the Town, and the remaining amount of the taxes collected shall be remitted to the State Treasurer for~~

~~deposit in the Pilot Special Fund first established in 1997 Acts and Resolves No. 60, § 89 pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138. The cost of administration and collection of this tax shall be paid 70 percent by the Town and 30 percent by the State from the Pilot Special Fund pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138. The tax to be paid to the Town, less its obligation for the 70 percent of the costs of administration and collection, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138 shall be paid to the Town on a quarterly basis and may be expended by the Town for municipal services only and not for education expenditures. The Town may repeal the local option taxes by Australian ballot vote.~~

* * * Division of Emergency Management; Technical Corrections * * *

Sec. 16. 20 V.S.A. chapter 1 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 1. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

* * *

§ 2. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(3) “Director” means the Director of ~~Vermont~~ the Division of Emergency Management of the Department of Public Safety.

* * *

§ 3. VERMONT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ~~DIVISION~~

(a) There is hereby created within the Department of Public Safety a ~~division to~~ the Division of Emergency Management, which may also be known as the Vermont Emergency Management Division.

* * *

§ 4. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES FOR STATE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

(a) If an all-hazards event occurs, the ~~Vermont Emergency Management~~ Division shall ensure that language assistance services are available for all State communications regarding the all-hazards event, including relevant press conferences and emergency alerts, as soon as practicable. Language assistance services shall be provided for:

* * *

(c) Annually, the ~~Vermont Emergency Management~~ Division shall hold a public meeting with members of the Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Advisory Council; the Office of Racial Equity; the Vermont

Association of Broadcasters; and other relevant stakeholders to review the adequacy and efficacy of the provision and distribution of language assistance services of emergency communications over mass communication platforms to individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind as well as individuals with limited English language proficiency.

* * *

Sec. 17. 20 V.S.A. § 112 is amended to read:

§ 112. ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS — ARTICLE X

* * *

(b) The ~~director~~ Director of the Vermont ~~emergency management service~~ Emergency Management shall be the authorized representative in regard to a request from a party state or by Vermont for aid that does not involve personnel or elements of the Vermont National Guard.

* * *

(d) The ~~director~~ Director of Vermont ~~emergency management~~ Emergency Management shall be responsible for handling any and all documents necessary to obtain reimbursement hereunder for services rendered to a requesting state, or within Vermont by another assisting state.

* * *

Sec. 18. 10 V.S.A. § 599a is amended to read:

§ 599a. REPORTS; RULEMAKING

* * *

(c) In adopting the Strategy, the Agency shall:

* * *

(2) in consultation with other State agencies and departments, including the Department of Public Safety's Division of ~~Vermont~~ Emergency Management, assess the adaptation needs and vulnerabilities of various areas vital to the State's economy, normal functioning, and the health and well-being of Vermonters;

* * *

Sec. 19. 32 V.S.A. § 3102 is amended to read:

§ 3102. CONFIDENTIALITY OF TAX RECORDS

* * *

(e) The Commissioner may, in the Commissioner's discretion and subject to such conditions and requirements as the Commissioner may provide, including any confidentiality requirements of the Internal Revenue Service, disclose a return or return information:

* * *

(24) To the Division of ~~Vermont~~ Emergency Management at the Department of Public Safety for the purposes of emergency management and communication, and to the Department of Housing and Community Development and any organization then under contract with the Department of Housing and Community Development to carry out a statewide housing needs assessment for the purpose of the statewide housing needs assessment, provided that the disclosure relates to the information collected on the landlord certificate pursuant to subsection 6069(c) of this title.

* * *

* * * Rulemaking; Federal Regulations Incorporated by Reference * * *

Sec. 20. 3 V.S.A. § 850 is added to read:

§ 850. RULES; INCORPORATION OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

Any federal regulation incorporated by reference into a Vermont Rule as of January 1, 2025 shall continue in effect as a State rule until January 31, 2029 or when the State rule is next amended, whichever is sooner, regardless of whether the federal rule was later repealed or amended. The secretary of an agency or commissioner of a department, as applicable, shall provide notice of these incorporated regulations by posting them on the agency or department website. Nothing in this section shall prevent the secretary or commissioner from adopting or amending a rule pursuant to this chapter, including emergency rulemaking.

* * * Property Tax Overpayment Refunds; City of Barre and Town of Milton * * *

Sec. 21. EDUCATION FUND REFUND; CITY OF BARRE TIF DISTRICT;
TAX INCREMENT; FY 2016–FY 2020

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the sum of \$437,028.00 shall be transferred from the Education Fund to the City of Barre not later than fiscal year 2026 to compensate the City for overpayments of education property taxes in fiscal years 2016 through 2020 due to insufficient retention of tax increment from the City's Tax Increment Financing District fund.

Sec. 22. EDUCATION FUND REFUND; MILTON TOWN CORE TIF
DISTRICT; TAX INCREMENT; FY 2017–FY 2023

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the sum of \$184,451.00 shall be transferred from the Education Fund to the Town of Milton not later than fiscal year 2026 to compensate the Town for overpayments of education property taxes in fiscal years 2017 through 2023 due to insufficient retention of tax increment from the Town Core's Tax Increment Financing District fund.

Sec. 23. REPEAL

3 V.S.A. § 850 (rules; incorporation of federal regulations) is repealed on January 31, 2029.

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 24. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and Sec. 20 (rules; incorporation of federal regulations) shall take effect on passage.

(b) Sec. 11 (local option taxes) shall take effect on October 1, 2025.

(c) All other sections shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(Committee vote: 5-0-0)

(For House amendments, see House Journal of March 26, 2025, pages 723 to 737)

Reported favorably with recommendation of proposal of amendment by Senator Cummings for the Committee on Finance.

The Committee recommends that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Government Operations, with further recommendation of proposal of amendment by adding a new section to be Sec. 22a to read as follows:

Sec. 22a. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 72, Sec. 37 is amended to read:

Sec. 37. TAX INCREMENT FINANCING DISTRICT; CITY OF BARRE;
EXTENSION; INCREMENT

(a) Notwithstanding 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 73, Sec. 26a, amending 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 175, Sec. 29, or any other provision of law, the authority of the City of Barre to incur indebtedness is hereby extended to March 31, ~~2026~~ 2028.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the authority of the City of Barre to retain municipal and education tax increment is hereby extended until June 30, 2039.

(Committee vote: 4-0-3)

**Reported favorably with recommendation of proposal of amendment
by Senator Perchlik for the Committee on Appropriations.**

The Committee recommends that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with proposals of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Government Operations and Finance, with further recommendation of proposal of amendment by striking out Secs. 21 and 22 in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 21 to read as follows:

**Sec. 21. GENERAL FUND TRANSFER TO THE EDUCATION FUND;
APPROPRIATION FOR COMPENSATION FOR
OVERPAYMENT**

(a) In fiscal year 2026, in addition to any other fund transfers made, \$621,479.00 shall be transferred from the General Fund to the Education Fund to compensate the City of Barre and the Town of Milton for overpayment of education property tax increment from Tax Increment Financing District funds, pursuant to the findings of State Auditor Reports Nos. 21-03 and 24-06.

(b) Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025, in fiscal year 2026, \$621,479.00 Education Fund shall be appropriated to the Department of Taxes for the following:

(1) \$437,028.00 to make a payment to the City of Barre to compensate the City for overpayments of education property taxes in fiscal years 2016 through 2020 due to insufficient retention of tax increment by the City's Tax Increment Financing District fund; and

(2) \$184,451.00 to make a payment to the Town of Milton to compensate the Town for overpayments of education property taxes in fiscal years 2017 through 2023 due to insufficient retention of tax increment by the Town's Tax Increment Financing District fund.

and by renumbering the remaining sections to be numerically correct.

(Committee vote: 5-0-2)

House Proposal of Amendment

S. 59.

An act relating to amendments to Vermont's Open Meeting Law.

The House proposes to the Senate to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 1 V.S.A. § 310 is amended to read:

§ 310. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

* * *

(9) “Undue hardship” means an action ~~required to achieve compliance would require~~ requiring significant difficulty or expense to the unit of government to which a public body belongs, considered in light of factors including the overall size of the entity, ~~sufficient~~ the availability of necessary personnel and staffing availability staff, the entity’s ~~budget~~ available resources, and the costs associated with compliance.

Sec. 2. 1 V.S.A. § 312 is amended to read:

§ 312. RIGHT TO ATTEND MEETINGS OF PUBLIC AGENCIES BODIES

(a)(1) All meetings of a public body are declared to be open to the public at all times, except as provided in section 313 of this title. No resolution, rule, regulation, appointment, or formal action shall be considered binding except as taken or made at such open meeting, except as provided under subdivision 313(a)(2) of this title. A meeting of a public body is subject to the public accommodation requirements of 9 V.S.A. chapter 139. A public body shall electronically record all public hearings held to provide a forum for public comment on a proposed rule, pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 840. The public shall have access to copies of such electronic recordings as described in section 316 of this title.

* * *

(3)(A) ~~State nonadvisory~~ public bodies; hybrid meeting requirement; exception for advisory bodies. Any public body of the State, except advisory bodies, shall:

(A)(i) hold all regular and special meetings in a hybrid fashion, which shall include both a designated physical meeting location and a designated electronic meeting platform;

(B)(ii) electronically record all meetings; and

(C)(iii) for a minimum of 30 days following the approval and posting of the official minutes for a meeting, retain the audiovisual recording and post the recording in a designated electronic location.

(B) Exception; site inspections and field visits. This subdivision (3) shall not apply to gatherings of a State public body for purposes of a site inspection or field visit.

(C) Application of subdivision; State public bodies only. This subdivision (3) applies exclusively to State public bodies.

* * *

(5) State ~~nonadvisory~~ public bodies; State and local advisory bodies; designating electronic platforms. ~~State nonadvisory A public bodies body meeting in a hybrid fashion pursuant to subdivision (3) of this subsection and State and local advisory bodies meeting without a physical meeting location or advisory body meeting pursuant to subdivision (4) of this subsection shall~~ designate and use an electronic platform that allows the direct access, attendance, and participation of the public, including access by telephone. The public body shall post information that enables the public to directly access the designated electronic platform and include this information in the published agenda or public notice for the meeting.

(6) Local ~~nonadvisory~~ public bodies; meeting recordings.

(A) A public body of a municipality or political subdivision, except advisory bodies, shall record or cause to record, in audio or video form, any meeting of the public body and post a copy of the recording in a designated electronic location for a minimum of 30 days following the ~~approval and posting of the official minutes for a meeting.~~ This subdivision (A) shall not apply to gatherings of a public body for purposes of a site inspection or field visit.

* * *

(c)(1) The time and place of all regular meetings subject to this section shall be clearly designated by statute, charter, regulation, ordinance, bylaw, resolution, or other determining authority of the public body, and this information shall be available to any person upon request. The time and place of all public hearings and meetings scheduled by all Executive Branch State agencies, departments, boards, or commissions shall be available to the public as required under 3 V.S.A. § 2222(c).

(2) The time, place, and purpose of a special meeting subject to this section shall be publicly announced at least 24 hours before the meeting. Municipal public bodies shall post notices of special meetings in or near the municipal clerk's office and in at least two other designated public places in the municipality or a neighboring municipality, at least 24 hours before the meeting. In addition, notice shall be given, either orally or in writing, to each member of the public body at least 24 hours before the meeting, except that a member may waive notice of a special meeting.

* * *

(d)(1) At least 48 hours prior to a regular meeting, and at least 24 hours prior to a special meeting, a meeting agenda shall be:

* * *

(B) in the case of a municipal public body, posted in or near the municipal office and in at least two other designated public places in the municipality or a neighboring municipality.

* * *

(3) A meeting agenda shall contain sufficient details concerning the specific matters to be discussed by the public body. Whenever a public body includes an executive session as an item on a posted meeting agenda, the public body shall list the agenda item as "proposed executive session" and indicate the nature of the business of the executive session.

(4)(A) Any addition to or deletion from the agenda shall be made as the first act of business at the meeting.

* * *

(k) Training.

(1) Annually, the following officers shall participate in a professional training that addresses the procedures and requirements of this subchapter:

(A) for municipalities and political subdivisions, the chair of the legislative body, town manager, and mayor; ~~and~~

(B) for the State, the chair of any public body that is not an advisory body; ~~and~~

(C) the members of a State advisory body, provided that the advisory body is composed entirely of members who are not government officers or employees.

* * *

Sec. 3. 1 V.S.A. § 313 is amended to read:

§ 313. EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

(a) No public body may hold or conclude an executive session from which the public is excluded, except by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of its members present in the case of any public body of State government or of a majority of its members present in the case of any public body of a municipality or other political subdivision. A motion to go into executive session shall indicate the nature of the business of the executive session, and no other matter may be considered in the executive session. ~~Such~~ The vote to

enter executive session shall be taken in the course of an open meeting and the result of the vote recorded in the minutes. No formal or binding action shall be taken in executive session except for actions relating to the securing of real estate options under subdivision (2) of this subsection. Minutes of an executive session need not be taken, but if they are, the minutes shall, notwithstanding subsection 312(b) of this title, be exempt from public copying and inspection under the Public Records Act. A public body may not hold an executive session except to consider one or more of the following:

* * *

(10) security, cybersecurity, or emergency response measures, the disclosure of which could jeopardize public safety; or

(11) confidential business information relating to the interest rates for publicly financed loans, provided that the public body is a State public body and the creditor for the loan.

* * *

Sec. 4. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly that section 5 of this act amend 13 V.S.A. § 1026 to conform subdivision (a)(4) of that section with the constitutional requirements articulated in the Supreme Court of Vermont decision *State v. Colby*, 185 Vt. 464 (2009).

Sec. 5. 13 V.S.A. § 1026 is amended to read:

§ 1026. DISORDERLY CONDUCT

(a) A person is guilty of disorderly conduct if ~~he or she~~ the person, with intent to cause public inconvenience or annoyance, or recklessly creates a risk thereof:

* * *

(4) without lawful authority, disturbs any lawful assembly or meeting of persons; or

* * *

(c) As used in this section:

(1) “Disturbs any lawful assembly or meeting of persons” means conduct that substantially impairs the effective conduct of an assembly or meeting, including conduct that:

(A) causes an assembly or meeting to terminate prematurely; or

(B) consists of numerous and sustained efforts to disrupt an assembly or meeting after being asked to desist.

(2) “Meeting” includes a meeting of a public body, as those terms are defined in 1 V.S.A. § 310.

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTIONS FOR ACTION

Concurrent Resolutions For Action Under Joint Rule 16

The following joint concurrent resolutions have been introduced for approval by the Senate and House. They will be adopted by the Senate unless a Senator requests floor consideration before the end of the session. Requests for floor consideration should be communicated to the Secretary’s Office.

H.C.R. 152-154 (For text of Resolutions, see Addendum to House Calendar for May 22, 2025)

CONFIRMATIONS

The following appointments will be considered by the Senate, as a group, under suspension of the Rules, as moved by the President *pro tempore*, for confirmation together and without debate, by consent thereby given by the Senate. However, upon request of any senator, any appointment may be singled out and acted upon separately by the Senate, with consideration given to the report of the Committee to which the appointment was referred, and with full debate; and further, all appointments for the positions of Secretaries of Agencies, Commissioners of Departments, Judges, Magistrates, and members of the Public Utility Commission, underlined below, shall be fully and separately acted upon.

Gary McQuesten of Plainfield - Member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Board - By Senator Weeks for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 21, 2025)

Kathleen Keenan of St. Albans - Member of the Employment Security Board - By Senator Brock for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 22, 2025)

David Boulanger of Hinesburg - Member of the State Labor Relations Board - By Senator Chittenden for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 22, 2025)

Corey Mathieu of Westford - Member of the Board of Liquor and Lottery - By Senator Chittenden for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 22, 2025)

Sabina Haskell of Burlington - Executive Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy and Development - By Senator Ram Hinsdale for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 22, 2025)

Amy Richardson (Mynter) of Northfield - Member of the Vermont Housing Conservation Board - By Senator Ram Hinsdale for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 23, 2025)

Jeffrey Becher of Vergennes - Journeyman Electrician Member of the Electricians Licensing Board - By Senator Chittenden for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 27, 2025)

Kevin Bourdon of Waltham - Fire Insurance Rep. Member of the Electricians Licensing Board - By Senator Weeks for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 27, 2025)

Lindsay Kurrle of Middlesex - Secretary of Agency of Commerce and Community Development - By Senator Clarkson for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 27, 2025)

Bryan Plant, II of Bristol - Commissioner of the Vermont State Housing Authority - By Senator Clarkson for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 27, 2025)

Emily Wadhams of Burlington - Member of the Vermont Housing Conservation Board - By Senator Ram Hinsdale for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (May 27, 2025)

JFO NOTICE

Grants and Positions that have been submitted to the Joint Fiscal Committee by the Administration, under 32 V.S.A. §5(b)(3):

JFO #3253: \$20,000.00 to the Vermont Department of Public Safety, Vermont State Police. Funds will be used by the Vermont Boating Law Administrator, with the support of the Vermont Department of Health, to create a comprehensive boating injury data tracking system.

[Received May 6, 2025]

JFO #3254: \$994,435.00 to the Vermont Department Public Safety, Vermont Emergency Management from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Funds for emergency work and repair/replacement of disaster damaged

facilities during the severe storm and flooding event in Lamoille County from June 22-24, 2024.

[Received May 6, 2025]

JFO #3255: \$41,000.00 to the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Department of Housing and Community Development. Funds will be used to restore the Baldwin Model K piano, once played by First Lady Grace Coolidge, which now resides in the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site in Plymouth, VT.

[Received May 6, 2025]