

Senate Calendar

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026

SENATE CONVENES AT: 1:00 P.M.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACTION CALENDAR

NEW BUSINESS

Third Reading

S. 218.

An act relating to reducing chloride contamination of State waters.

Amendment to S. 218 to be offered by Senators Watson and Hardy before Third Reading

Senators Watson and Hardy move to amend the bill as follows:

First: In Sec. 3, ANR report on management of salt and sand facilities, in subdivision (5), by striking out the words “including a proposed annual amount of funding that would be required to meet the timelines for covering or movement” where they appear and inserting in lieu thereof the words “including an estimate of the time necessary to cover or move all facilities requiring cover or movement and an estimated annual amount of funding that would be needed for cover or movement”

Second: In Sec. 5, fee report, by striking out the second and third sentences in their entireties and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

The Secretary of Natural Resources, after consultation with the Secretary of Transportation, shall recommend to the House Committees on Environment and on Ways and Means and the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy and on Finance a fee to be charged either by the State or by a third-party vendor for the certification of commercial salt applicators under 10 V.S.A. chapter 47, subchapter 3B and a fee to be charged to municipal salt applicators completing the salt applicator training set forth under Sec. 4 of this act. Any fee charged to commercial salt applicators or municipal salt applicators by the State or a third-party vendor for certification under the Chloride Contamination Reduction Program or under the Vermont Local Roads curriculum shall be approved by the General Assembly.

Report of Committee of Conference

S. 23.

An act relating to the use of synthetic media in elections.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

The Committee of Conference to which were referred the disagreeing votes of the two Houses upon Senate Bill entitled:

S.23 An act relating to the use of synthetic media in elections

Respectfully report that they have met and considered the same and recommends that the Senate recede from its proposal of amendment to the House proposal of amendment and that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 17 V.S.A. chapter 35, subchapter 4 is added to read:

Subchapter 4. Use of Synthetic Media in Elections

§ 2031. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media” means synthetic media that appears to a reasonable person to be a realistic representation of:

(A) a political candidate that injures the reputation of a political candidate; or

(B) an individual that attempts to unduly influence the outcome of an election, including a public question, by providing materially false information to voters.

(2) “Synthetic media” means an image, an audio recording, or a video recording of an individual’s appearance, speech, or conduct that has been created or intentionally manipulated with the use of digital technology, including artificial intelligence.

§ 2032. DISCLOSURE OF DECEPTIVE AND FRAUDULENT SYNTHETIC MEDIA

(a) Disclosure. A person shall not, within 90 days before an election in Vermont, publish, communicate, or otherwise distribute synthetic media that the person knows is deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media unless the person includes a disclosure in the synthetic media stating: “This media has been manipulated or generated by digital technology and depicts speech or conduct that did not occur.”

(1) For deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media consisting of images and video recordings, the text of the disclosure shall appear in a size that is easily readable by the average viewer and inclusive to the greatest extent possible of individuals with disabilities. For video recordings, the disclosure shall appear for the full duration of the video recording.

(2) For deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media consisting of audio recordings only, the disclosure shall be read in a clearly spoken manner and in a pitch and pace that can be easily heard by the average listener and inclusive to the greatest extent possible of individuals with disabilities, at the beginning of the audio recording, at the end of the audio recording, and, if the audio is greater than two minutes in length, interspersed within the audio recording at intervals of not greater than two minutes each.

(b) Exceptions. Subsection (a) of this section shall not apply to:

(1) a radio or television broadcasting station, including a cable or satellite television operator, programmer, or producer, or to a website, streaming platform, or mobile application, that:

(A) broadcasts deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media as part of a bona fide newscast, news interview, news documentary, commentary of general interest, or on-the-spot coverage of bona fide news events, provided the broadcast clearly acknowledges through content or a disclosure, in a manner that can be easily heard or read by the average listener or viewer, that there are questions about the authenticity of the deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media;

(B) is paid to broadcast deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media; or

(C) is required by federal law to broadcast advertisements from legally qualified candidates;

(2) a website or a regularly published newspaper, magazine, or other periodical of general circulation, including an internet or electronic publication, that routinely carries news and commentary of general interest, and that publishes deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media, if the publication clearly states that the deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media does not accurately represent the speech or conduct of the represented individual;

(3) a person that produces or distributes deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media constituting satire or parody;

(4) a provider of a telecommunications service or information service, as those terms are defined in the Communications Act of 1934, 47 U.S.C. § 153, for content provided by another person; or

(5) a provider of an interactive computer service, as defined in 47 U.S.C. § 230, for content provided by another person.

§ 2033. PENALTIES

(a) A person that knowingly and intentionally violates a provision of this subchapter shall be fined not more than \$1,000.00, unless:

(1) the person commits the violation with the intent to cause violence or bodily harm, in which case the fine shall be not more than \$5,000.00;

(2) the person commits the violation within five years after one or more prior violations under this section, in which case the fine shall be not more than \$10,000.00; or

(3) the person commits the violation with the intent to cause violence or bodily harm and the person commits the violation within five years after one or more prior violations under this section, in which case the fine shall be not more than \$15,000.00.

(b) A candidate whose appearance, speech, conduct, or environment is misrepresented through the use of deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media in violation of section 2032 of this title may seek injunctive or other equitable relief prohibiting the publication, communication, or other distribution of such deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media.

Sec. 2. 17 V.S.A. chapter 35, subchapter 5 is added to read:

Subchapter 5. Enforcement and Investigation

§ 2041. ENFORCEMENT

In addition to the other remedies provided in this chapter, a State's Attorney or the Attorney General may institute any appropriate action, injunction, or other proceeding to prevent, restrain, correct, or abate any violation of this chapter.

§ 2042. CIVIL INVESTIGATIONS

(a)(1) The Attorney General or a State's Attorney, whenever there is reason to believe any person to be or to have been in violation of this chapter, may examine or cause to be examined by any designated agent or representative any books, records, papers, memoranda, or physical objects of any nature bearing upon each alleged violation and may demand written responses under oath to questions bearing upon each alleged violation.

(2) The Attorney General or a State's Attorney may require the attendance of such person or of any other person having knowledge in the premises in the county where such person resides or has a place of business or in Washington County if such person is a nonresident or has no place of business within the State and may take testimony and require proof material for that person's information and may administer oaths or take acknowledgment in respect of any book, record, paper, or memorandum.

(3) The Attorney General or a State's Attorney shall serve notice of the time, place, and cause of such examination or attendance or notice of the cause

of the demand for written responses personally or by certified mail upon such person at that person's principal place of business or, if such place is not known, to that person's known address. Such notice shall include a statement that a knowing and intentional violation of this chapter is subject to criminal prosecution.

(4) Any book, record, paper, memorandum, or other information produced by any person pursuant to this section shall not, unless otherwise ordered by a court of this State for good cause shown, be disclosed to any person other than the authorized agent or representative of the Attorney General or a State's Attorney or another law enforcement officer engaged in legitimate law enforcement activities unless with the consent of the person producing the same, except that any transcript of oral testimony, written responses, documents, or other information produced pursuant to this section may be used in the enforcement of this chapter, including in connection with any civil action brought under this subchapter or subsection (c) of this section.

(5) Nothing in this subsection is intended to prevent the Attorney General or a State's Attorney from disclosing the results of an investigation conducted under this section, including the grounds for the decision as to whether to bring an enforcement action alleging a violation of this chapter or of any rule made pursuant to this chapter.

(6) This subsection shall not be applicable to any criminal investigation or prosecution brought under the laws of this or any state.

(b)(1) A person upon whom a notice is served pursuant to the provisions of this section shall comply with its terms unless otherwise provided by the order of a court of this State.

(2) Any person that, with intent to avoid, evade, or prevent compliance, in whole or in part, with any civil investigation under this section, removes from any place; conceals, withholds, or destroys; or mutilates, alters, or by any other means falsifies any documentary material in the possession, custody, or control of any person subject to such notice or mistakes or conceals any information shall be fined not more than \$5,000.00.

(c)(1) Whenever any person fails to comply with any notice served upon that person under this section or whenever satisfactory copying or reproduction of any such material cannot be done and the person refuses to surrender the material, the Attorney General or a State's Attorney may file, in the Superior Court in the county in which the person resides or of that person's principal place of business or in Washington County if the person is a nonresident or has no principal place of business in this State, and serve upon the person a petition for an order of the court for the enforcement of this section.

(2) Whenever any petition is filed under this section, the court shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine the matter so presented and to enter any order or orders as may be required to carry into effect the provisions of this section. Any disobedience of any order entered under this section by any court shall be punished as a contempt of the court.

(d) Any person aggrieved by a civil investigation conducted under this section may seek relief from Washington Superior Court or the Superior Court in the county in which the aggrieved person resides. Except for cases the court considers to be of greater importance, proceedings before Superior Court as authorized by this section shall take precedence on the docket over all other cases.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

*SEN. BRIAN P. COLLAMORE
SEN. TANYA C. VYHOVSKY
SEN. JOHN S. MORLEY III*

Committee on the part of the Senate

*REP. MATTHEW J. BIRONG Jr.
REP. LISA A. HANGO
REP. CHEA WATERS EVANS*

Committee on the part of the House

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Announcement: Joint Public Hearing on the Governor's Recommended FY 2027 Budget

The Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations will hold a **joint public hearing on Thursday, February 19, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.** in Room 11 of the State House. Interested parties may attend the hearing in person or virtually.

The Committees will take testimony on the Governor's recommended budget at the above date and time. **Anyone interested in testifying must sign up in advance of the hearing through the following online form not later than 10:00 a.m. on February 19, 2026, for the hearing.** Registration will be first-come, first-served and will be limited to 40 people. For those planning to testify, instructions on how to access and participate in the hearing will be sent once you have signed up for the hearing.

Online sign-up form: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/links/public-hearing-on-fy27-budget>

For those not planning to testify, the hearing will be available to watch live on YouTube at the following link:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/streaming/house-appropriations>

Written testimony is encouraged and can be submitted electronically through email at testimony@vtleg.gov or mailed to the House Committee on Appropriations, c/o Autumn Crabtree, 115 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05633. For more information about the format of the event, contact Autumn Crabtree at Autumn.Crabtree@vtleg.gov or Elle Oille-Stanforth at Elle.Oille-Stanforth@vtleg.gov

Announcement: Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Department of Motor Vehicles' Inspection Manual and [S.211](#)

Room 10, [Broadcast via YouTube](#)

The Vermont Senate Committee on Transportation will hold a **public hearing on February 24 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.** in Room 10 of the State House. Interested parties may attend the hearing in person or virtually.

The Committee will take testimony on the proposed changes to the Department of Motor Vehicles' Inspection Manual and [S.211](#), a bill that proposes to require that motor vehicles be inspected every two years. [Proposed changes to the Inspection Manual](#) can be reviewed on the Committee's website. **Anyone interested in testifying must sign up in advance of the hearing through the following online form no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 18.** For those planning to testify, instructions on how to access and participate in the hearing will be sent the morning of the hearing.

Online sign-up form: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/s211-public-hearing>

For those not planning to testify, the hearing will be available to watch live on YouTube at the following link:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/streaming/senate-transportation>.

Written testimony is encouraged and can be submitted through email at testimony@leg.state.vt.us or mailed to the Senate Committee on Transportation, c/o Megan Cannella, 115 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05633.

For more information about the format of this event, contact Megan Cannella at Megan.Cannella@vtleg.gov.

NOTICE OF JOINT ASSEMBLY

Thursday, February 19, 2026 - 10:30 A.M. – House Chamber - Election of an Adjutant and Inspector General, and of two (2) trustees for the Vermont State Colleges Corporation.

The following rules shall apply to the conduct of these elections:

First: All nominations for these offices will be presented in alphabetical order prior to voting.

Second: There will be only one nominating speech of not more than three (3) minutes and not more than two seconding speeches of not more than one (1) minute each for each nominee.

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 #3271: \$218,385.00 to the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services from the U.S. Department of Justice. Funds will be used to consolidate data into one case management system.

[Received January 27, 2026]

JFO #3272: \$195,053,740.00 to the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Central Office from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Participation in the Rural Health Transformation Plan (RHTP) will help to ensure long-term health care system sustainability in Vermont. This grant includes two (2) limited-service positions (LSP): one (1) Health Care Reform Integration Manager to the Office of Health Care Reform and one (1) Financial Manager II to the Agency of Human Services Central Office. Both limited positions are expected to last through 9/30/2031.

[Received January 27, 2026]

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

CROSSOVER DATES

The Joint Rules Committee established the following crossover deadlines:

(1) All **Senate/House** bills must be reported out of the last committee of reference (including the Committees on Appropriations and Finance/Ways and Means, except as provided below in (2) and the exceptions listed below) on or

before **Friday, March 13, 2026**, and filed with the Secretary/Clerk so they may be placed on the Calendar for Notice the next legislative day. - Committee bills must be voted out of Committee by **Friday, March 13, 2026**.

(2) All **Senate/House** bills referred pursuant to Senate Rule 31 or House Rule 35(a) to the Committees on Appropriations and Finance/Ways and Means must be reported out by the last of those committees on or before **Friday, March 20, 2026**, and filed with the Secretary/Clerk so they may be placed on the Calendar for Notice the next legislative day.

Note: The Senate will not act on bills that do not meet these crossover deadlines, without the consent of the Senate Rules Committee.

Exceptions to the foregoing deadlines include the major money bills (the General Appropriations Bill (“The Big Bill”), the Transportation Capital Bill, the Capital Construction Bill, and the Fee/Revenue Bills)