

Journal of the House

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Rev. Peter Plagge, Waterbury Congregational Church.

Message from the Governor

A message was received from His Excellency, the Governor, by Ms. Brittney L. Wilson, Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, as follows:

Madam Speaker:

I am directed by the Governor to inform the House of Representatives that on the 15th day of January 2025, pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 2002(b), I am herewith enclosing the following Executive Order:

01-25 Creation of the Agency of Public Safety

Text of the Executive Order 05-21

“STATE OF VERMONT

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 01-25

[Creation of the Agency of Public Safety]

WHEREAS, the Governor, pursuant to Vermont Constitution Chapter II, Section 3 and Section 20, and 3 V.S.A. Section 2001 and Section 2002, subject to the Vermont Constitution Chapter II, Section 6, may make such changes in the organization of the Executive Branch or in the assignment of functions among its units as he considers necessary for efficient administration; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Vermont, Chapter II, Section 6 provides that no bill, resolution or other thing which shall have been passed by one house of the General Assembly shall have the effect of or be declared to be a law without the concurrence of the other, ensuring no action by a single house, committee or agent of the General Assembly may be binding on the Executive Branch; and

WHEREAS, any organizational changes made by the Governor, pursuant to 3 V.S.A. Section 2001 and Section 2002, shall be subject to disapproval by both houses of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, it is desirable to reorganize the agencies, departments and divisions of government to better coordinate certain activities and improve the coordination and effectiveness of services to the public; and

WHEREAS, the workload and responsibilities of the Department of Public Safety have been ever increasing over time including:

- Statewide law enforcement provided by the Vermont State Police.
- The response capabilities for the entirety of Vermont offered by special teams from both the Vermont State Police and the Division of Fire Safety.
- The Division of Emergency Management (VEM) is responsible for disaster response, recovery, and mitigation as well as management of the State Emergency Operations Center; VEM's responsibilities will only increase as Vermont faces the dynamic impacts of climate change.
- Broad responsibilities of the Division of Fire Safety.
- Numerous support services including Radio Technology and Crime Information, as well as management of Vermont's only accredited forensic lab.
- Animal welfare.

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Safety has demonstrated strong leadership in expanding alternative crisis response methodologies such as field mental health workers; providing enhanced statewide model policies in key areas, including use of force; leading efforts to reduce violent crime in Vermont communities; and communication and public safety information and technology systems that support every community in the state; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Safety's leadership serves as the State's designated Homeland Security Advisors to the Governor and is tasked with monitoring intelligence, coordinating planning and response to all hazard threats to the State, its populace and its Critical Infrastructure sectors; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Safety has established, together with the Agency of Education, the Vermont School Safety Center; and

WHEREAS a new division of Animal Welfare was statutorily added to the Department of Public Safety in 2024; and

WHEREAS, the expansion of responsibilities accruing to the Department of Public Safety in service to the Governor's Constitutional duty to faithfully execute the laws and the public health and safety needs of Vermonters statewide, necessitate the elevation of the Department of Public Safety to a cabinet-level agency.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Philip B. Scott, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor of Vermont by the Constitution of the State of Vermont, Chapter II, Section 3 and Section 20, 3 V.S.A. § 209, 3 V.S.A. Chapter 41 and 32 V.S.A. § 704a, do hereby create an Agency of Public Safety which shall be successor to the Department of Public Safety as follows:

1. All duties, obligations, responsibilities and authority, including all contracts, grant agreements, service level agreements and MOUs of the Department of Public Safety are hereby transferred to the Agency of Public Safety.
2. All financial assets and liabilities, including all appropriations associated with the positions transferred pursuant to paragraph 3 below, of the Department of Public Safety are hereby transferred to the Agency of Public Safety.
3. All authorized positions, functions, equipment, supplies and inventory of the Department of Public Safety are transferred to the Agency of Public Safety.
4. The positions of Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety and Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety are abolished and all the duties, responsibilities, and authority, including board, committee and council memberships, of the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner are hereby transferred to the Secretary of the Agency of Public Safety and the Deputy Secretary of the Agency of Public Safety, respectively.
5. The Secretary shall be directly responsible to the Governor and shall plan, coordinate and direct the functions vested in the Agency. The Secretary shall prepare and submit to the Governor an annual budget for the Agency.
6. Effective April 16, 2025, the Agency of Public Safety shall be headed by the Secretary appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.
7. Effective April 16, 2025, the Secretary of the Agency of Public Safety may appoint a Deputy Secretary, with the approval of the Governor, who shall be exempt from the classified service.

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8. Effective April 16, 2025, the Agency of Public Safety shall consist of a Division Fire Safety, a Division of Law Enforcement and Homeland Security, a Division of Emergency Management, a Division of Administration and Finance, a Division of Animal Welfare, a Division of the Forensic Laboratory, a Division of Radio Technology Services and a Division of the Vermont Crime Information Center, as follows:
- A. The Division of Fire Safety shall be headed by an Executive Director and organized into four offices, each reporting to the Executive Director of Fire Safety through a program manager:
 - 1) Administration – (Plan Review, Permitting, Code Inspection and Public Fire Education)
 - 2) Licensing, Certification and Rule Making Office
 - 3) Special Teams
 - a) HazMat Team
 - b) USAR/Swiftwater Team
 - c) Fire and Explosive Investigation Unit
 - 4) Training Office – Vermont Fire Academy
 - B. The Division of Law Enforcement and Homeland Security shall be headed by the Colonel who shall be the senior commander of the Vermont State Police.
 - C. The Division of Emergency Management shall be headed by a Director and organized into the following five sections:
 - 1) Planning
 - 2) Engagement
 - 3) Operations and Logistics
 - 4) Recovery
 - 5) Mitigation
 - D. The Division of Administration and Finance shall be headed by a Director and organized into the following offices:
 - 1) Accounting
 - 2) Budgeting
 - 3) Grant Management
 - 4) Procurement
 - 5) Audit and Payroll

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- E. The Division of Animal Welfare shall be headed by a Director.
 - F. The Division of the Vermont Forensic Laboratory shall be headed by a Director and shall be organized into the following sections:
 - 1) Chemistry
 - 2) Biology
 - 3) Toxicology
 - 4) Physical Comparison
 - 5) Quality Control and Accreditation
 - 6) Evidence Management and Control
 - G. The Division of Radio Technology Services shall be headed by a Director.
 - H. The Division of the VT Crime Information Center, including the Sex Offender Registry, shall be headed by a Director.

The Colonel and all Executive Directors and Directors shall be appointed by the Secretary with the approval of the Governor. The Director of the Division of Fire Safety and the Director of Emergency Management shall be exempt from the classified service. The Colonel shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

The Secretary of the Agency of Public Safety shall be a member of the Governor's Cabinet which consists of the Secretaries of the agencies as are created by law, as well as such Commissioners of the departments created by law as the Governor determines shall appoint to be members of the Cabinet.

This Executive Order shall be submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 2002, subject to the Vermont Constitution Chapter II, Section 6, and shall take effect on April 16, 2025, unless disapproved by both houses of the General Assembly.

WITNESS my name hereunto subscribed and the Great Seal of the State of Vermont hereunto affixed at Montpelier this 15th day of January 2025.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

By the Governor:
Brittney L. Wilson, Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs
Executive Order 01-25"

Message from the Senate No. 6

A message was received from the Senate by Ms. Gradel, its Assistant Secretary, as follows:

Madam Speaker:

I am directed to inform the House that:

The Senate has on its part adopted joint resolution of the following title:

J.R.S. 7. Joint resolution to provide for a Joint Assembly to hear the budget message of the Governor.

In the adoption of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

House Bills Introduced

House bills of the following titles were severally introduced, read the first time, and referred to committee as follows:

H. 33

By Reps. Headrick of Burlington, Burrows of West Windsor, Chapin of East Montpelier, Greer of Bennington, Krasnow of South Burlington, LaMont of Morristown, Logan of Burlington, McCann of Montpelier, McGill of Bridport, Priestley of Bradford, Stevens of Waterbury, Tomlinson of Winooski, Waszazak of Barre City, and White of Bethel,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to expanding employee access to unpaid leave

To the Committee on General and Housing.

H. 34

By Reps. Marcotte of Coventry, Bosch of Clarendon, Boutin of Barre City, Cooper of Pownal, Duke of Burlington, Graning of Jericho, Micklus of Milton, Olson of Starksboro, Priestley of Bradford, and White of Bethel,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to workforce leadership in Vermont

To the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development.

H. 35

By Rep. Houghton of Essex Junction,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to unmerging the individual and small group health insurance markets

To the Committee on Health Care.

H. 36

By Reps. Goodnow of Brattleboro and LaLonde of South Burlington,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to family forensic evaluators

To the Committee on Judiciary.

H. 37

By Rep. Harrison of Chittenden,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the consolidation of Vermont's school districts to align with career and technical education service regions

To the Committee on Education.

Joint Resolution Adopted in Concurrence

J.R.S. 6

By Senator Baruth,

J.R.S. 6. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on January 17, 2025.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, January 17, 2025, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, January 21, 2025.

Was taken up, read, and adopted in concurrence.

Adjournment

At three o'clock and seventeen minutes in the afternoon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until tomorrow at three o'clock in the afternoon.