

Journal of the House

Friday, April 11, 2025

At nine o'clock and thirty minutes in the forenoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Rep. Mike Mrowicki and Amelia Struthers of Putney.

House Bills Introduced

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

H. 504

By Reps. Howard of Rutland City, Howland of Rutland Town, Keyser of Rutland City, and Maguire of Rutland City,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the City of Rutland

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 505

By Reps. Galfetti of Barre Town and McFaun of Barre Town,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Barre

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 506

By Rep. Waters Evans of Charlotte,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to approval of the adoption of the charter of the Town of Charlotte

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

Third Reading; Bill Passed in Concurrence**S. 3**

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to the transfer of property to a trust

Was taken up, read the third time, and passed in concurrence.

Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered**H. 293**

Rep. Eastes of Guilford, for the Committee on Human Services, to which had been referred House bill, entitled

An act relating to health equity data reporting and registry disclosure requirements

Reported in favor of its passage when amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Health Equity Data Reporting * * *

Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. § 253 is amended to read:

§ 253. DATA RESPONSIVE TO HEALTH EQUITY INQUIRIES

* * *

(b)(1) The Department of Health shall systematically analyze such health equity data using the smallest appropriate units of analysis feasible to detect racial and ethnic disparities, as well as disparities along the lines of primary language, sex, disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status, and report the results of such analysis on the Department's website periodically, but not less than biannually. The Department's analysis shall be used to measure over time the impact of actions taken to reduce health disparities in Vermont. The data informing the Department's analysis shall be made available to the public in accordance with State and federal law.

(2) Annually Every three years beginning in 2028, on or before January 15, the Department shall submit a report containing the results of the analysis conducted pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and to the House Committees on Health Care and on Human Services.

* * * Cancer Registry Disclosure Requirements * * *

Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 155 is amended to read:

§ 155. DISCLOSURE

* * *

(b) The Commissioner may furnish confidential information to the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, other states' cancer registries, federal cancer control agencies, or health researchers in order to collaborate in a national cancer registry or to collaborate in cancer control and prevention research studies. However, before releasing confidential information, the Commissioner shall first obtain from such state registries, agencies, or researchers ~~an agreement in writing to keep~~ written assurances acceptable to the Commissioner that the identifying information shall be kept confidential and privileged as required by law. In the case of researchers, the Commissioner shall also first obtain written evidence of the approval of ~~their academic committee for the protection of human subjects established in accordance with 45 C.F.R. part 46~~ an institutional review board or privacy board in accordance with 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (B).

* * * Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Registry Disclosure Requirements * * *

Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. § 174 is amended to read:

§ 174. CONFIDENTIALITY

(a)(1) All identifying information regarding an individual patient or health care provider is exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept confidential.

(2) Notwithstanding subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Commissioner may enter into data sharing and protection agreements with researchers or state, regional, or national amyotrophic lateral sclerosis registries for bidirectional data exchange, provided access under such agreements is consistent with the privacy, security, and disclosure protections in this chapter. In the case of researchers, the Commissioner shall also first obtain written evidence of the approval of ~~their academic committee for the protection of human subjects established in accordance with 45 C.F.R. Part 46~~ an institutional review board or privacy board in accordance with 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (B). The Commissioner shall disclose the minimum information necessary to accomplish a specified research purpose.

* * *

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, the report of the Committee on Human Services agreed to, and third reading ordered.

Recess

At ten o'clock and two minutes in the forenoon, the Speaker declared a recess until the fall of the gavel.

Call to Order

At twelve o'clock and twenty-three minutes in the afternoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

**Amendment Offered and Withdrawn; Bill Amended;
Amendment Offered and Withdrawn; Bill Amended; Amendment
Offered; Third Reading; Bill Passed**

H. 454

House bill, entitled

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

Was taken up and, pending third reading of the bill, **Rep. Greer of Bennington** moved to amend the bill as follows:

First: In Sec. 2, 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 1, in subdivision (j)(1)(A)(viii), following "all grade levels from kindergarten through grade 12" by adding ", including use of a supervisory union structure where necessary to maintain existing tuition structures"

Second: By adding a new section to be Sec. 27a to read as follows:

Sec. 27a. TUITION PAYMENT; SCHOOL OPERATION; INTENT

(a) All governance transitions contemplated pursuant to this act shall preserve the ability of a district that, as of the effective date of this section, provides for the education of all resident students in one or more grades by paying tuition on the students' behalf, to continue to provide education by paying tuition on behalf of all students in the grade or grades if it chooses to do so and shall not result in the consolidation of any district into a merged entity with a dissimilar operating or tuitioning structure.

(b) Nothing in this act shall be construed to restrict or repeal, or to authorize, encourage, or contemplate the restriction or repeal of, the ability of a school district that, as of the effective date of this section, provides for the education of all resident students in one or more grades:

(1) by paying tuition on the students' behalf, to continue to provide education by paying tuition on behalf of all students in the grade or grades; or

(2) by operating a school offering the grade or grades, to continue to provide education by operating a school for all students in the grade or grades.

Third: In Sec. 95, effective dates, by striking out subsection (b) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (b) to read as follows:

(b) The following sections shall take effect on July 1, 2025:

(1) Sec. 3 (scale; intent);

(2) Sec. 6 (SBE rules; report);

(3) Sec. 7 (school size; intent);

(4) Sec. 8 (school closure);

(5) Sec. 11 (16 V.S.A. § 3443);

(6) Sec. 12 (School Construction Advisory Board sunset);

(7) Sec. 18 (16 V.S.A. § 828);

(8) Sec. 19 (tuition transition);

(9) Sec. 20 (statewide cohesion; intent);

(10) Sec. 21 (AOE report; school calendar; graduation requirements);

(11) Sec. 22 (State-level governance; intent);

(12) Sec. 23 (16 V.S.A. § 161);

(13) Sec. 24 (SBE appointments transition);

(14) Sec. 25 (16 V.S.A. § 162);

(15) Sec. 26 (SBE rule review; appropriation);

(16) Sec. 27a (tuition payment; school operation; intent);

(17) Sec. 31 (special education report);

(18) Sec. 32 (AOE special education strategic plan);

(19) Sec. 33 (AOE position); and

(20) Sec. 93 (PVR hearing officer pay).

Thereupon, **Rep. Greer of Bennington** asked and was granted leave of the House to withdraw the amendment.

Pending third reading of the bill, **Reps. Toof of St. Albans Town and Houghton of Essex Junction** moved to amend the bill as follows:

First: In Sec. 2, 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 1, by striking out subdivision (b)(2) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subdivision (b)(2) to read as follows:

(2) Nonvoting members. The following nine members shall be nonvoting members of the Commission who shall be appointed on or before July 15, 2025:

(A) Nonlegislative members. There shall be five nonlegislative, nonvoting members, all of whom shall have extensive experience working within the Vermont public education system. Appointing authorities shall coordinate to ensure that, to the extent possible, each of the five nonvoting members represents a different geographic region of the State.

(i) Two members, appointed by the Speaker of the House, one of whom shall be a retired or former Vermont superintendent of a supervisory union with multiple member school districts and one of whom shall be either a retired or former Vermont school business manager or a retired or former school board member.

(ii) Two members, appointed by the Committee on Committees, one of whom shall be a retired or former Vermont superintendent and one of whom shall be a retired or former Vermont school business manager.

(iii) One member, appointed by the Governor, who shall be a retired or former Vermont superintendent.

(B) Legislative members. There shall be four legislative, nonvoting members.

(i) Two current members of the House of Representatives, not all from the same political party or same school district, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House.

(ii) Two current members of the Senate, not all from the same political party or same school district, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees.

Second: In Sec. 2, 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 1, in subsection (j), following “to be composed of the” by striking out the word “five” and inserting in lieu thereof the word “nine”

Third: By adding a new reader assistance heading and section to be Sec. 2b to read as follows:

* * * School District Voting Ward Task Force * * *

Sec. 2a. SCHOOL DISTRICT VOTING WARD TASK FORCE; REPORT;
MAPS

(a) Creation. There is created the School District Voting Ward Task Force to create voting district wards within the new school districts contemplated by this act, to ensure school board membership is apportioned in such a manner as to achieve substantially equal weighting of the votes of all voters in the choice of school board members.

(b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following members who shall have substantial understanding of Vermont geography, trade, travel, social interaction, and Vermont's public education system:

(1) the Secretary of State or designee, who shall be the chair;

(2) three members, who shall be appointed by the Vermont Municipal Clerk Treasurer Association;

(3) two members, appointed by the Vermont School Boards Association;
and

(4) the Director of the Vermont Center for Geographic Information or designee.

(c) Powers and duties. On or before October 15, 2025, the Task Force shall consult with the school district boundary subcommittee created in Sec. 2 of this act to gain an understanding of the status of the work of the subcommittee and to determine whether the subcommittee has one or more boundary proposals ready for the Task Force to begin the work of creating voting wards. Using the boundary proposals of the subcommittee, the Task Force shall, following the principles of apportionment followed by the legislative apportionment board, make recommendations to the General Assembly to achieve voting districts within each school district that are compact, contiguous, and drawn to achieve substantially equal weighting of votes and that meet the requirements of applicable State and federal law. If at any time during the work of the Task Force the General Assembly enacts new school district boundaries, or it appears clear the General Assembly is focused on only one proposal, the Task Force shall focus its work and recommendations to align with the work of the General Assembly. The Task Force's recommendations shall include:

(1) the optimal number of school board members per school board to maximize public representation and democratic input while maintaining effective school board size; and

(2) boundaries for school district voting wards within each school district, with alternative options if necessary, including detailed maps clearly and unambiguously delineating ward boundaries that respect current municipal boundary lines.

(d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Secretary of State's office and the technical assistance of the Agency of Digital Services, Vermont Center for Geographic Information. The Task Force may contract for such expert services as may be necessary to carry out its duties.

(e) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of State shall call the first meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before July 15, 2025.

(2) The Secretary of State shall be the chair.

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

(4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on June 30, 2026.

(f) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Task Force shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 10 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Secretary of State's office.

Fourth: By adding a new section to be Sec. 61b to read as follows:

Sec. 61b. PROPERTY TAX CLASSIFICATIONS IMPLEMENTATION
REPORT

The Commissioner of Taxes shall study the implementation of new property tax classifications under this act and identify any further actions required by the Department of Taxes, Vermont municipalities, and the General Assembly to successfully implement the new tax classification system on the timeline established by this act. The issues considered by the Commissioner shall include any needed changes to existing forms, whether new forms or taxpayer filings are needed, and how the Department could identify parcels with dwelling units that do not have an affiliated homestead declaration or landlord certificate on file. On or before December 15, 2026, the Commissioner of Taxes shall submit a study report detailing the Commissioner's findings under this section to the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Committee on Finance.

Fifth: In Sec. 95, effective dates, by striking out subsection (a) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (a) to read as follows:

(a) This section and the following sections shall take effect on passage:

- (1) Sec. 1 (findings; intent; plan);
- (2) Sec. 2 (Commission on the Future of Public Education);
- (3) Sec. 2a (School District Voting Ward Task Force);
- (4) Sec. 29 (16 V.S.A. § 4011(f));
- (5) Sec. 30 (adult education funding report);
- (6) Sec. 44 (transportation reimbursement guidelines);
- (7) Sec. 45 (inflationary measures; prekindergarten; reports);
- (8) Sec. 53 (homestead declaration sample form);
- (9) Sec. 61a (tax classification data; transition);
- (10) Sec. 61b (property tax classifications implementation report)
- (11) Sec. 63 (RAD transition; annual progress report);
- (12) Sec. 64 (RAD stakeholder working group);
- (13) Sec. 91 (correction of inadvertently removed language);
- (14) Sec. 92 (minimum debt for tax sales); and
- (15) Sec. 94 (property tax credit late fee).

Which was agreed to.

Pending third reading of the bill, **Rep. Galfetti of Barre Town** moved to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Findings and Intent * * *

Sec. 1. FINDINGS; INTENT

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) The study commissioned in 2024 titled “An Evidence-Based Approach to Identifying an Adequate Education Spending Level in Vermont” by Allan Odden and Lawrence O. Picus evaluated Vermont education spending against research-informed best practices. The evidence-based model is designed to identify an array of staffing and resources that high-performing schools need to provide every student with robust opportunities to meet college and career-ready standards. Performing to those standards would

substantially improve student achievement and reduce demographic related performance gaps.

(2) The evidence-based model represents an adequate model for the level of education funding necessary to improve student achievement. It was developed by experts in education funding with more than 25 years of experience across the United States in determining how to adequately fund schools, meaning providing a level of resources that would enable schools to provide every student with an equal opportunity to learn to high performance standards. The State has a Constitutional obligation to ensure that all students are provided a quality education on a reasonably equal basis, without regard to town of residence. Doing so will require significant change to the current system of education.

(3) Vermont's current funding model equalizes school district's ability to raise education taxes, leveling out the distinctions in property wealth among districts. The current funding system does not provide equalized education dollars to districts. The choice to spend or not spend equitable amounts of education funding per student across the State rests with individual districts. Spending patterns demonstrate that many districts do not utilize the tax equalization mechanisms to increase spending, even in the districts with the most demonstrated student need.

(4) Vermont's current school and school district sizes do not align with the Evidence-Based Model, and contribute to higher costs that are not fully addressed by the Model. In order to ensure the Model can be implemented in a way that improves education quality, the State must be organized into larger school districts that are responsible for approximately at minimum 3,900 students, a population that represents the minimum to achieve efficiency in delivering the Evidence-Based Model.

(5) Additionally, larger school districts, consistent with State-level guidance for school size, average class size, and budgetary priorities, must examine the appropriate number of schools for the student population, geography, student need, and community desires of the school district.

(6) The intent of the proposed five districts is to charge school boards to represent a diverse set of student and community needs to promote equitable budgeting and district policies and to create central offices that provide specialized resources and support for students and teachers in alignment with best practices for teaching and learning.

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 43 is amended to read:

§ 43. FEDERAL EDUCATION AID FUNDS; ADMINISTRATION; LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY

(a) The Agency, as sole state agency, may administer federal funds made available to the State under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Public L. No. 89-10, as amended, and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Public L. No. 107-110. Those funds may be accepted and shall be distributed and accounted for by the State Treasurer in accordance with that law and rules and regulations of the United States issued under it if there is conflict between that law or those rules and regulations and the laws of this State.

(b) For purposes of distribution of funds under this section, a ~~supervisory union~~ school district shall be a local education agency as that term is defined in 20 U.S.C. § 7801(26).

(c) For purposes of determining student performance and application of consequences for failure to meet standards and for provision of compensatory and remedial services pursuant to 20 U.S.C. §§ 6311–6318, a ~~supervisory union~~ school district shall be a local education agency.

Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 212 is amended to read:

§ 212. SECRETARY'S DUTIES GENERALLY

The Secretary shall articulate a long-term strategic vision for educational services in the State, through engagement of the education community; shall execute those policies adopted by the State Board in the legal exercise of its powers; and shall:

(1) Coordinate the educational work of the public schools with higher education in the State.

(2) Identify the educational goals of the public schools, provide alternative methods of attaining those goals, and promote education in the State.

(3) ~~Evaluate the program of instruction in the public schools~~ Establish, through rulemaking, education and district quality standards to evaluate the quality of instruction and operations in the public and school choice schools.

(4) Advise the General Assembly concerning proposed laws affecting the public schools.

(5) Supervise and direct the execution of the laws relating to the public schools and ensure compliance.

(6) Supervise the expenditure and distribution of all money appropriated by the State under the provisions of this title for public schools.

(7) Arrange conferences and summer schools for superintendents and teachers and employ suitable speakers, lecturers, and instructors for the same; fix the amount of tuition for the instruction; provide for educational gatherings, institutes, summer schools, and other supplementary educational activities; and provide for cooperation with the Board of Libraries established by 22 V.S.A. § 602 or the State Librarian.

~~(8) Inform citizens of the condition of and opportunities within the public education system and provide other educational publicity for the enlightenment and well-being of the citizens of the State~~ Provide clear, transparent and high quality information to citizens regarding the condition and opportunities within the public education system.

~~(9) Establish requirements for information to be submitted by school districts, including necessary statistical data and other information, and ensure, to the extent possible, that data are reported in a uniform way. Data collected under this subdivision shall include budget surplus amounts, reserve fund amounts, and information concerning the purpose and use of any reserve funds.~~

(10) Make recommendations to school boards regarding transportation policies.

~~(11) Provide an educational facilities planning service to make available technical assistance and comprehensive information on school construction, school systems design, component technology and suppliers, and similar subjects to public schools, school districts, and independent schools, for the purpose of helping them to achieve flexibility and economy in construction, to retain the potential for modification and expansion of educational facilities, and to attain the lowest maintenance costs consistent with educational needs. [Repealed.]~~

(12) Distribute at his or her the Secretary's discretion upon request to approved independent schools appropriate forms and materials relating to the education quality standards for elementary and secondary students.

(13) Ensure the provision of services to children and adolescents with a severe emotional disturbance in coordination with the Departments of Mental Health, for Children and Families, and of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living pursuant to the provisions of 33 V.S.A. chapter 43.

(14) Annually, communicate to each superintendent a list of information that ~~a supervisory union, a school board, a school district, a school, or a school district employee, or a supervisory union employee~~ is required under State or

federal law to make available to the electorate, community members, parents, or students. It is the intent of this subdivision that the Secretary shall make a good faith effort to compile a complete list of the information to be made available. Due to the difficult nature of compiling such a list, it is also the intent that failure to include relevant information on the list shall not constitute grounds for an action against the Secretary.

(15) Annually, with the Commissioner of Health, shall jointly inform superintendents and principals of appropriate practices regarding students with life-threatening allergies and chronic illnesses; and prepare and distribute policies, training materials, and school guidelines for managing students with life-threatening allergies and chronic illnesses, including family responsibilities, school responsibilities, and student responsibilities.

(16) Annually, convene a meeting of directors of Vermont educator preparation programs and representatives of school boards, superintendents, principals, educators, and the Vermont Standards Board to determine subject and geographic areas in which there is a critical need for educators and to discuss ways to meet the need.

(17) Encourage and facilitate collaboration among school districts ~~and supervisory unions~~ to share information and expertise regarding low-incidence special education needs.

(18) Annually, inform superintendents and principals of regional resources available to assist schools to provide instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of automated external defibrillators and provide updated information to the education community regarding the provision of a comprehensive health education.

(19) Establish an information clearinghouse and accessible database to help districts share information about educational programs and practices that improve student performance. Educational programs and practices include those designed to create and sustain a safe learning environment.

(20) Develop, in consultation with the Secretary of State, and make available to school boards sample ballot language for issues that may be decided by Australian ballot and for which no statutory language exists.

(21) Prepare a budget for the Agency and submit it to the Governor after review by the State Board.

(22) Annually, prior to September 1, present the Governor's education policy priorities to the State Board.

(23) Make regulations governing the attendance and records of attendance of all students and the department of students attending public schools.

(24) Implement and continually update standards for student performance in appropriate content areas and at appropriate intervals in the continuum from kindergarten to grade 12 and methods of assessment to determine attainment of the standards for student performance. The standards shall be rigorous, challenging, and designed to prepare students to participate in and contribute to the democratic process and to compete in the global marketplace. The standards shall include a standard for reading level proficiency for students completing grade three.

(25) By rule, determine statewide graduation standards.

(26) Provide oversight for adult education and literacy programs and perform all the duties and powers prescribed by law pertaining to adult education and literacy and to act as the State approval agency for educational institutions conducting programs of adult education and literacy.

(27) Report annually on the condition of education statewide and on a school district basis. The report shall include information on attainment of standards for student performance adopted under subdivision (24) of this section, the number and types of complaints of hazing, harassment, or bullying made pursuant to chapter 9, subchapter 5 of this title and responses to the complaints; financial resources and expenditures; and community social indicators. The report shall be organized and presented in a way that is easily understandable by the general public and that enables each school and school district to determine its strengths and weaknesses. To the extent consistent with State and federal privacy laws and regulations, data on hazing, harassment, or bullying incidents shall be disaggregated by incident type, including disaggregation by ethnic groups, racial groups, religious groups, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, and English language learner status. The Secretary shall use the information in the report to determine whether students in each school and school district are provided educational opportunities substantially equal to those provided in other schools and school districts pursuant to subsection 165(b) of this title.

(28) Ensure that Vermont's students, including students enrolled in secondary career technical education, have access to a substantially equal educational opportunity by developing a system to evaluate the equalizing effects of Vermont's education finance system and education quality standards under section 165 of this title.

Sec. 4. 16 V.S.A. § 164 is amended to read:

§ 164. STATE BOARD; GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES

The State Board shall engage local school board members ~~and the broader education community~~ and, consistent with the provisions of this title, its own rules, and rules adopted by the Secretary, ~~establish and regularly update~~ contribute to a long-term strategic vision articulated by the Secretary of Education for the delivery of educational services in Vermont; ~~advise the General Assembly, the Governor, and the Secretary of Education on high-priority educational policies and issues as they arise;~~ and act in accordance with legislative mandates, including ~~the adoption of rules and~~ executing special assignments. In addition to other specified duties, the Board shall:

(1) Establish such advisory commissions as in the judgment of the Board will be of assistance to it in carrying out its duties. Advisory commission members shall serve with or without compensation at the discretion of the Board but shall receive actual expenses incurred in pursuance of their duties.

(2) Have the authority to enter into agreements with school districts, municipalities, states, the United States, foundations, agencies, or individuals for service, educational programs, or research projects.

(3) Examine and determine all appeals that by law are made to it and prescribe rules of practice in respect thereto, not inconsistent with law.

(4) [Repealed.]

(5) [Repealed.]

(6) ~~Make regulations governing the attendance and records of attendance of all students and the deportment of students attending public schools.~~ [Repealed.]

(7) Adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to carry out the powers and duties of the Board as directed by the General Assembly, within the limitations of legislative intent.

(8) [Repealed.]

(9) ~~Implement and continually update standards for student performance in appropriate content areas and at appropriate intervals in the continuum from kindergarten to grade 12 and methods of assessment to determine attainment of the standards for student performance. The standards shall be rigorous, challenging, and designed to prepare students to participate in and contribute to the democratic process and to compete in the global marketplace. The~~

~~standards shall include a standard for reading level proficiency for students completing grade three. [Repealed.]~~

~~(10) [Repealed.]~~

~~(11) If deemed advisable, determine educational standards for admission to and graduation from the public schools. [Repealed.]~~

~~(12) [Repealed.]~~

~~(13) Be the State Board for the program of adult education and literacy and perform all the duties and powers prescribed by law pertaining to adult education and literacy and to act as the State approval agency for educational institutions conducting programs of adult education and literacy. [Repealed.]~~

~~(14) Adopt rules for approval of independent schools. [Repealed.]~~

~~(15) Establish criteria governing the establishment of a system for the receipt, deposit, accounting, and disbursement of all funds by supervisory unions and school districts. [Repealed.]~~

~~(16) In cooperation with the Secretary, ensure that the Agency develops information, plans, and assistance to aid in making technology and telecommunications available and coordinated in all school districts. The State Board shall develop guidelines for distribution of federal, State, or private funds designated for the development or expansion of distance learning technologies. The guidelines shall encourage, consistent with any terms or conditions established by the funding source, collaboration between schools and school districts to realize economic and educational efficiencies. [Repealed.]~~

~~(17) Report annually on the condition of education statewide and on a supervisory union and school district basis. The report shall include information on attainment of standards for student performance adopted under subdivision (9) of this section, number and types of complaints of hazing, harassment, or bullying made pursuant to chapter 9, subchapter 5 of this title and responses to the complaints, financial resources and expenditures, and community social indicators. The report shall be organized and presented in a way that is easily understandable by the general public and that enables each school, school district, and supervisory union to determine its strengths and weaknesses. To the extent consistent with State and federal privacy laws and regulations, data on hazing, harassment, or bullying incidents shall be disaggregated by incident type, including disaggregation by ethnic groups, racial groups, religious groups, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, and English language learner status. The Secretary shall use the information in the report to determine whether students in each school, school district, and supervisory union are provided educational opportunities~~

~~substantially equal to those provided in other schools, school districts, and supervisory unions pursuant to subsection 165(b) of this title. [Repealed.]~~

~~(18) Ensure that Vermont's students, including students enrolled in secondary career technical education, have access to a substantially equal educational opportunity by developing a system to evaluate the equalizing effects of Vermont's education finance system and education quality standards under section 165 of this title. [Repealed.]~~

~~(19) [Repealed.]~~

~~(20) Pursuant to section 806g of this title, constitute the State Council for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and appoint to the Council a Compact Commissioner and Military Family Education Liaison, who may be the same person. The Board may appoint additional members.~~

~~(21) Report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly on the progress the Board has made on the development of education policy for the State in the execution of its enumerated duties.~~

~~(22) Administer a statewide contract to provide annual training to school board members on educational leadership and the roles and responsibilities of the school district board. The State Board will select an appropriate training vendor to speak to the Vermont context and to be informed by research-based best practices.~~

~~(23) Annually, review each school district's adopted equity budget policy, and coordinate with school districts on the content and implementation considerations for those policies.~~

~~(24) Annually, review the outcome of the District Quality Standards evaluation of school board proficiency published by the Agency of Education. The State Board shall convene public discussions with each school district to identify areas for improvement and to define the role of the school board in improving districtwide practices.~~

Sec. 5. 16 V.S.A. § 165 is amended as follows:

§ 165. EDUCATION QUALITY STANDARDS; EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES; ~~INDEPENDENT SCHOOL MEETING~~
EDUCATION QUALITY STANDARDS

(a) In order to carry out Vermont's policy that all Vermont children will be afforded educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality, each Vermont public school, including each career technical center, shall meet the following education quality standards:

(1) The school, through a process including parents, teachers, students, and community members, develops, implements, and annually updates a continuous improvement plan to improve student performance within the school. The plan shall include goals and objectives for improved student learning and educational strategies and activities to achieve its goals. The plan shall also address the effectiveness of efforts made since the previous continuous improvement plan to ensure the school maintains a safe, orderly, civil, and positive learning environment that is free from harassment, hazing, and bullying. The school shall assess student performance under the plan using a method or methods of assessment developed under subdivision 164(9) of this title.

(2) The school, at least annually, reports student performance results to community members in a format selected by the school board. In the case of a regional career technical center, the community means the school districts in the service region. The school report shall include:

(A) Information indicating progress toward meeting standards from the most recent measure taken.

(B) [Repealed.]

(C) Information indicating progress toward meeting the goals of an annual continuous improvement plan.

(D) Any other statistical information about the school or community that the school board deems necessary to place student performance results in context.

(E)–(G) [Repealed.]

(H) A description of how the school ensures that each student receives appropriate career counseling and program information regarding availability of education and apprenticeship program offerings at career technical centers.

(I) [Repealed.]

(J) If the school is a secondary school, information and supporting data presented in a manner designed to protect student confidentiality on the dropout and graduation rates.

(K) Data provided by the Secretary that enable a comparison with other schools, or school districts if school level data are not available, for cost-effectiveness. The Secretary shall establish which data are to be included pursuant to this subdivision and, notwithstanding that the other elements of the report are to be presented in a format selected by the school board, shall develop a common format to be used by each school in presenting the data to

community members. The Secretary shall provide the most recent data available to each school ~~no~~ not later than October 1 of each year. Data to be presented include student-to-teacher ratio, administrator-to-student ratio, administrator-to-teacher ratio, and cost per pupil.

(3) The school substantially meets standards adopted by rule of the ~~State Board~~ Agency of Education regarding conditions, practices, and resources of schools. The standards shall address those aspects of the following that are most closely associated with improving student performance:

(A) school leadership, staffing, and support services, and average minimum class sizes that shall require that for grades four through 12 average class sizes to be equivalent to a teacher to student ratio of 1:25 and for grades kindergarten through three shall be equivalent to a teacher to student ratio of 15:1;

(B) instructional practices and curriculum leadership, content, and coordination;

(C) educational materials and school facilities;

(D) access to current technology.

(4) The school shall provide for and the staff shall use needs-based professional development designed to improve the quality of education provided to the students and directly connected to standards for student performance established by the ~~State Board~~ Agency of Education and any other educational performance goals established by the school board.

(5) The school uses staff evaluation to advance educational performance objectives.

(6) The school ensures that students receive appropriate career counseling and program information regarding the availability of education and apprenticeship program offerings at career technical centers. In addition, the school, if it is a secondary school, offers a genuine opportunity to access career technical education programs.

(7) The school ensures that students are furnished educational services in accordance with any State or federal entitlements and in a nondiscriminatory manner.

(8) The school maintains a safe, orderly, civil, and positive learning environment that is free from hazing, harassment, and bullying, and is based on sound instructional and classroom management practices and clear discipline policies that are consistently and effectively enforced.

(b) Annually, the Secretary shall determine whether students in each Vermont public school are provided educational opportunities substantially equal to those provided in other public schools. If the Secretary determines that a school is not meeting the education quality standards listed in subsection (a) of this section or that the school is making insufficient progress in improving student performance in relation to the standards for student performance set forth in subdivision 164(9) of this title, ~~he or she~~ the Secretary shall describe in writing actions that a district must take in order to meet either or both sets of standards and shall provide technical assistance to the school. If the school fails to meet the standards or make sufficient progress within two years of the determination, the Secretary shall recommend to the State Board one or more of the following actions:

(1) the Agency continue to provide technical assistance for one more cycle of review;

(2) the State Board adjust ~~supervisory union boundaries or~~ responsibilities of the superintendency pursuant to section 242 of this title;

(3) the Secretary assume administrative control of an individual school, or school district, ~~or supervisory union~~, including budgetary control to ensure sound financial practices, only to the extent necessary to correct deficiencies;

(4) the State Board close an individual school or schools and require that the school district ~~pay tuition to another public school or an approved independent school pursuant to chapter 21 of this title~~ assign students to a different school operated by the district; or

(5) the State Board require two or more school districts to consolidate their governance structures.

(c) The State Board, after offering the school board an opportunity for a hearing, shall either dismiss the Secretary's recommendation or order that one or more of the actions listed in subsection (b) of this section be taken. The action ordered by the State Board shall be the least intrusive consistent with the need to provide students attending the school substantially equal educational opportunities. A school board aggrieved by an order of the State Board may appeal the order in accordance with the Rules of Civil Procedure.

(d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to entitle any student to educational programs or services identical to those received by students in the same or any other school district. Further, nothing in this section shall create a private right of action.

(e) If the Secretary determines at any time that the failure of a school to meet the education quality standards listed in subsection (a) of this section is severe or pervasive, potentially results in physical or emotional harm to

students or significant deprivation of equal education opportunities, and the school has either unreasonably refused to remedy the problem or its efforts have proved ineffective, ~~he or she~~ the Secretary may recommend to the State Board one or more of the actions listed in subsection (b) of this section. The State Board shall then follow the procedure of subsection (c) of this section.

~~(f) In order to be designated an independent school meeting education quality standards, an independent school shall participate in the education quality standards process of subsection (b) of this section. An independent school shall receive technical assistance in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b), but shall not be subject to subdivisions (b)(2) (4) of this section. The school shall be an independent school meeting education quality standards unless the State Board, after opportunity for hearing, finds that:~~

~~(1) the school has discontinued its participation in the education quality standards process; or~~

~~(2) two or more years following a determination that the school is not meeting the education quality standards or that the school is making insufficient progress in improving student performance, the school fails to meet the standards or make sufficient progress toward meeting the standards. [Repealed.]~~

(g) In addition to the education quality standards provided in subsection (a) of this section, each Vermont school district shall meet the school district quality standards adopted by rule of the Agency of Education regarding the business, facilities management, and governance practices of school districts. These standards shall include a process for school district quality reviews to be conducted by the Agency of Education. Annually, the Secretary shall publish metrics regarding the outcomes of school district quality reviews.

Sec. 6. 16 V.S.A. § 166 is amended to read:

§ 166. ~~APPROVED AND RECOGNIZED INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS;~~

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SERVING AS SCHOOL CHOICE

SCHOOL FOR GRADES 9–12

(a) Authority. An independent school may operate and provide elementary education or secondary education if it is ~~either approved or recognized or designated as a school choice school~~ as set forth in this section.

~~(b) Approved independent schools. On application, the State Board shall approve an independent school that offers elementary or secondary education if it finds, after opportunity for hearing, that the school provides a minimum course of study pursuant to section 906 of this title and that it substantially complies with all statutory requirements for approved independent schools and~~

~~the Board's rules for approved independent schools. An independent school that intends to accept public tuition shall be approved by the State Board only on the condition that the school agrees, notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, to enroll any student who requires special education services and who is placed in or referred to the approved independent school as an appropriate placement and least restrictive environment for the student by the student's individualized education program team or by the local education agency; provided, however, that this requirement shall not apply to an independent school that limits enrollment to students who are on an individualized education program or a plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794, and who are enrolled pursuant to a written agreement between the local education agency and the school. Except as provided in subdivision (6) of this subsection, the Board's rules must at minimum require that the school have the resources required to meet its stated objectives, including financial capacity, faculty who are qualified by training and experience in the areas in which they are assigned, and physical facilities and special services that are in accordance with any State or federal law or regulation. Approval may be granted without State Board evaluation in the case of any school accredited by a private, State, or regional agency recognized by the State Board for accrediting purposes, provided that the State Board shall determine that the school complies with all student enrollment provisions required by law.~~

~~(1) On application, the State Board shall approve an independent school that offers kindergarten but no other graded education if it finds, after opportunity for hearing, that the school substantially complies with the Board's rules for approved independent kindergartens. The State Board may delegate to another State agency the authority to evaluate the safety and adequacy of the buildings in which kindergartens are conducted but shall consider all findings and recommendations of any such agency in making its approval decision.~~

~~(2) Approvals under this subsection (b) shall be for a term established by rule of the Board but not greater than five years.~~

~~(3) A approved independent school shall provide to the parent or guardian responsible for each of its students, prior to accepting any money for a student, an accurate statement in writing of its status under this section and a copy of this section. Failure to comply with this provision may create a permissible inference of false advertising in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2005.~~

~~(4) Each approved independent school shall provide to the Secretary on October 1 of each year the names, genders, dates of birth, and addresses of its enrolled students. Within seven days of the termination of a student's~~

~~enrollment, the school choice school shall notify the Secretary of the name and address of the student. The Secretary shall notify the appropriate school officials as provided in section 1126 of this title.~~

~~(5) The State Board may revoke, suspend, or impose conditions upon the approval of an approved independent school, after having provided an opportunity for a hearing, for substantial failure to comply with the minimum course of study, for failure to demonstrate that the school has the resources required to meet its stated objectives, for failure to comply with statutory requirements or the Board's rules for approved independent schools, or for failure to report under subdivision (4) of this subsection (b). Upon that revocation or suspension, students required to attend school who are enrolled in that school shall become truant unless they enroll in a public school, an approved or recognized independent school, or a home study program.~~

~~(6) This subdivision (6) applies to an independent school located in Vermont that offers a distance learning program and that, because of its structure, does not meet some or all the rules of the State Board for approved independent schools. In order to be approved under this subdivision, a school shall meet the standards adopted by rule of the State Board for approved independent schools that can be applied to the applicant school and any other standards or rules adopted by the State Board regarding these types of schools. A school approved under this subdivision shall not be eligible to receive tuition payments from public school districts under chapter 21 of this title.~~

~~(7) Approval for independent residential schools under this subsection is also contingent upon proof of the school's satisfactory completion of an annual fire safety inspection by the Department of Public Safety or its designee pursuant to 20 V.S.A. chapter 173, subchapter 2. A certificate executed by the inspecting entity, declaring satisfactory completion of the inspection and identifying the date by which a new inspection must occur, shall be posted at the school in a public location. The school shall provide a copy of the certificate to the Secretary of Education after each annual inspection. The school shall pay the actual cost of the inspection unless waived or reduced by the inspecting entity.~~

~~(8)(A) If an approved independent school experiences any of the following financial reporting events during the period of its approved status, the school shall notify the Secretary of Education within five days after its knowledge of the event unless the failure is de minimis:~~

~~(i) the school's failure to file its federal or State tax returns when due, after permissible extension periods have been taken into account;~~

~~(ii) the school's failure to meet its payroll obligations as they are due or to pay federal or State payroll tax obligations as they are due;~~

~~(iii) the school's failure to maintain required retirement contributions;~~

~~(iv) the school's use of designated funds for nondesignated purposes;~~

~~(v) the school's inability to fully comply with the financial terms of its secured installment debt obligations over a period of two consecutive months, including the school's failure to make interest or principal payments as they are due or to maintain any required financial ratios;~~

~~(vi) the withdrawal or conditioning of the school's accreditation on financial grounds by a private, State, or regional agency recognized by the State Board for accrediting purposes; or~~

~~(vii) the school's insolvency, as defined in 9 V.S.A. § 2286(a).~~

~~(B)(i) If the Secretary reasonably believes that an approved independent school lacks financial capacity to meet its stated objectives during the period of its approved status, then the Secretary shall notify the school in writing of the reasons for this belief and permit the school a reasonable opportunity to respond.~~

~~(ii) If the Secretary, after having provided the school a reasonable opportunity to respond, does not find that the school has satisfactorily responded or demonstrated its financial capacity, the Secretary may establish a review team that, with the consent of the school, includes a member of the Council of Independent Schools, to:~~

~~(I) conduct a school visit to assess the school's financial capacity;~~

~~(II) obtain from the school such financial documentation as the review team requires to perform its assessment; and~~

~~(III) submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the State Board.~~

~~(iii) If the State Board concludes that an approved independent school lacks financial capacity to meet its stated objectives during the period of its approved status, the State Board may take any action that is authorized by this section.~~

~~(iv) In considering whether an independent school lacks financial capacity to meet its stated objectives during the period of its approved status and what actions the State Board should take if it makes this finding, the State~~

~~Board may consult with, and draw on the analytical resources of, the Vermont Department of Financial Regulation.~~

~~(C) Information provided by an independent school under this subsection that is not already in the public domain is exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept confidential. [Repealed.]~~

(c) School Choice Schools. An independent school may be designated as a School Choice School to serve grades 9–12 by the school district in which it is geographically located. In order to be eligible for designation, an independent school shall be certified by the Agency of Education as meeting the following criteria:

- (1) use of State standardized assessments;
- (2) implementation of minimum State graduation requirements;
- (3) the provision of special education services to all enrolled students to the same extent as would be required of a public school operated by a school district;
- (4) completion of an annual single audit by a certified public accountant, which shall be submitted to the Agency of Education;
- (5) maintenance of minimum financial reserves, in an amount to be established by rules adopted by the Agency of Education;
- (6) compliance with the school choice school requirements of the Education Quality Standards as defined by the Secretary through rule making;
- (7) compliance with school safety requirements in chapter 33 of this title;
- (8) adherence in all policies and operations with nondiscrimination requirements of 9 V.S.A. chapter 139;
- (9) adoption of harassment, hazing, and bullying prevention policies required by chapter 9, subchapter 5 of this title; except that the board shall follow its own procedures for adopting policy;
- (10) the school annually announces a capacity for incoming students to attend on a publicly funded basis in the following school year;
- (11) the school was an approved independent school on July 1, 2025;
- (12) the school's enrollment is at least 51 percent comprised of students attending on a district-funded tuition basis as of July 1, 2025,

(13) the school has a policy to govern a nondiscriminatory lottery system for determining which students may enroll in the school on a publicly funded basis when student interest exceeds capacity; and

(14) the school offers due process protections prior to suspending or expelling a student attending on a publicly funded basis that are at least as comprehensive as those required of public schools in section 1162 of this title.

~~(e)~~(d) Recognized independent schools. Upon filing an enrollment notice, a recognized independent school may provide elementary or secondary education in Vermont. The enrollment notice shall be on a form provided by the Secretary and shall be filed with the Secretary no earlier than three months before the beginning of the school year for the public schools in the town in which the applicant proposes to locate.

(1) The enrollment notice shall contain the following information and assurances:

(A) a statement that the school will be in session an amount of time substantially equivalent to that required for public schools;

(B) a detailed description or outline of the minimum course of study for each grade level the school offers and how the annual assessment of each student will be performed; and

(C) assurances that:

(i) the school will prepare and maintain attendance records for each student enrolled or regularly attending classes;

(ii) at least once each year, the school will assess each student's progress, and will maintain records of that assessment, and present the result of that assessment to each student's parent or guardian;

(iii) the school's educational program will include the minimum course of study set forth in section 906 of this title;

(iv) the school will have teachers and materials sufficient to carry out the school's educational program; and

(v) the school will meet such State and federal laws and regulations concerning its physical facilities and health and safety matters as are applicable to recognized independent schools.

(2) If the Secretary has information that creates significant doubt about whether the school would be able to meet the requirements set forth in this subsection ~~(e)~~(d), the Secretary may call a hearing. At the hearing, the school shall establish that it can meet the requirements for recognized independent schools. Failure to do so shall result in a finding by the Secretary that the

school must take specified action to come into compliance within a specified time frame or the children enrolled must attend another recognized independent school, a public school, an approved independent school, or a home study program, or be declared truant unless absent with legal excuse.

(3) A recognized independent school shall provide to each student's parent or guardian a copy of its currently filed statement of objectives and a copy of this section. The copy shall be provided when the student enrolls or before September 1, whichever comes later. Failure to comply with this subsection may create a permissible inference of false advertising in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2005.

(4) A recognized independent school shall renew its enrollment notice annually. An independent school shall be recognized for a period not to exceed five years by the Secretary without need for filing an annual enrollment notice if:

(A) it is recognized by an organization approved by the State Board for the purpose of recognizing such school; or

(B) it is accredited by a private, state, or regional agency approved by the State Board for accrediting purposes; provided, however, nothing in this subdivision (4) shall be construed to prohibit the Secretary from initiating a hearing under this subsection ~~(e)~~(d).

(5) If the Secretary has information that creates significant doubt about whether the school, once in operation, is meeting the requirements for recognized independent schools, the Secretary may call a hearing. At the hearing, the school shall establish that it has met the requirements for recognized independent schools. Failure to do so shall result in a finding by the Secretary that:

(A) the school may not be in operation for the remainder of the school year and that the children are truant unless absent with legal excuse or enrolled in a public school, ~~an independent school~~, another recognized independent school, or a home study program; or

(B) the school must take specified action to come into compliance within a specified time frame or the school will not be permitted to operate for the remainder of the school year.

(6) Each recognized independent school shall provide to the Secretary on October 1 of each year the names, genders, dates of birth, and addresses of its enrolled students. Within seven days of the termination of a student's enrollment, the recognized independent school shall notify the Secretary of the name and address of the student. The Secretary shall notify the appropriate school officials as provided in section 1126 of this title.

(7) After the filing of the enrollment notice or at a hearing, if the school is unable to comply with any specific requirements due to deep religious conviction shared by an organized group, the Secretary may waive such requirements if ~~he or she~~ the Secretary determines that the educational purposes of this subsection are being or will be substantially met.

(8) A recognized independent school shall provide to the parent or guardian responsible for each of its students, prior to accepting any money for a student, an accurate statement in writing of its status under this section and a copy of this section. Failure to comply with this provision may create a permissible inference of false advertising in violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2005.

(9) Each school choice school designated by a school district pursuant to school shall provide to the Secretary on October 1 of each year the names, genders, dates of birth, and addresses of its enrolled students. Within seven days following the termination of a student's enrollment, the school choice school shall notify the Secretary of the name and address of the student. The Secretary shall notify the appropriate school officials as provided in section 1126 of this title.

(10) Approval for independent residential schools under this subsection is also contingent upon proof of the school's satisfactory completion of an annual fire safety inspection by the Department of Public Safety or its designee pursuant to 20 V.S.A. chapter 173, subchapter 2. A certificate executed by the inspecting entity, declaring satisfactory completion of the inspection and identifying the date by which a new inspection must occur, shall be posted at the school in a public location. The school shall provide a copy of the certificate to the Secretary of Education after each annual inspection. The school shall pay the actual cost of the inspection unless waived or reduced by the inspecting entity.

~~(d)(e) Council of Independent Schools. A Council of Independent Schools is created consisting of 11 members, no fewer than three of whom shall be representatives of recognized independent schools. The Secretary shall appoint nine members from within the independent schools' community. The Secretary shall appoint two members from the public-at-large. Each member shall serve for two years and may be reappointed for up to an additional two terms. The Council shall adopt rules for its own operation. A chair shall be elected by and from among the members. The duties of the Council shall include advising the Secretary on policies and procedures with respect to independent schools. No hearing shall be initiated under this section before the State Board or by the Secretary until the recommendations of the Council have been sought and received. The recommendations of the Council, including any minority reports, shall be admissible at the hearing. [Repealed.]~~

~~(e)(f)~~ Harassment, hazing, and bullying policies. The board of trustees of ~~an approved or~~ a recognized independent school operating in Vermont shall adopt harassment, hazing, and bullying prevention policies; establish procedures for dealing with harassment, hazing, and bullying of students; and provide notice of these. The provisions of chapter 9, subchapter 5 of this title for public schools shall apply to this subsection, except that the board shall follow its own procedures for adopting policy.

~~(f)(g)~~ Tuition bills. An approved independent school that accepts students for whom the district of residence pays tuition under chapter 21 of this title shall bill the sending district monthly for a State-placed student and shall not bill the sending district for any month in which the State-placed student was not enrolled. [Repealed.]

~~(g)(h)~~ Tuition students; assessments. An approved independent school that accepts students for whom the district of residence pays tuition under chapter 21 of this title shall use the assessment or assessments required under subdivision 164(9) of this title to measure attainment of standards for student performance of those students. In addition, the school shall provide data related to the assessment or assessments as required by the Secretary. [Repealed.]

Sec. 7. AGENCY OF EDUCATION STUDY OF COOPERATIVE
EDUCATION SERVICES AND THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS,
STATEWIDE SALARY SCHEDULE; REPORT

The Agency of Education shall convene superintendents, directors of therapeutic independent schools, special education directors and other experts in the opinion of the Agency to study the need for cooperative education services and the oversight of therapeutic schools within the governance framework created by this Act. The Agency shall submit a summary of its findings and recommended legislative language to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education on or before December 15, 2025. The Agency shall also submit recommendations for legislative language to implement a statewide salary schedule with its report.

Sec. 8. 16 V.S.A. § 241 is amended to read:

§ 241. APPOINTMENT

(a) Each ~~supervisory union~~ school district board, with the advice of the Secretary, ~~may~~ shall employ a superintendent of schools.

(b) A superintendent shall be employed by written contract for a term not to exceed five years nor less than one year and shall work the number of hours required by contract, performing the duties designated in the contract or

assigned by the board. A superintendent of schools may be dismissed for cause or as specified in the contract of employment.

(c) Not later than May 15 of a year in which an incumbent superintendent's contract of employment expires, the ~~supervisory union school district~~ board shall meet to renew or act otherwise upon the superintendent's contract. ~~If a supervisory union employs a superintendent, the supervisory union board shall specify and assign the duties of a superintendent. If the supervisory union board does not hire a superintendent, the board may assign any duties assigned to the superintendent under this title to the school principal or principals in the supervisory union or to other qualified persons designated by the board.~~

Sec. 9. 16 V.S.A. § 242 is amended to read:

§ 242. DUTIES OF SUPERINTENDENTS

The superintendent shall be the chief executive officer for the ~~supervisory union board and for each school board within the supervisory union~~, and shall:

(1) Carry out the policies adopted by the school ~~boards~~ board relating to the educational or business affairs of the school district ~~or supervisory union~~, and develop procedures to do so.

(2) Prepare, for adoption by a ~~local~~ the school board, plans to achieve the educational goals and objectives established by the school district.

(3)(A) Nominate a candidate for employment by the school district ~~or supervisory union~~ if the vacant position requires a licensed employee; provided, if the ~~appropriate~~ board declines to hire a candidate, then the superintendent shall nominate a new candidate;

(B) select nonlicensed employees to be employed by the district ~~or supervisory union~~; and

(C) dismiss licensed and nonlicensed employees of a school district ~~or the supervisory union~~ as necessary, subject to all procedural and other protections provided by contract, collective bargaining agreement, or provision of State and federal law.

(4)(A) Provide data and information required by the Secretary and by using a format approved by the Secretary to:

(i) Report budgetary data for the subsequent school year and fiscal year.

(ii) Report all financial operations within the ~~supervisory union district~~ to the Secretary ~~and State Board~~ for the preceding school year on or before August 15 of each year.

(iii) Report all financial operations for ~~each member the~~ school district to the Secretary and ~~State Board~~ for the preceding school year on or before August 15 of each year.

~~(B) Prepare for each district an itemized report detailing the portion of the proposed supervisory union budget for which the district would be assessed for the subsequent school year identifying the component costs by category and explaining the method by which the district's share for each cost was calculated; and provide the report to each district at least 14 days before a budget, including the supervisory union assessment, is voted on by the electorate of the district. [Repealed.]~~

~~(5) Work with the school boards of the member districts to develop and board to implement policies regarding minimum and optimal average class sizes for regular and career technical education classes consistent with section 165 of this title and rules adopted by the Agency. The policies may be supervisory union-wide, may be course or grade-specific, and may reflect differences among school districts due to geography or other factors.~~

~~(6) Arrange for the provision of the professional training required in subsection 561(b) of this title.~~

~~(7) Provide for the general supervision of the public schools in the supervisory union or district.~~

* * * School Governance * * *

Sec. 10. REPEAL

16 V.S.A. chapter 7 (supervisory unions) is repealed on July 1, 2027.

Sec. 11. NEW UNION SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Vermont school districts and supervisory unions then in effect shall be dissolved on July 1, 2027 and succeeded by five unified union school districts. Not later than 30 days following the enactment of this section, the Secretary of Education shall certify the designation of the newly created school districts pursuant to section 713 of this title.

Sec. 12. 16 V.S.A. § 2 is added to read:

§ 2. MEMBERSHIP OF FIVE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICTS

As of July 1, 2027:

(1) The member districts of the Barre SD, Central Vermont SU, Harwood UUSD, Lamoille North MUUSD, Lamoille South UUSD, Montpelier Roxbury School District, Orange Southwest SU, Orleans Southwest SU, Orleans Southwest SU, Washington Central School District,

and White River Valley School District shall constitute the Winooski Valley UUSD.

(2) The member districts of the Bennington-Rutland SU, Greater Rutland County SU, Mill River UUSD, Rutland City SD, Rutland Northeast UUSD, Slate Valley UUSD, Southwest Vermont UUSD, and Southwest Tech Center shall constitute the Southwest Vermont UUSD.

(3) The member districts of Hartford SD, Mountain Views UUSD, River Valley Tech Center, Springfield SD, Two Rivers SD, Windham Central SU, Windham Northeast SU, Windham Southeast SU, Windham Southwest SU, and Windsor Southeast SU shall constitute the Southeast Vermont UUSD.

(4) The member districts of Caledonia Central SU, Essex North SU, Kingdom East UUSD, North Country SU, Orange East SU, Orleans Central UUSD, and St. Johnsbury SD shall constitute the Northeast Vermont UUSD.

(5) The Addison Central SD, Addison Northwest SD, Burlington SD, Champlain Valley SD, Colchester SD, Essex Westford ECUUSD, Franklin Northeast SU, Franklin West SU, Grand Isle SU, Lincoln School District, Maple Run SD, Milton SD, Franklin Northwest SU, Mount Mansfield SD, Patricia Hanaford Tech Center, South Burlington SD, and Winooski SD shall constitute the Champlain Valley UUSD.

Sec. 13. 16 V.S.A. § 563 is amended to read:

§ 563. POWERS OF SCHOOL BOARDS; FORM OF VOTE

The school board of a school district, in addition to other duties and authority specifically assigned by law:

(1) Shall determine the educational policies of the school district. Board policies shall be of general application to the district and shall be in writing, codified, and made available to the public. Board policies shall be adopted at regular or special school board meetings. A school board shall give public notice of its intent to adopt a board policy, stating the substance of the proposed policy, at least ten days prior to its adoption. A school board may also approve or disapprove rules and regulations proposed by the principal or superintendent for the conduct and management of public schools in the district.

(2) May take any action that is required for the sound administration of the school district. The Secretary, with the advice of the Attorney General, upon application of a school board, shall decide whether any action contemplated or taken by a school board under this subdivision is required for the sound administration of the district and is proper under this subdivision. The Secretary's decision shall be final.

(3) Shall have the possession, care, control, and management of the property of the school district, subject to the authority vested in the electorate or any school district official.

(4) [Repealed.]

(5) Shall keep the school buildings and grounds in good repair, suitably equipped, insured, and in safe and sanitary condition at all times. The school board shall regulate or prohibit firearms or other dangerous or deadly weapons on school premises. At a minimum, a school board shall adopt and implement a policy at least consistent with section 1166 of this title and 13 V.S.A. § 4004, relating to a student who brings a firearm to or possesses a firearm at school.

(6) Shall have discretion to furnish instruction to students who have completed a secondary education and to administer early educational programs.

(7) May relocate or discontinue use of a schoolhouse or facility, subject to the provisions of sections 821 and 822 of this title.

(8) Shall establish and maintain a system for receipt, deposit, disbursement, accounting, control, and reporting procedures that meets the criteria established by the ~~State Board pursuant to subdivision 164(15)~~ Agency pursuant to section 165(g) of this title and that ensures that all payments are lawful and in accordance with a budget adopted or amended by the school board. The school board may authorize a subcommittee, the superintendent of schools, or a designated employee of the school board to examine claims against the district for school expenses and draw orders for the payment of those claims. Such orders shall state definitely the purpose for which they are drawn and shall serve as full authority to the treasurer to make such payments. It shall be lawful for a school board to submit to its treasurer a certified copy of those portions of the board minutes, properly signed by the clerk and chair, or a majority of the board, showing to whom and for what purpose each payment is to be made by the treasurer, and such certified copy shall serve as full authority to the treasurer to make the payments as thus approved.

(9) Shall establish with the advice and consent of the Auditor of Accounts and the Secretary a system of accounts for the proper control and reporting of school district finances and for stating the annual financial condition of the school district.

~~(10) Shall prepare and distribute to the electorate, not less than ten days prior to the district's annual meeting, a report of the conditions and needs of the district school system, including the superintendent's, supervisory union treasurer's, and school district treasurer's annual report for the previous school year and the balance of any reserve funds established pursuant to 24 V.S.A.~~

~~§ 2804. At a school district's annual meeting, the electorate may vote to provide notice of availability of the report required by this subdivision to the electorate in lieu of distributing the report. If the electorate of the school district votes to provide notice of availability, it must specify how notice of availability shall be given, and such notice of availability shall be provided to the electorate at least 30 days before the district's annual or special meeting. [Repealed.]~~

(11)(A) Shall prepare and distribute publish annually a proposed budget for the next school year according to such major categories as may from time to time be prescribed by the Secretary. The board shall hold not fewer than two informational meetings at which the public can comment on the proposed budget.

(B) [Repealed.]

~~(C) At a school district's annual or special meeting, the electorate may vote to provide notice of availability of the school budget required by this subdivision to the electorate in lieu of distributing the budget. If the electorate of the school district votes to provide notice of availability, it must specify how notice of availability shall be given, and such notice of availability shall be provided to the electorate at least 30 days before the district's annual meeting. The proposed budget shall be prepared and distributed at least ten days before a sum of money is voted on by the electorate. Any proposed budget shall show the following information in a format prescribed by the Secretary:~~

~~(i) all revenues from all sources, and expenses, including as separate items any assessment for a supervisory union of which it is a member and any tuition to be paid to a career technical center; and including the report required in subdivision 242(4)(D) of this title itemizing the component costs of the supervisory union assessment;~~

~~(ii) the specific amount of any deficit incurred in the most recently closed fiscal year and how the deficit was or will be remedied;~~

~~(iii) the anticipated homestead tax rate and the percentage of household income used to determine income sensitivity in the district as a result of passage of the budget, including those portions of the tax rate attributable to supervisory union assessments; and~~

~~(iv) the definition of "education spending," the number of pupils and number of equalized pupils in the school district, and the district's education spending per equalized pupil in the proposed budget and in each of the prior three years. [Repealed.]~~

(D) ~~The board shall present the budget to the voters by means of a ballot in the following form:~~

~~“Article #1 (School Budget):~~

~~Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend \$ _____, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?~~

~~The _____ District estimates that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in per pupil education spending of \$ _____, which is _____% higher/lower than per pupil education spending for the current year.”~~
~~[Repealed.]~~

(12) Shall employ such persons as may be required to carry out the work of the school district pursuant to the provisions of subdivision 242(3) of this title.

(13) [Repealed.]

(14) Shall provide, at the expense of the district, subject to the approval of the superintendent, all text books, learning materials, equipment, and supplies.

(15) Shall exercise the general powers given to a legislative branch of a municipality.

(16) May execute contracts on behalf of the school district, including contracts providing for binding arbitration, by its chair or any person designated whose appointment is recorded in the minutes of the board.

(17)-(18) [Repealed.]

(19) Shall allow any high school student who meets the academic requirements of the high school to graduate and receive a diploma in less than four years.

(20) Shall establish policies and procedures designed to avoid the appearance of board member conflict of interest.

(21) Shall have the authority to engage in short-term borrowing to cover the costs of those portions of projects approved by the State Board and that will be reimbursed by the State Board under sections 3447–3456 of this title but which payments will be delayed. However, the board shall borrow under this subdivision only amounts that it would receive if the State Board could fund its obligation and may borrow no earlier than the time it would have received the funds. The State shall not pay for costs of borrowing funds under this subdivision.

(22) May apply for grants and may accept and expend grants or gifts. The board shall include, in its annual report, a description of all grants or gifts accepted during the year and associated expenditures.

(23) May, at the expense of the district, present informational materials to the electorate on any matter to be voted. However, such materials shall be limited to those that are reasonably designed to inform, educate, and explain to the electorate the board's position on the matter.

(24) Shall adopt a policy that, in accordance with rules adopted by the ~~State Board of Education~~ Agency of Education, will integrate home study students into its schools through enrollment in courses, participation in cocurricular and extracurricular activities, and use of facilities.

(25) ~~Shall, if it is a school board of a school district that maintains a secondary school, upon request,~~ award a high school diploma to any Vermont resident who served in the military in World War II, the Korean War, or during the Vietnam era, was honorably separated from active federal military service, and does not hold a high school diploma. The ~~State Board~~ Agency of Education shall develop and make available an application form for veterans who wish to request a high school diploma.

(26) [Repealed.]

(27) Annually, shall inform each secondary student and the student's parents or guardians of the right to opt out of the federal requirement that student contact information be provided to military recruiters or institutions of higher education pursuant to 20 U.S.C. § 7908(a). A school board shall enable the secondary student and the student's parents or guardians to disallow provision of student contact information to either military recruiters or institutions of higher education, while allowing provision of information to the other. ~~For purposes of~~ As used in this subdivision, "secondary student" means a student in grade 9, 10, 11, or 12.

(28) Annually, shall inform students and their parents or guardians of their options for school choice under applicable laws or policy.

(29) Shall assign an employee to annually:

(A) inform parents of students with life-threatening allergies and life-threatening chronic illnesses of applicable provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and other applicable federal statutes, State statutes, federal regulations, and State rules;

(B) inform appropriate school staff of their responsibilities; and

(C) provide necessary training to carry out these responsibilities.

(30) May make available school facilities and equipment for specified public purposes if such purposes appear, in the judgment of the board, to be in the best interests of the district and are an efficient, economical, and appropriate use of the facilities and equipment.

(31) Subject to the requirements of section 571 of this title, may enter into contracts with other school boards to provide joint programs, services, facilities, and professional or other staff.

(32) May enter into a contract or contracts with a school offering a distance learning program that is approved by one or more accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or is approved in Vermont pursuant to subdivision 166(b)(6) of this title.

(33) Establish a district-wide curriculum. The curriculum shall meet the requirements adopted by the Agency of Education under subdivision 165(a)(3)(B) of this title.

(34) Assist each school in the district to follow the curriculum as adopted under the requirements of the Agency of Education pursuant to subdivision 165(a)(3)(B) of this title.

(35) In accordance with criteria established by the Agency of Education establish and implement a plan for receiving and disbursing federal and State funds distributed by the Agency of Education, including funds awarded under P.L. 89-10, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended.

(36) Provide professional development programs or arrange for the provision of them, or both, for teachers, administrators, and staff within the district, which may include programs offered solely to one school or other component of the entire district to meet the specific needs or interests of that component; a district has the discretion to provide financial assistance outside the negotiated agreements for teachers' professional development activities.

(37) Provide special education services to resident students and compensatory and remedial services and provide or coordinate the provision of other educational services as directed by the Agency.

(38) Employ a person or persons qualified to provide financial and student data management services.

(39) Provide the following services in a manner that promotes the efficient use of financial and human resources:

(A) manage a system to procure and distribute goods and operational services;

(B) manage construction projects;

(C) provide financial and student data management services, including grant writing and fundraising as requested;

(D) negotiate with teachers and administrators, pursuant to chapter 57 of this title, and with other school personnel, pursuant to 21 V.S.A. chapter 22;

(E) provide transportation or arrange for the provision of transportation, or both, to schools within the district, consistent with rules adopted by the Agency of Education; and

(F) provide human resources management support.

(40) Adopt district-wide truancy policies consistent with the model protocols developed by the Secretary.

* * * Transition to New Districts * * *

Sec. 14. 16 V.S.A. chapter 11 is amended to read:

Chapter 11. Union School Districts

§ 702. DEFINITIONS

(3) “Forming districts” means all school districts, including union school districts, that are located within the geographical boundaries of a proposed or voter-approved union school district, or districts that are named by the General Assembly to be merged into a new union district on July 1, 2027, prior to the operational date of the union school district, which will potentially merge or have merged to form the new union school district.

(15) “New union district” shall refer to a school district created by the General Assembly that shall assume operations on July 1, 2027.

§ 706. ~~PROPOSAL TO FORM STUDY COMMITTEE; BUDGET AND~~
MEMBERSHIP ATTENDANCE IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2027–2028

~~(a) Establishment of committee. When the boards of two or more school districts vote to establish a study committee to study the advisability of forming a union school district or are petitioned to do so by at least five percent of voters in the school district, the boards shall meet with the superintendent or superintendents of each school district. With the advice of the superintendent or superintendents, the boards shall establish a budget for~~

~~the study committee's work and shall determine the number of persons to serve on the study committee pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.~~

~~(b) Budget and membership. Each participating school district's share of the established budget and membership on the study committee shall be the same as the proportion of the school district's equalized pupils to the total equalized pupils of all school districts intending to participate formally in the study committee. As used in this subsection, "equalized pupils" has the same meaning as in section 4001 of this title.~~

~~(c) Existing union school districts.~~

~~(1) Existing union elementary or union high school district; proposed unified union school district. If the board of an existing union elementary or union high school district votes to participate in a study committee to consider formation of a unified union school district, or is petitioned by the voters to do so, then:~~

~~(A) The interests of the existing union school district shall be represented by its member districts on the study committee.~~

~~(B) Any warning and vote on the study committee budget pursuant to section 707 of this chapter and the warning and vote on any resulting proposal to form a unified union school district pursuant to section 710 shall be at the member district level.~~

~~(C) If the existing union school district does not have any member districts because all towns for which it is organized are members of both a union elementary school district and a union high school district, then the existing union school district shall represent its own interests on the study committee, and the towns within it shall not participate on its behalf.~~

~~(D) If a town is a member of both a union elementary school district and a union high school district, is not independently organized as a district that is responsible for the education of students in any grade, and does not have a town school district board, then notwithstanding other provisions to the contrary:~~

~~(i) To the extent possible, the boards of the union elementary and union high school districts of which the town is a member shall make a reasonable attempt, jointly, to appoint a member to the study committee who resides in the town.~~

~~(ii) The legislative body or appropriate officer of the town shall perform electoral functions, including warning meetings and conducting the voting process, ordinarily performed by and in member districts on behalf of a union school district.~~

~~(2) Existing unified union school district; proposed unified union school district. If the board of a unified union school district votes to participate in a study committee to consider formation of a new unified union school district rather than the enlargement of the existing unified union school district pursuant to section 721 (joining an existing union school district) of this chapter, or is petitioned by the voters to do so, then:~~

~~(A) The existing unified union school district shall represent its own interests on the study committee, and the towns within it shall not participate on its behalf.~~

~~(B) To the extent possible, the board of the existing unified union school district shall make a reasonable attempt to appoint members to the study committee who reside in each town within the district.~~

~~(C) Any warning and vote on the study committee budget pursuant to section 707 of this chapter and the warning and vote of the electorate on any resulting proposal to form a new unified union school district pursuant to section 710 shall proceed pursuant to the provisions for commingled Australian ballot voting as set forth in subchapter 3 (unified union school districts) of this chapter.~~

~~(3) Existing union elementary or union high school district; proposed union elementary or union high school district. If the board of an existing union elementary or union high school district votes to participate in a study committee to consider formation of a new union elementary or union high school district rather than enlarging the existing union school district pursuant to section 721 (joining an existing union school district) of this chapter, or is petitioned by the voters to do so, then:~~

~~(A) The existing union school district shall represent its own interests on the study committee, and the member districts of the existing union school district shall not participate on its behalf.~~

~~(B) To the extent possible, the board of the existing union school district shall make a reasonable attempt to appoint members to the study committee who reside in each of the member districts within the existing union school district.~~

~~(C) Any warning and vote on the study committee budget pursuant to section 707 of this chapter and the warning and vote of the electorate on any resulting proposal to form a new union elementary or union high school district pursuant to section 710 of this chapter shall proceed pursuant to the provisions for commingled Australian ballot voting as set forth in subchapter 4 (union elementary and union high school districts) of this chapter.~~

In academic year 2027–2028, each student in the new union district will attend the school that a student residing in that town would have attended in academic year 2026–2027; provided, however, that the superintendent may grant a parent’s or guardian’s request for student enrollment in a different school operated by the new union district based on individual student circumstances and the superintendent’s determination of the school’s capacity to serve the child. Additionally, the superintendent may adjust student attendance locations to respond to unforeseen circumstances, such as facilities failures.

§ 707. APPROVAL OF STUDY BUDGET; APPOINTMENT OF STUDY COMMITTEE; PARTICIPATION FINANCES

(a) Proposed budget exceeding \$50,000.00.

(1) If the proposed budget established in section 706 of this chapter exceeds \$50,000.00, then subject to the provisions of that section the board of each potentially participating school district shall warn the district’s voters to meet at an annual or special school district meeting to vote whether to appropriate funds necessary to support the district’s financial share of a study committee’s costs. The meeting in each school district shall be warned for the same date. The warning in each school district shall contain an identical article in substantially the following form:

Shall the school district of _____ appropriate funds necessary to support the school district’s financial share of a study to determine the advisability of forming a union school district with some or all of the following school districts:

_____ and
_____? It is estimated that the
_____ school district’s share, if all
of the identified school districts vote to participate, will be
\$_____. The total proposed budget,
to be shared by all participating school districts is
\$_____.”

(2) If the vote in subdivision (1) of this subsection is in the affirmative in two or more school districts, then the boards of the affirming school districts shall appoint a study committee consisting of the number of persons determined pursuant to section 706 (proposed study committee budget and membership) of this chapter. At least one current board member from each participating school district shall be appointed to the study committee. The board of a school district appointing more than one person to the study

committee may appoint residents of the school district who are not members of the board to any of the remaining seats.

~~(3) The sums expended for study purposes under this section shall be considered part of the approved cost of any project in which the union school district, if created, participates pursuant to chapter 123 of this title. Indebtedness, including capital debt. The new union district shall assume all indebtedness that may exist on June 30, 2027, including capital debt and including both principal and interest, of the forming districts.~~

(b) Proposed budget not exceeding \$50,000.00.

~~(1) If the proposed budget established in section 706 of this chapter does not exceed \$50,000.00, then the boards of the participating school districts shall appoint a study committee consisting of the number of persons determined under that section. At least one current board member from each participating school district shall be appointed to the study committee. The board of a school district appointing more than one person to the study committee may appoint residents of the school district who are not members of the board to any of the remaining seats.~~

~~(2) The sums expended for study purposes under this section shall be considered part of the approved cost of any project in which the union school district, if created, participates pursuant to chapter 123 of this title. Operating fund surpluses. The new union district shall assume all operating surpluses, deficits, and fund balances of the forming districts that may exist at the close of business on June 30, 2027.~~

(c) Additional costs.

~~(1) If the voters approve a budget that exceeds \$50,000.00 but the study committee later determines that its budget is likely to exceed the projected, voter-approved amount, then the boards of all participating school districts shall obtain voter approval for the amounts exceeding the previously approved budget in the manner set forth in subdivision (a)(1) of this section before the study committee obligates or expends sums in excess of the initial voter-approved amount.~~

~~(2) If a proposed budget does not exceed \$50,000.00 at the time the school boards appoint members to the study committee, but the study committee later determines that its total budget is likely to exceed \$50,000.00, then the boards of all participating school districts shall obtain voter approval for the amounts exceeding \$50,000.00 in the manner set forth in subdivision (a)(1) of this section before the study committee obligates or expends funds in excess of \$50,000.00. Reserve funds. The new union district shall apply any reserve~~

fund for the fund's specific purpose, if identified, unless otherwise determined through appropriate legal procedures.

~~(d) Grants. Costs to be paid by State, federal, or private grants shall not be included when calculating whether a study committee's budget or proposed budget exceeds \$50,000.00. Transfer of debt and funds. The forming districts shall transfer the debt and funds specified in this section to the new union district on or before June 30, 2027 in accordance with procedures and timelines established by the new union district board.~~

~~(e) Subsequent appointments of persons to the study committee; vacancy.~~

~~(1) Subject to the requirement that each school board appoint at least one current member of the board, the board of a participating school district shall appoint a person residing in the school district to the study committee if one of the school district's seats is vacant because a study committee member:~~

~~(A) is no longer a member of the school district's board and was the sole board member appointed by that school district;~~

~~(B) has resigned from or is no longer able to serve on the study committee; or~~

~~(C) has not attended three consecutive study committee meetings without providing notice to the study committee chair of the reason for each absence and obtaining a determination of the study committee members that the absences were reasonable.~~

~~(2) Notice under subdivision (1)(C) of this subsection shall be given in advance of absences whenever possible. [Repealed.]~~

~~(f) Formal participation in study committee.~~

~~(1) A school district shall not be a formal participant in and appoint members to more than one study committee created under this chapter at any one point in time.~~

~~(2) A school district shall not formally withdraw its participation in an existing study committee after the school district has appointed members to that committee until the study committee dissolves pursuant to subsection 708(e) of this chapter. [Repealed.]~~

~~(g) Additional formal participants.~~

~~(1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (f) of this section, a school district may join as an additional formal participant in a study committee after creation of the committee if:~~

~~(A) — the school district’s board has requested the committee’s approval to participate after either a vote of the school district’s board or a petition by five percent of the school district’s voters and if the study committee votes to approve formal participation by the district; or~~

~~(B) — the study committee has voted to ask the school district to participate formally and either the board of the school district votes to approve formal participation or is petitioned by five percent of the school district’s voters to do so.~~

~~(2) — A school district that becomes a formal participant in an existing study committee pursuant to this subsection is subject to the provisions of section 706 (proposed study committee budget and membership) of this chapter regarding financial and representational proportionality and to all other requirements of study committees set out in this chapter. [Repealed.]~~

~~(h) Informal participation by other school districts.~~

~~(1) — The board of a school district that is not a formal participant in an existing study committee may authorize one or more of the board’s members to contact the study committee to discuss whether it may be advisable to include the school district within a proposal to form a new union school district as an “advisable” district, as described in section 708 (necessary and advisable districts) of this chapter.~~

~~(2) — An existing study committee may authorize one or more of its members to contact the board of one or more additional school districts that are not formal participants in the committee to discuss whether it may be advisable to include the school district within a proposal to form a new union school district as an “advisable” district.~~

~~(3) — An existing study committee may invite representatives of a nonparticipating school district’s board to participate informally in the study committee’s deliberations.~~

~~(4) — Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the board of a school district from authorizing informal exploration between and among the boards of school districts prior to the formation of a study committee. [Repealed.]~~

§ 708. ~~STUDY COMMITTEE; NECESSARY AND ADVISABLE
DISTRICTS; CONTENTS OF STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT AND
PROPOSED ARTICLES; DISSOLUTION OF COMMITTEE REAL
AND PERSONAL PROPERTY~~

~~(a) Study committee; process.~~

~~(1) The superintendent shall convene a study committee's first meeting when the committee's members are appointed. If the participating districts are members of more than one supervisory union, then the superintendents shall decide which of their number shall convene the meeting. The study committee members shall elect a chair who shall notify the Secretary in writing of the committee's creation and the chair's election within 30 days following the vote of the committee's creation.~~

~~(2) Staff of the supervisory union or unions shall provide administrative assistance to the study committee.~~

~~(3) The Secretary shall cooperate with the study committee and is authorized to make Agency staff available to provide technical assistance to the committee.~~

~~(4) The study committee is a public body pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 310(4) and is subject to the requirements of 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 2.~~

~~(5) Although a study committee should try to achieve consensus, committee decisions shall be reached by a majority of all committee members present and voting. Transfer of property to the new union district. Not later than June 30, 2027, the forming districts shall convey to the new union district, for the sum of one dollar and other good and valuable consideration, and subject to the encumbrances of record, all of their school-related real and personal property, including all land, buildings, and contents.~~

~~(b) Necessary and advisable school districts. If a study committee decides to recommend formation of a union school district, then it shall determine whether each school district included in the recommended formation is "necessary" or "advisable" to formation.~~

~~(1) "Necessary" school district.~~

~~(A) The study committee shall identify a school district as "necessary" to formation of the union school district only if the school district is a formal participant in the study committee.~~

~~(B) Subject to the provisions of subsection 706(c) of this chapter, the school board of a "necessary" school district is required to warn a vote of the electorate under sections 710 (vote to form union school district) and 711 (initial members of union school district board election) of this chapter.~~

~~(C) A proposed union school district is formed only if the voters voting in each "necessary" school district vote to approve formation.~~

~~(2) "Advisable" school district.~~

~~(A) The study committee may identify any school district as “advisable” to formation of the union school district even if the school district is not a formal participant in the study committee.~~

~~(B) The school board of an “advisable” school district is not required to warn a vote of the electorate under sections 710 (vote to form union school district) and 711 (initial members of union school district board election) of this chapter, except upon application of 10 percent of the voters in the school district.~~

~~(C) Voter approval in an “advisable” district is not required for formation of a new union school district.~~

~~(3) Existing union elementary or union high school district. Notwithstanding other provisions of this subsection, an existing union elementary or union high school district is “necessary” to the formation of a unified union school district even though its interests are represented by its member districts pursuant to subdivision 706(e)(1) (study committee budget and membership for existing union school districts) of this chapter. Subsequent sale of real property to town in which it is located, in any year in the future. Subject to any provision of law relating to duties of the new union district and to the sale of buildings in this title or any other title of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, if the new union district board determines, in its discretion, that the real property, including land and buildings, conveyed to it by one or more of the forming districts will not be used for direct delivery of education in at least one grade or for any other purpose related to operation of the new union district, then the new union district shall offer for sale such real property to the town in which the real property is located, for the sum of one dollar, subject to all encumbrances of record, the assumption or payment of all outstanding bonds and notes, and the repayment of any school construction aid or grants required by State law. The conveyance of any of the above school properties shall be conditioned upon the town owning and using the real property for community and public purposes for a minimum of five years. If the town elects to sell the real property prior to five years of ownership, then the town shall compensate the new union district for all capital improvements and renovations initiated after July 1, 2027 and prior to the sale to the town. If a town elects not to acquire ownership of such real property, then the new union district shall sell the property pursuant to State law and upon such terms and conditions as established by the new union district board.~~

~~(c) Proposal to form union school district; report and proposed articles of agreement. If a study committee determines that it is advisable to propose formation of a union school district, then it shall prepare a report analyzing the strengths and challenges of the current structures of all “necessary” and~~

~~“advisable” school districts and outlining the ways in which a union school district promotes the State policy set forth in section 701 of this chapter. The study committee shall also prepare proposed articles of agreement that, if approved pursuant to the provisions of this chapter, shall serve as the operating agreement for the new union school district. At a minimum, articles of agreement shall state:~~

~~(1) The name of any school district the study committee considers “necessary” to formation of the proposed union school district.~~

~~(2) The name of any school district the study committee considers “advisable” to include in the proposed union school district.~~

~~(3) The legal name or temporary legal name by which the union school district shall be known.~~

~~(4) The grades, if any, that the proposed union school district will operate and the grades, if any, for which it will pay tuition.~~

~~(5) The cost and general location of any proposed new school buildings to be constructed and the cost and general description of any proposed renovations to existing school buildings.~~

~~(6) A plan for the first year of the union school district’s operation for transportation of students, assignment of staff, and use of curriculum that is consistent with existing contracts, collective bargaining agreements, and other provisions of law. The board of the union school district, if formed, shall make all subsequent decisions regarding transportation, staff, and curriculum subject to existing contracts, collective bargaining agreements, and other provisions of law.~~

~~(7) A list of the indebtedness of each “necessary” and “advisable” district, which the union school district shall assume.~~

~~(8) The specific pieces of real property of each “necessary” and “advisable” district that the union school district shall acquire, their valuation, and how the union school district shall pay for them.~~

~~(9) Consistent with the proportional representation requirements of the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution, the method or methods of apportioning representation on the union school district board as set forth in subsections 711(d) (unified union school district), (e) (union elementary or union high school district), and (f) (weighted voting) of this chapter.~~

~~(10) The term of office for each member initially elected to the union school district board, to be arranged so that one-third expire on the day of the second annual meeting of the union school district, one-third on the day of the~~

~~third annual meeting, and one-third on the day of the fourth annual meeting, or as near to that proportion as possible.~~

~~(11) The date on which the proposal to create the union school district and the election of initial union school district board members will be submitted to the voters.~~

~~(12) The date on which the union school district will be solely responsible for the education of its resident students in the grades for which it is organized and will begin operating any schools, paying any tuition, and providing educational services.~~

~~(13) Whether the election of board members, election of school district officers, votes on the union school district budget, or votes on other public questions, or any two or more of these, shall be by Australian ballot.~~

~~(14) Any other matters that the study committee considers pertinent. Subsequent sale of real property conveyed by forming district that was a union school district, in any year in the future. Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section and any other provision of law to the contrary, if the new union district board determines, in its discretion, that the real property, including land and buildings, conveyed to it by a forming district that was a union school district on June 30, 2027 will not be used for direct delivery of education in at least one grade or for any other purpose related to operation of the new union district, then the new union district shall sell the property pursuant to State law and upon such terms and conditions as are established by the new union district board.~~

~~(d) No proposal to form a union school district. If a study committee determines that it is inadvisable to propose formation of a union school district, then its members shall vote to dissolve the committee. If the study committee members vote to dissolve, then the chair shall notify the Secretary in writing of the vote. [Repealed.]~~

~~(e) Dissolution of study committee.~~

~~(1) If a study committee proposes formation of a union school district pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, then the committee shall cease to exist when the clerk of each school district voting on a proposal to establish the union school district has certified the results of the vote to the Secretary pursuant to subsection 713(a) of this chapter.~~

~~(2) If a study committee determines that it is inadvisable to propose formation of a union school district, then the committee shall cease to exist when the chair notifies the Secretary of the committee's vote pursuant to subsection (d) of this section. [Repealed.]~~

~~§ 709. REVIEW BY LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARDS;
CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL BY STATE BOARD OF
EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION, EMPLOYEES, AND
CONTRACTS IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2027–2028~~

~~(a) If a study committee determines that it is advisable to propose formation of a union school district, then the committee shall transmit its report and proposed articles of agreement to the school board of each school district that the report identifies as either “necessary” or “advisable” to formation of the proposed union school district. Each board may review the report and proposed articles and may provide its comments to the study committee. The study committee has sole authority to determine the contents of the report and proposed articles and to decide whether to submit them to the State Board under subsection (b) of this section. In academic year 2027–2028, the new union district shall provide for the transportation of students, assignment of staff, and implementation of curriculum in a manner that is consistent with the contracts, collective bargaining agreements, and provisions of law that are in effect during that academic year.~~

~~(b) If a study committee determines that it is advisable to propose formation of a union school district, then the committee shall transmit the report and proposed articles of agreement to the Secretary who shall submit them with recommendations to the State Board. The new union district, through its board, shall comply with chapter 53, subchapter 3 of this title, regarding recognition of the representatives of employees of the respective forming districts, as the representatives of the employees of the new union district, and shall commence negotiations pursuant to chapter 57 of this title for teachers and 21 V.S.A. chapter 22 for other employees. In the absence of new collective bargaining agreements on July 1, 2027, the new union district shall comply with the pre-existing master agreements pursuant to chapter 53, subchapter 3 of this title.~~

~~(c)(1) The State Board:~~

~~(A) shall consider the study committee’s report and proposed articles of agreement and the Secretary’s recommendations;~~

~~(B) shall provide the study committee an opportunity to be heard;~~

~~(C) may ask the Secretary or the study committee, or both, to make further investigation and may consider any other information the State Board deems to be pertinent; and~~

~~(D) may request that the study committee amend the report or the proposed articles of agreement, or both.~~

~~(2) If the State Board finds that formation of the proposed union school district is in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts, and aligns with the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, then it shall approve the study committee's report and proposed articles of agreement, together with any amendments, as the final report and proposed articles of agreement, and shall give notice of its action to the study committee. The new union district shall honor all individual employment contracts that are in place in the forming districts on June 30, 2027 until their respective termination dates; provided, however, that if a forming district enters into the contract on or after May 1, 2025, then this subsection shall apply only if the contract expires on or before July 1, 2029.~~

~~(d) The chair of the study committee shall file a copy of the approved final report and proposed articles of agreement with the clerk of each school district identified as "necessary" or "advisable" at least 30 days prior to the vote of the electorate on whether to form the union school district. [Repealed.]~~

~~§ 710. VOTE TO FORM UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT TRANSITIONAL BOARD~~

~~Subject to the provisions of subsections 706(c) (proposal to form study committee; existing union school districts) and 708(b) (study committee; necessary and advisable districts) of this chapter, the voters of each school district identified as "necessary" or "advisable" shall vote whether to form the proposed union school district, as follows:~~

~~(1) The vote shall be held on the date specified in the final report.~~

~~(2) The vote shall be by Australian ballot.~~

~~(3) The vote shall be at separate school district meetings held on the same day.~~

~~(4) The opportunity for early and absentee voting pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §§ 2531-2550 shall be provided.~~

~~(5) The board of each school district voting on the proposal shall warn the vote either as a special meeting of the school district or as part of its annual meeting.~~

~~(a) Creation of transitional board; term of existence. Until the voters of the new union district elect the members of the initial board of directors as set forth in section 711 of this title, and those members are sworn in and assume their duties, the individuals serving on December 15, 2025 on the boards of the forming districts identified in section 2 of this title, including the board of any forming district that is a union school district on that date, shall designate one of their members to serve on a transitional board of directors for the new union~~

district (transitional board). The transitional board shall be comprised of the designee from each forming district.

(b) Initial meeting of transitional board. The superintendent of the supervisory union of which a majority of the forming districts are members shall convene the first meeting of the transitional board to occur no later than January 10, 2026. The agenda for this first meeting of the transitional board shall include the election by the transitional board members of one of their members to serve as chair of the transitional board and one of their members to serve as clerk of the transitional board.

(c) Purpose and authority of transitional board. During the period of its existence, the transitional board shall serve as the new union district's school board and shall perform all functions required of and have all authority granted to the transitional board in this chapter and the new union district board in this title and otherwise by law.

(d) Specific duties of transitional board.

(1) In addition to any responsibilities of the new union district board that can, should, or must be performed before the initial members of that board are elected and assume office, the transitional board shall perform the following functions:

(A) prepare a draft of the proposed fiscal year 2028 budget of the new union district, which the transitional board shall provide to the new union district board for consideration at the first meeting of the new union district board; and

(B) prepare a short list of superintendent candidates.

(2) With respect to the transitional board's duties in this section, the transitional board shall have the assistance of the Agency of Education, including dedicated resources to be paid by transitional funds set aside by the Agency for these purposes.

§ 711. VOTE TO ELECT INITIAL MEMBERS OF THE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD

~~(a) Election of initial members of union school district board. At the meeting warned to vote on formation of a union school district under section 710 of this chapter, the voters shall also elect the initial members who will serve on the board of the union school district if the voters approve the district's formation.~~

~~(1) The vote to elect the initial members shall be by Australian ballot.~~

~~(2) The opportunity for early and absentee voting pursuant to 17 V.S.A. §§ 2531–2550 shall be provided. Representation on new union district board. The new union district board shall be composed of five individuals elected from the district. The members shall be elected pursuant to proportionate voting districts. Petitions for candidates for initial school district board membership shall be submitted on the same timeline and in the same manner as candidates for the General Assembly. Elections for school board shall be held on general election day 2026. Each new union district board member shall serve for a period of four years or until his or her successor is elected and qualified, as required by State law.~~

~~(b) Representation and term length. Initial membership on a union school district board shall be pursuant to the method of representation set forth in the articles of agreement, for the terms specified in that document, and pursuant to the provisions of this section and subdivisions 708(e)(9) and (10) (study committee; proposed articles of agreement; apportionment and terms) of this chapter. Swearing-in and assumption of duties. Within 14 days after the initial board members are elected, the transitional board shall provide for a meeting of the initial board members. Prior to the date of the meeting, newly elected members shall be sworn in by a town clerk within the boundaries of the district and shall assume office upon being sworn in.~~

~~(c) Operational definitions. As used in subsections (d) and (e) of this section, any term not defined in section 702 of this chapter shall have its plain meaning, except as provided in this subsection.~~

~~(1) If, pursuant to section 425 (other town school district officers) of this title, the voters of a school district have elected a district clerk who is not also the clerk of the town served by the school district, then “town clerk” means the elected clerk of that school district.~~

~~(2) Notwithstanding subdivision (1) of this subsection, if a potential forming district is an existing unified union school district, then:~~

~~(A) Reference to the voters of the “school district” means the voters of each town within the existing unified union school district, who shall vote at a location in their town of residence that is identified in the warning issued by the existing unified union school district; provided, however, that the total of all votes cast in the towns shall determine the modified at-large and at-large election of initial board members pursuant to subdivisions (d)(2) (proposed unified union district; modified at-large), (d)(3) (proposed union district; at-large), (e)(2) (proposed union elementary or union high school district; modified at-large), and (e)(3) (proposed union elementary or union high school district; at-large) of this section, as well as whether the existing unified union school district approves formation of the new unified union school district.~~

~~(B) “Town clerk” means the clerk of each town within the existing unified union school district; provided, however, that the town clerk of each town shall transmit the name of each duly nominated candidate to the clerk of the existing unified union school district, who shall prepare the unified union school district ballot for that town and transmit the ballot to the town clerk to make available to the voters.~~

~~(3) Notwithstanding subdivision (1) (clerk of school district) of this subsection, if a town is a member of both a union elementary school district and a union high school district, is not independently organized as a district that is responsible for the education of students in any grade, and does not have a town school district board, then:~~

~~(A) reference to the voters of the “school district” means the voters of the town that is the member of both existing union school districts, who shall vote at a location in their town of residence that is identified in the warning issued by:~~

~~(i) the existing union elementary school district if the voters are voting on a proposed unified union school district or a proposed union elementary school district; or~~

~~(ii) the existing union high school district if the voters are voting on a proposed union high school district; and~~

~~(B) “town clerk” means the clerk of the town that is a member of both existing union school districts; provided, however, that the town clerk shall transmit the name of each duly nominated candidate to the clerk of the union school district identified in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3), who shall prepare the ballot for that town and transmit the ballot to the town clerk to make available to the voters. First meeting. At the first meeting of initial members of the new union district board:~~

~~(1) The members shall elect a chair of the board and clerk of the board.~~

~~(2) The members of the former transitional board shall present the draft fiscal year 2028 budget to the new union district board together with any supporting data or other documentation.~~

~~(3) The members of the former transitional board shall present a summary of hiring actions and recommendations for the position of superintendent for the district.~~

~~(d) Proposed unified union school district. Subject to the provisions of subsections 706(c) (existing union school districts) and 708(b) (necessary and advisable school districts) of this chapter, the voters of each school district~~

~~identified as “necessary” or “advisable” shall vote whether to elect initial board members of a proposed unified union school district, as follows:~~

~~(1) Proportional to town population. When representation on the board of a proposed unified union school district is apportioned to each potential town within the proposed district in a number that is closely proportional to the town’s relative population:~~

~~(A) Voters of each school district identified as either “necessary” or “advisable” to formation of the proposed unified union school district shall file a petition nominating a candidate for the office of unified union school district board member based on town population. A petition shall be valid only if:~~

~~(i) the candidate is a current voter of the town;~~

~~(ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the candidate is nominated;~~

~~(iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the town or one percent of the legal voters in the town, whichever is less;~~

~~(iv) the voters file the petition with the town clerk of the town in which the candidate resides not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and~~

~~(v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the printing of the candidate’s name on the ballot.~~

~~(B) The town clerk shall place the name of each duly nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the school district.~~

~~(C) The voters of the school district for the town in which the candidate resides shall elect as many board members to the unified union school board as are apportioned based on the town’s population.~~

~~(2) Modified at-large model: allocation to town; at-large representation. When representation on the board of a proposed unified union school district is allocated to each potential town within the proposed district, but the allocation is not closely proportional to the town’s relative population and the board member is elected at-large:~~

~~(A) Voters of each school district identified as either “necessary” or “advisable” to formation of the proposed unified union school district shall file a petition nominating a candidate for the office of unified union school district board member allocated to the voters’ town. A petition shall be valid only if:~~

~~(i) the candidate is a current voter of the town;~~

~~(ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the candidate is nominated;~~

~~(iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the town or one percent of the legal voters in the town, whichever is less;~~

~~(iv) the voters file the petition with the town clerk of the town in which the candidate resides not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and~~

~~(v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.~~

~~(B) Upon receipt of a petition for a unified union school district board member allocated to a potential town within the proposed district but to be elected at large under the modified at-large model, the town clerk shall place the name of the duly nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the school district and shall notify the town clerks preparing the ballots for the voters of each of the other "necessary" school districts and of each "advisable" school district voting on formation of the proposed unified union school district to place the candidate's name on the ballot presented to the voters in those districts. Alternatively, at their discretion, the town clerks may meet jointly to prepare a uniform ballot.~~

~~(C) The voters of each "necessary" school district and of each "advisable" school district voting on formation of the proposed unified union school district shall vote for the board members to be elected at large under the modified at-large model; provided, however, that ballots shall be included in the calculation of total votes cast pursuant to the provisions of subdivision 714(a)(2) (calculation of votes) of this chapter.~~

~~(3) At large representation. When representation on the board of a proposed unified union school district is not apportioned or allocated to the potential towns within the proposed district pursuant to subdivision (1) (proportional to town population) or (2) (modified at large) of this subsection and the board member is elected at large:~~

~~(A) The voters of one or more school districts identified as "necessary" to formation of the proposed unified union school district shall file a petition nominating a candidate for the office of unified union school district board member at large. A petition shall be valid only if:~~

~~(i) the candidate is a current voter of a school district identified as "necessary" to the formation of the proposed union school district;~~

~~(ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the candidate is nominated;~~

~~(iii) the petition is signed by at least 60 voters residing in one or more school districts identified as “necessary” to the formation of the proposed unified union school district or one percent of the legal voters residing in the combined “necessary” school districts that would form the proposed unified union school district, whichever is less;~~

~~(iv) the voters file the petition with the town clerk in the “necessary” school district in which the candidate resides not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and~~

~~(v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the printing of the candidate’s name on the ballot.~~

~~(B) Upon receipt of a petition for a unified union school district board member elected at large, the town clerk shall place the name of the duly nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the school district and shall notify the town clerks preparing the ballots for the voters of each of the other “necessary” school districts and of each “advisable” school district voting on formation of the proposed unified union school district to place the candidate’s name on the ballot presented to the voters in those districts. Alternatively, at their discretion, the town clerks may meet jointly to prepare a uniform ballot.~~

~~(C) The voters of each “necessary” school district and of each “advisable” school district voting on formation of the proposed unified union school district shall vote for the members to be elected at large; provided, however, that ballots shall be included in the calculation of total votes cast pursuant to the provisions of subdivision 714(a)(2) (calculation of votes) of this chapter. [Repealed.]~~

~~(e) Proposed union elementary or union high school district. Subject to the provisions of subsections 706(e) (existing union school districts) and 708(b) (necessary and advisable school districts) of this chapter, the voters of each school district identified as “necessary” or “advisable” shall vote whether to elect initial board members of the proposed union school district, as follows:~~

~~(1) Proportional to town population. When representation on the board of a proposed union elementary or union high school district is apportioned to each potential member district of the proposed district in a number that is closely proportional to the potential member district’s relative population:~~

~~(A) Voters of each school district identified as either “necessary” or “advisable” to formation of the proposed union school district shall file a petition nominating a candidate for the office of union school district board member representing the potential member district. A petition shall be valid only if:~~

~~(i) the candidate is a current voter of the potential member district;~~

~~(ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the candidate is nominated;~~

~~(iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the potential member district or one percent of the legal voters in the district, whichever is less;~~

~~(iv) the petition is filed with the town clerk not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and~~

~~(v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.~~

~~(B) The town clerk shall place the name of each duly nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the potential member district.~~

~~(C) The voters of the district shall elect as many board members as are apportioned to the potential member district based on population.~~

~~(2) Modified at-large model: allocation to town; at-large representation. When representation on the board of a proposed union elementary or union high school district is allocated to each potential member district, but the allocation is not closely proportional to the potential member district's relative population and the board member is elected at-large:~~

~~(A) Voters of each school district identified as either "necessary" or "advisable" to formation of the proposed union school district shall file a petition nominating a candidate for the office of union school district board member allocated to the potential member district. A petition shall be valid only if:~~

~~(i) the candidate is a current voter of the potential member district;~~

~~(ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the candidate is nominated;~~

~~(iii) the petition is signed by at least 30 voters residing in the potential member district or one percent of the legal voters in the district, whichever is less;~~

~~(iv) the petition is filed with the town clerk of the school district in which the candidate resides not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and~~

~~(v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.~~

~~(B) Upon receipt of a petition for union school district board member allocated to a potential member district but to be elected at large under the modified at large mode, the town clerk shall place the name of the duly nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the potential member district and shall notify the town clerks preparing the ballots for the voters of each of the other "necessary" school districts and of each "advisable" school district voting on formation of the proposed union school district to place the candidate's name on the ballot presented to the voters in those districts. Alternatively, at their discretion, the town clerks may meet jointly to prepare a uniform ballot.~~

~~(C) The voters of each "necessary" school district and of each "advisable" school district voting on formation of the proposed unified union school district shall vote for the board members to be elected at large under the modified at large model; provided, however, that ballots shall be included in the calculation of total votes cast pursuant to the provisions of subdivision 714(a)(2) (calculation of votes) of this chapter.~~

~~(3) At large representation. When representation on the board of a proposed union elementary or union high school district board is not apportioned or allocated to the potential member districts pursuant to subdivision (1) (proportional to town population) or (2) (modified at large) of this subsection and the board member is elected at large:~~

~~(A) The voters of one or more school districts identified as "necessary" to the formation of the proposed union school district shall file a petition nominating a candidate for the office of union school district board member at large. A petition shall be valid only if:~~

~~(i) the candidate is a current voter of a school district identified as "necessary" to the formation of the proposed union school district;~~

~~(ii) the petition identifies the term of office for which the candidate is nominated;~~

~~(iii) the petition is signed by at least 60 voters residing in one or more school districts identified as "necessary" to the formation of the proposed union school district or one percent of the legal voters residing in the combined "necessary" school districts that would form the proposed union school district, whichever is less;~~

~~(iv) the petition is filed with the town clerk in the "necessary" school district in which the candidate resides not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election; and~~

~~(v) the candidate files with the town clerk a written consent to the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot.~~

~~(B) Upon receipt of a petition for a union school district board member to be elected at large, the town clerk shall place the name of the duly nominated candidate on the ballot to be presented to the voters of the school district and shall notify the town clerks preparing the ballots for the voters of each of the other "necessary" school districts and of each "advisable" school district voting on formation of the proposed union school district to place the candidate's name on the ballot presented to the voters in those districts. Alternatively, at their discretion, the town clerks may meet jointly to prepare a uniform ballot.~~

~~(C) The voters of each "necessary" school district and of each "advisable" school district voting on formation of the proposed union school district shall vote for the board members to be elected at large; provided, however, that ballots shall be included in the calculation of total votes cast pursuant to the provisions of subdivision 714(a)(2) (calculation of votes) of this chapter. [Repealed.]~~

~~(f) Weighted voting. If representation on a union school district board is apportioned based upon population pursuant to subdivision (d)(1) or (e)(1) of this section, then the union school district may achieve proportionality through a system of weighted voting. [Repealed.]~~

~~§ 712. CONTENTS OF WARNING ON VOTES TO ESTABLISH THE
UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT AND ELECT THE INITIAL
MEMBERS OF THE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD
PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED FISCAL
YEAR 2028 BUDGET~~

~~The warning for each school district meeting to vote on formation of a union school district shall contain two articles in substantially the following form. The language used in Article I shall be the same for each "necessary" and "advisable" district voting on formation of the new district. Article II of the warning shall not include names of candidates for the union school district board.~~

~~WARNING~~

~~The _____ voters _____ of _____ the
_____ School District are hereby notified and warned to meet at
_____ on the _____ day of~~

_____, 20_____, to vote by Australian ballot between the hours of _____, at which time the polls will open, and _____, at which time the polls will close, upon the following articles of business:

Article I. FORMATION OF UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Shall _____ the

_____ School District, which the proposed articles of agreement have identified as [“necessary” or “advisable”] to the formation of the proposed union school district, join with the school district[s] of _____ and _____, which are identified as “necessary” to formation, and potentially the school district[s] of _____ and _____, which are identified as “advisable” to formation, for the purpose of forming a union school district, as provided in Title 16, Vermont Statutes Annotated, upon the following conditions and agreements:

(a) Grades. The union school district shall be organized to provide for the education of resident students in grades _____ through _____ and shall assume full and sole responsibility therefor on July 1, 20_____.

(b) Operation of schools. The union school district shall operate and manage one or more schools offering instruction in grades _____ through _____. [Amend as necessary if the district will pay tuition for any or all grades for which it is organized.]

(c) Union school district board. [State method by which representation of each member of the union school board is to be determined pursuant to section 711 (vote to elect initial members) of this chapter.]

(d) Assumption of debts and ownership of school property. The union school district shall assume the indebtedness of forming districts, acquire the school properties of the forming districts, and pay for them, all as specified in the final report and proposed articles of agreement.

(e) Final report. The provisions of the final report and proposed articles of agreement approved by the State Board of Education on the _____ day of _____, 20_____, which is on file in the office of the clerk of each school district named in this warning, shall govern the union school district.

~~Article II. ELECTION OF INITIAL MEMBERS OF THE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD~~

~~To elect a total of _____ () member(s) to serve as initial members of the proposed union school district board for the terms established in the final report and proposed articles of agreement: [Amend as necessary to reflect method for determining school board membership pursuant to section 711 (vote to elect initial members) of this chapter.]~~

~~(a) _____ [Insert number] Board Member[s] to serve until the second annual meeting of the union school district, in 20_____.~~

~~(b) _____ [Insert number] Board Member[s] to serve until the third annual meeting of the union school district, in 20_____.~~

~~(c) _____ [Insert number] Board Member[s] to serve until the fourth annual meeting of the union school district, in 20_____. Pursuant to the provisions of chapter 133 of this title, the new union district board shall consider and adopt a proposed fiscal year 2028 budget to, based on the anticipated funding for fiscal year 2028, provide for the operations of the district.~~

~~§ 713. CERTIFICATION OF VOTES; DESIGNATION OF DISTRICT AS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT; RECORDING BY SECRETARY OF STATE~~

~~(a) Within 45 days after the vote or 15 days after a vote to reconsider the original vote under 17 V.S.A. § 2661, whichever is later, the clerk of each school district voting on the proposal to form a union school district shall certify the results of that vote to the Secretary of Education. The clerk shall submit the certification regardless of whether the district voters approved the proposed formation of a union school district. [Repealed.]~~

~~(b) If the voters voting in each school district identified as “necessary” to formation of the proposed union school district vote to form the district, then the “necessary” school districts constitute a union school district, together with any school district designated as “advisable” that votes to form the proposed union school district. [Repealed.]~~

~~(c) If the voters approve formation of a union school district pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, then upon receiving the certification of each clerk pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, but not sooner than 30 days after the initial vote, the Not later than July 1, 2025, the Secretary shall designate the newly formed district each of the new union districts as a union school district. The Secretary shall certify that designation and send the~~

certification together with ~~the clerks' certifications~~ a copy of this Act to the Secretary of State, who shall record the certification.

(d) When the Secretary of State records the certification of the Secretary of Education, the union school district shall be a body politic and corporate with the powers incident to a municipal corporation, shall be known by the name or number given in the recorded certification, by that name or number may sue and be sued, and may hold and convey real and personal property for the use of the union school district. The recorded certification shall be notice to all parties of the formation of the union school district with all the powers incident to such a district as provided in this title.

(e) The Secretary of State shall file a certified copy of the recorded certification with the clerk of each member district of a new union elementary or union high school district and with the town clerk of each town within a new unified union school district. The Secretary of State shall file the certified copies not later than 14 days after the date on which the Secretary of Education certifies the existence of the union school district to the Secretary of State. Filing a certified copy with each clerk shall be prima facie evidence of full compliance with the requirements for the formation of a union school district as set forth in this subchapter.

* * *

§ 715. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING; NOTICE; BUSINESS TO BE
TRANSACTIONED COMMENCEMENT OF OPERATIONS

~~(a) Meeting. The union school district shall hold an organizational meeting within 60 days after the Secretary of State files the certified copy of the recorded certification with each clerk pursuant to subsection 713(e) of this chapter.~~

~~(b) Notice.~~

~~(1) The Secretary of Education shall prepare and execute a warning for the organizational meeting. The warning shall give notice of the day, hour, and location of the meeting and shall itemize the business to be transacted.~~

~~(2) The Secretary of Education shall transmit the signed warning to the superintendent, who shall post the warning in at least one public place in each town within the union school district and shall cause the warning to be published once in a newspaper of general circulation in the towns within the union school district. Posting and publication shall be made not more than 40 days nor less than 30 days before the date of the meeting.~~

~~(3) The union school district shall bear the cost of posting and publishing the warning.~~

~~(e) Business to be transacted.~~

~~(1) The Secretary or a person designated by the Secretary shall call the organizational meeting to order and the registered voters shall consider the following items of business:~~

~~(A) Elect a temporary presiding officer and a temporary clerk of the union school district from among the voters present at the organizational meeting.~~

~~(B) Adopt Robert's or other rules of order, which shall govern the parliamentary procedures of the organizational meeting and all subsequent meetings of the union school district.~~

~~(C) Elect a moderator of the union school district from among the voters.~~

~~(D) Elect a clerk of the union school district from among the voters or vote to authorize the school board to appoint a clerk of the union school district from among the voters.~~

~~(E) Elect a treasurer of the union school district or vote to authorize the school board to appoint a treasurer of the union school district. The treasurer may also be the supervisory union treasurer and need not be a resident of the union school district.~~

~~(F) Determine the date and location of the union school district's annual meeting, which shall be not earlier than February 1 nor later than June 1, if not previously determined by the voter-approved articles of agreement.~~

~~(G) Determine whether compensation shall be paid to the moderator, clerk, and treasurer of the union school district elected at the organizational meeting and at subsequent annual meetings of the union school district and, if so, the amount to be paid to them.~~

~~(H) Determine whether compensation shall be paid to members of the union school district board and, if so, the amount to be paid to them.~~

~~(I) Establish provisions for payment by the union school district of any expense incurred or to be incurred by or on behalf of the district for the period between the date on which the voters approved formation of the union school district and the first annual meeting of the union district.~~

~~(J) Determine whether to authorize the initial board of the union school district to borrow money pending receipt of payments from the Education Fund by the issuance of its note payable not later than one year from the date of the note. Regardless of whether the voters provide this authorization, the initial board is authorized to borrow sufficient funds to meet~~

~~pending obligations until the voters approve a budget for the initial year of operation pursuant to subdivision 716(b)(3) of this chapter.~~

~~(K) Transact any other business, the subject matter of which has been included in the warning, that the voters have power to transact at any annual or special meeting and transact any nonbinding business that may legally come before the voters.~~

~~(2) When there is only one nominee for temporary presiding officer, temporary clerk, moderator, district clerk, or district treasurer, the voters may, by acclamation, instruct an officer to elect the nominee by casting one ballot, and upon the ballot being cast, the nominee shall be legally elected and shall thereupon be sworn.~~

~~(3) The elected officers listed in subdivisions (1)(A) (temporary presiding officer and temporary clerk), (C) (moderator of the union school district), (D) (clerk of the union school district), and (E) (treasurer of the union school district) of this subsection shall be sworn in before entering upon the duties of their offices and a record made by the district clerk. They shall assume office upon being sworn in. The officers listed in subdivisions (1)(C), (D), and (E) of this subsection shall serve terms as set forth in section 735 (unified union school districts; officers) or 753 (union elementary and union high school district; officers) of this chapter unless the voters extend the term length up to three years.~~

~~(4) Any member of the union school district board not sworn in before the organizational meeting pursuant to section 714 of this chapter may be sworn in at or after the organizational meeting. The new union district, through its board, has and shall exercise all of the authority that is necessary for it to prepare for full educational operations beginning on July 1, 2027. On or before June 30, 2027, the new union district board shall perform all planning, transitional, and other related duties necessary to begin operations of the new union district on July 1, 2027, including preparing for and negotiating contractual agreements, and transacting any other lawful business that comes before the board, provided however, that the exercise of such authority by the new union district shall not be construed to limit or alter the authority or responsibilities of each forming district, which shall remain responsible for providing for the education of its resident students until July 1, 2027.~~

~~§ 724. WITHDRAWAL FROM OR DISSOLUTION OF A UNIFIED
UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT~~

~~(a) Definition. As used in this section, “petitioning town” means the town within a unified union school district that seeks to withdraw from the union district pursuant to the provisions of this section.~~

~~(b) Withdrawal study committee.~~

~~(1) To initiate the process set forth in this section, the voters residing in the petitioning town shall submit petitions to the clerk of the unified union school district indicating the petitioners’ desire to withdraw the petitioning town from the union district. Individual petitions shall be signed by at least five percent of the voters residing in each of the towns within the union school district, with each town having its own petition. The petitioners shall submit each petition to that town’s town clerk for verification of the voting registration status of the signors. On a form created by the Secretary of State’s Office, and appended to each petition, shall be the names of three voters residing in the petitioning town to serve on a withdrawal study committee and a signed statement by each of the three named voters consenting to serve. Once each petition has been verified by the subject town clerk, the petitioners shall submit the petitions to the clerk of the unified union school district.~~

~~(2) Within 30 days after receiving the petition, the board of the union district shall recognize the creation of the withdrawal study committee and shall appoint a board subcommittee to serve as a liaison between the board and the withdrawal study committee and to represent the interests of the union district.~~

~~(3) Within 30 days after the board’s appointment of the liaison subcommittee, the superintendent of the union district shall convene the first formal meeting of the withdrawal study committee. The study committee shall elect one committee member to serve as chair.~~

~~(4) Before beginning any analysis under subsection (c) of this section or seeking technical or analytical services from the union district staff or supervisory union staff, or both, the withdrawal study committee shall obtain a letter of commitment from a supervisory union board to explore the provision of supervisory union services if withdrawal is ultimately approved.~~

~~(5) The withdrawal study committee is a public body pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 310(4) and is subject to the requirements of chapter 5, subchapter 2 of that title.~~

~~(c) Analysis. The withdrawal study committee shall evaluate the strengths and challenges of the current union district structure and consider the ways in which the union district promotes or fails to promote the State policy set forth in section 701 of this chapter. At a minimum, the withdrawal study committee shall evaluate:~~

~~(1) the educational advantages and disadvantages likely to result from the proposed withdrawal of the petitioning town from the union district:~~

~~(A) on the students residing in the proposed new school district; and~~

~~(B) on the students remaining in the union district if withdrawal is approved;~~

~~(2) the educational advantages and disadvantages likely to result from the continued inclusion of the petitioning town as a town within the union district:~~

~~(A) on the students residing in the petitioning town; and~~

~~(B) on the students residing in the other towns within the union district;~~

~~(3) the financial advantages and disadvantages likely to result from the proposed withdrawal of the petitioning town from the union district:~~

~~(A) on the taxpayers residing in the proposed new school district; and~~

~~(B) on the taxpayers remaining in the union district if withdrawal is approved;~~

~~(4) the financial advantages and disadvantages likely to result from the continued inclusion of the petitioning town as a town within the union district:~~

~~(A) on the taxpayers residing in the petitioning town; and~~

~~(B) on the taxpayers residing in the other towns within the union district;~~

~~(5) the likely operational and financial viability and sustainability of:~~

~~(A) the proposed new school district; and~~

~~(B) the union district if withdrawal is approved;~~

~~(6) any other advantages and disadvantages of withdrawal, including any advantages and disadvantages to the students and taxpayers of the region and the State; and~~

~~(7) the potential source of supervisory union services for the proposed new school district, including discussions with the board of any supervisory union to which the report of the withdrawal study committee might propose assignment.~~

~~(d) Report, including a plan for withdrawal; decision not to prepare report.~~

~~(1) Report supporting withdrawal.~~

~~(A) If, after conducting the analysis required by subsection (c) of this section, the withdrawal study committee votes to advance the withdrawal process as further outlined in this section, then the committee shall prepare a report, which it shall deliver electronically to the union district board and which the superintendent shall publish on the district's website.~~

~~(B) At a minimum, the report shall include:~~

~~(i) the analysis conducted pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, describing the ways in which the data and analysis:~~

~~(I) support withdrawal; and~~

~~(II) do not support the continuation of the union district in its current configuration;~~

~~(ii) the proposed financial terms of withdrawal, including the proposed ownership of buildings and other assets and the proposed responsibility for financial and other contractual obligations, including debts;~~

~~(iii) a plan, including a detailed timeline, for the actions the proposed new school district would take to ensure that, on a proposed operational date, it could provide for the education of its students in prekindergarten through grade 12 by operating all grades, tuitioning all grades, or operating some grades and tuitioning the remainder, in a manner that will meet educational quality standards as required by section 165 of this title, and including, if applicable, the process by which the proposed new school district would explore formation of a new union school district with one or more other school districts in the region and would integrate or condition any votes to withdraw with votes on formation of a new union district; and~~

~~(iv) a proposal, including analysis, for the potential source of supervisory union services for the proposed new school district, including, if applicable to the proposal:~~

~~(I) a recommendation of one or more potential supervisory unions to which the State Board could assign the proposed new school district; and~~

~~(H) a statement from the board of the potential supervisory union or unions regarding the ability and willingness to accept the proposed new school district as a member district.~~

~~(C) Within 45 days following receipt of the withdrawal study committee report, the union district board shall invite the members of the withdrawal study committee to attend a regularly scheduled meeting of the board to present the contents of its report and to answer any questions posed by the board. The board shall also invite the members of the liaison subcommittee to share any analysis and conclusions at the meeting. The withdrawal study committee has sole authority to determine the contents of its report.~~

~~(2) Decision not to propose withdrawal. If, after conducting the analysis required by subsection (c) of this section, the withdrawal study committee votes not to approve advancement of the withdrawal process, then:~~

~~(A) the withdrawal study committee shall prepare a brief written statement explaining the reasons underlying the votes supporting and not supporting advancement, which it shall deliver electronically to the union district board and which the superintendent shall publish on the district's website;~~

~~(B) within 45 days following receipt of the withdrawal study committee report, the union district board shall invite the members of the withdrawal study committee to attend a regularly scheduled meeting of the board to present the contents of the written statement and to answer any questions posed by the board; and~~

~~(C) the withdrawal study committee shall cease to exist upon adjournment of the union district board's meeting.~~

~~(e) Secretary and State Board.~~

~~(1) Secretary. If the study committee voted to proceed pursuant to subdivision (d)(1) of this section, then within 30 days after attending the union district board meeting pursuant to subdivision (d)(1)(C) of this section, it shall deliver its report electronically to the Secretary for review. The liaison subcommittee may also submit a report outlining its analysis and conclusions. The Secretary shall submit the report or reports, with recommendations, to the State Board.~~

~~(2) State Board review. The State Board:~~

~~(A) shall consider the report or reports and the Secretary's recommendations;~~

~~(B) shall provide representatives of the withdrawal study committee and the liaison subcommittee an opportunity to be heard;~~

~~(C) may, in its discretion, take testimony from other individuals and entities;~~

~~(D) may ask the Secretary, the withdrawal study committee, or the liaison subcommittee to make further investigation and may consider any other information the State Board deems to be pertinent; and~~

~~(E) may request the members of the withdrawal study committee to amend the report.~~

~~(3) State Board action.~~

~~(A) Advisory opinion with positive recommendation. If the State Board finds that the withdrawal proposal contained in the report, including the most feasible options for the provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district, is in the best interests of the State, the region, the students, and the school districts and aligns with the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, then within 90 days after receiving the report of the study committee the State Board shall:~~

~~(i) issue an opinion recommending approval of the withdrawal proposal;~~

~~(ii) provide a preliminary assessment of most feasible options for the provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district if withdrawal is approved by the voters; and~~

~~(iii) make any other finding or declaration, and approve any other motion, related and necessary to the withdrawal proposal.~~

~~(B) Advisory opinion with negative recommendation. If the State Board finds that the withdrawal proposal contained in the report, including the most feasible options for the provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district, is not in the best interests of the State, the region, the students, and the school districts or does not align with the policy set forth in section 701 of this title, or both, then within 90 days after receiving the report of the study committee the State Board shall:~~

~~(i) issue an opinion recommending disapproval of the withdrawal proposal, including a written statement detailing the reasons supporting this conclusion;~~

~~(ii) provide a preliminary assessment of most feasible options for the provision of supervisory union services to the proposed new school district if withdrawal is approved by the voters; and~~

~~(iii) make any other finding or declaration and approve any other motion related and necessary to the withdrawal proposal.~~

~~(f) Vote of the electorate.~~

~~(1) Vote following positive recommendation of the State Board.~~

~~(A) Within 30 days after receipt of the State Board's written recommendation, the superintendent shall file the withdrawal study committee's report, the State Board's written recommendation, and any report of the liaison subcommittee with the clerk of the union district and the town clerk of each town within the union district.~~

~~(B) Within 90 days after the clerk of the union district receiving the reports and recommendations described in subdivision (A) of this subsection, the voters of the union district, including those residing in the petitioning town, shall vote whether to approve withdrawal as set forth in the report. The question shall be determined by Australian ballot and shall proceed pursuant to sections 737 (warnings of unified union school district meetings) and 739-741 (vote by Australian ballot) of this chapter. The ballots shall not be commingled.~~

~~(C) Withdrawal from the union district shall occur if the question is approved by a majority vote of the union district voters living in each town within the district, including the petitioning town. If a majority of the voters in one or more towns within the union district do not vote in favor of withdrawal, then the proposed withdrawal shall not occur.~~

~~(D) Within 45 days after the vote or 15 days after a vote to reconsider the original vote under 17 V.S.A. § 2661, whichever is later, the clerk of each town within the union district shall certify the results of the vote to the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary shall advise the State Board of the certified results. Each clerk shall submit the certification regardless of whether the voters in that town approved withdrawal. The withdrawal study committee shall cease to exist when each clerk has submitted a certification to the Secretary.~~

~~(2) Vote following negative recommendation of the State Board.~~

~~(A) The superintendent shall file the withdrawal study committee's report, the State Board's written recommendation, and any report of the liaison subcommittee with the clerk of the union district and with the town clerk of each town within the union district.~~

~~(B) The union district voters residing in the petitioning town shall vote whether to withdraw from the union district pursuant to the terms set forth in the report.~~

~~(i) The question shall be determined by Australian ballot and shall proceed pursuant to sections 737 (warnings of unified union school district meetings) and 739-741 (vote by Australian ballot) of this chapter.~~

~~(ii) The withdrawal proposal shall proceed to a vote in each of the other towns within the union district only if approved by a majority of the union district voters residing in the petitioning town present and voting yes or no on the warned question. If a majority of the voters in the petitioning town do not vote in favor of withdrawal, then the proposed withdrawal shall not occur.~~

~~(C) Within 45 days after the vote in subdivision (B) of this subdivision (f)(2) or 15 days after a vote to reconsider the original vote under 17 V.S.A. § 2661, whichever is later, the clerk of the petitioning town shall certify the results of the vote to the Secretary of State who shall record the certificate and give notice of the vote to the clerk of the union district, the clerks of each of the other towns within the union district, and the Secretary of Education. The clerk of the petitioning town shall submit the certification regardless of whether the voters in the petitioning town approved withdrawal. The withdrawal study committee shall cease to exist upon submission of the certification.~~

~~(D) If the union district voters residing in the petitioning town approve the withdrawal proposal pursuant to subdivision (B) of this subdivision (f)(2), then, within 90 days after receiving notice of the certification as required in subdivision (C) of this subdivision (f)(2), the voters of the union district residing in each of the other towns shall vote on the same day whether to approve withdrawal of the petitioning town as set forth in the final report.~~

~~(i) The question shall be determined by Australian ballot and shall proceed pursuant to sections 737 (warnings of unified union school district meetings) and 739-741 (vote by Australian ballot) of this chapter. The ballots shall not be commingled.~~

~~(ii) Withdrawal from the union district shall occur if the question is approved by a majority vote of the union district voters living in each of the other towns within the union district. If a majority of the voters in one or more towns within the union district do not vote in favor of withdrawal, then the proposed withdrawal shall not occur.~~

~~(E) Within 45 days after the vote in subdivision (D) of this subdivision (f)(2) or 15 days after a vote to reconsider the original vote under 17 V.S.A. § 2661, whichever is later, the clerk of each of the other towns within the union district shall certify the results of the vote to the Secretary of~~

~~Education, and the Secretary shall advise the State Board of the certified results. Each clerk shall submit the certification regardless of whether the voters in that town approved withdrawal. The withdrawal study committee shall cease to exist when each clerk has submitted a certification to the Secretary.~~

~~(g) Election of potential board members. On the day on which they vote whether to approve withdrawal, the union district voters residing in the petitioning town shall also vote for three individual registered voters from the petitioning town to serve as the initial members of the proposed new school district's board if withdrawal is approved. The nomination and election of the initial members shall proceed pursuant to subdivision 730(a)(1) of this chapter (election of board members under the proportional to town model by Australian ballot). The term of office for each initial member shall be arranged so that one term expires on the day of the second annual meeting of the proposed new school district, one term expires on the day of the third annual meeting, and one term expires on the day of the fourth annual meeting.~~

~~(h) State Board's duties if withdrawal is approved. If the union district voters approve withdrawal pursuant to subsection (f) of this section, then upon receiving notice from the Secretary pursuant to subdivision (f)(1)(D) or (f)(2)(E) of this section, the State Board shall:~~

~~(1) Declare the withdrawal approved as of the date of the Board's meeting; provided, however, that withdrawal shall not be final until the date identified in the voter-approved proposal of withdrawal.~~

~~(2) Declare the creation and existence of the new school district, effective on the date of the Board's declaration; provided, however, that:~~

~~(A) the new school district shall assume full and sole responsibility for the education of its resident students on the date identified in the voter-approved proposal of withdrawal; and~~

~~(B) until the identified operational date, the new school district shall exist for the sole purposes of:~~

~~(i) convening an organizational meeting of the voters of the new school district to prepare the district to assume its responsibilities;~~

~~(ii) organizing the school board of the new school district, which shall be responsible for preparing a proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning on the identified operational date;~~

~~(iii) approving the budget of the new school district for the fiscal year beginning on the identified operational date; and~~

~~(iv) taking any other actions necessary, as district voters or as a school board, for the new school district to assume full responsibility for providing for the education of the district's resident students in all grades, prekindergarten through grade 12, on the identified operational date.~~

~~(3) Determine or set a schedule for determining the manner in which supervisory union services will be provided to the new school district, to be effective on the district's identified operational date.~~

~~(A) In addition to the considerations set forth in section 261 of this title, when the State Board makes its determination, it shall consider the potential positive and negative consequences on all affected districts and supervisory unions if supervisory union services were provided to the new school district in a manner that required:~~

~~(i) a union district serving as its own supervisory district to become a member of a multidistrict supervisory union; or~~

~~(ii) a neighboring supervisory union to accept one or more additional districts that the supervisory union testifies it is not able to accommodate.~~

~~(B) If assigned to a multidistrict supervisory union, then the board of the new school district may appoint its members to the supervisory union board pursuant to section 266 of this title, where they may participate as nonvoting members of that board until the new school district's operational date.~~

~~(i) Certification; Secretary of State. If the State Board declares the creation and existence of a new school district pursuant to subdivision (h)(2) of this section, then within 30 days following such action the Secretary of Education shall certify the adjustment of the towns within the union district to the Secretary of State. When the Secretary of State records the certification of the Secretary of Education, the towns within the union district shall be adjusted accordingly; provided, however, that the voter-approved proposal of withdrawal shall establish the date on which withdrawal shall be final, the new school district shall assume full and sole responsibility for the education of its resident students, and the union school district shall no longer have responsibility for the education of those students. Not more than 14 days after the date the Secretary of Education certifies the adjustment, the Secretary of State shall file a certified copy of the recorded certification with the clerk of the union district and the clerk for the town in which the new school district is located. Filing a certified copy with the clerks shall be prima facie evidence of full compliance with the requirements for adjusting the union school district by withdrawal as set forth in this section.~~

~~(j) Timing of action.~~

~~(1) The voters residing in any town within a union district shall not initiate the withdrawal process set forth in this section within the first year after the latter of the operational date of a newly formed union district or, if applicable, the operational date of a union district adjusted pursuant to subsection (i) of this section.~~

~~(2) If a petitioning town's action to withdraw from a union school district is unsuccessful, then the voters residing in that town shall not initiate a new withdrawal action under this section until two years after either a withdrawal study committee votes not to approve advancement of the withdrawal process or the vote by the voters that concluded the initial withdrawal action. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

Sec. 15. 16 V.S.A. § 564 is added to read:

§ 564. SCHOOL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

(a) Each school district shall establish a local school advisory committee for each school. These committees shall have membership from parents, community members and students to represent the gender, racial, and socioeconomic diversity of the school community, and shall serve in an advisory role to the school administration.

(b) Building level principals will administer the application and membership process for the school advisory committees. School advisory committees shall provide input to the school board on equitable budgeting parameters and feedback on the proposed school district budget each year.

(c) A school advisory committee shall, through the administration of the building level principal, direct a designated portion of the funding allocated to the school it represents. Annually, the school board shall determine the amount that each school advisory committee will have authority to direct, which shall be equitable with respect to school size or school budget size. Before funds are expended, the school board shall approve the proposed plan developed by the school advisory committee.

Sec. 16. 16 V.S.A. § 821 is amended to read:

§ 821. SCHOOL DISTRICT TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS OR PAY TUITION

(a) Each school district shall maintain one or more approved schools within the district in which elementary education for its resident students in kindergarten through grade six is provided unless:

~~(1) the electorate authorizes the school board to provide for the elementary education of the students by paying tuition in accordance with law to one or more public elementary schools in one or more school districts;~~

~~(2) the school district is organized to provide only high school education for its students; or~~

~~(3) the General Assembly provides otherwise.~~

(b) A school board shall adopt a policy on intra-district grade K–8 choice and update the policy as appropriate. The policy shall state whether and to what extent resident students in elementary grades can choose a school operated by the school district other than the school designated by the district for the student’s town of residence.

~~(c) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, without previous authorization by the electorate, a school board in a district that operates an elementary school may pay tuition for elementary students who reside near a public elementary school in an adjacent district upon request of the student’s parent or guardian, if in the board’s judgment the student’s education can be more conveniently furnished there due to geographic considerations. Within 30 days of the board’s decision, a parent or guardian who is dissatisfied with the decision of the board under this subsection may request a determination by the Secretary, who shall have authority to direct the school board to pay all, some, or none of the student’s tuition and whose decision shall be final. [Repealed.]~~

~~(d) Notwithstanding subdivision (a)(1) of this section, the electorate of a school district that does not maintain an elementary school may grant general authority to the school board to pay tuition for an elementary student at an approved independent elementary school or an independent school meeting education quality standards pursuant to sections 823 and 828 of this chapter upon notice given by the student’s parent or legal guardian before April 15 for the next academic year. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 17. 16 V.S.A. § 822 is amended to read:

§ 822. SCHOOL DISTRICT TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS OR
PAY TUITION; SCHOOL CHOICE SCHOOLS

(a) Each school district shall maintain one or more approved high schools in which high school education is provided for its resident students unless:

~~(1) the electorate authorizes the school board to close an existing high school and to provide for the high school education of its students by paying tuition to a public high school, an approved independent high school, or an independent school meeting education quality standards, to be selected by the parents or guardians of the student, within or outside the State; or~~

~~(2) the school district is organized to provide only elementary education for its students.~~

~~(b) For purposes of this section, a school district that is organized to provide kindergarten through grade 12 and maintains a program of education for only the first eight years of compulsory school attendance shall be obligated to pay tuition for its resident students for at least four additional years. A school board shall designate at least one public or independent school that operates grades nine through 12 to receive incoming students. This school shall be known as a school choice school. The school board is not required to designate an independent school if it instead designates one or more public schools. If the school choice school designated by the district is an independent school, it shall first be certified by the Agency of Education as meeting the school choice school requirements in section 166 of this title. Any such designation shall be for a period of five years.~~

~~(1) After reviewing the portfolio of school options for grades nine through 12 in the district, the school board shall adopt a policy on grade nine through 12 school choice and update the policy as appropriate. The policy shall take into consideration historic patterns of attendance, capacity of schools, and attendance and geographic needs of the district, along with student interest for specialized educational programming. The policy shall state a number of resident students in grades nine through 12 that can participate in school choice, which shall be not less than 10 percent of the number of resident students in grades nine through 12 for a given year.~~

~~(2) If the district will operate one or more of its public schools as a school choice school, then the school board shall annually announce the capacity for incoming students to attend each such school or schools.~~

~~(c)(1) A school district may both maintain a high school and furnish high school education by paying tuition:~~

~~(A) to a public school as in the judgment of the school board may best serve the interests of the students; or~~

~~(B) to an approved independent school or an independent school meeting education quality standards if the school board judges that a student has unique educational needs that cannot be served within the district or at a nearby public school. Subject to the provisions of subsection (a)(1) of this section, if more than the allowable number of students wish to participate in school choice, then the district shall use a nondiscriminatory lottery system for determining which students may participate in school choice.~~

~~(2) The judgment of the board shall be final in regard to the institution the students may attend at public cost. Subject to the provisions of subdivision (a)(2) of this section, if more than the allowable number of students wish to transfer to a school choice school operated by the district, then the district shall use a nondiscriminatory lottery system for determining which students may transfer to the school choice school.~~

~~(A) the district shall give preference to the school choice request of a student whose request to participate in school choice was denied in a prior year;~~

~~(B) the district shall give preference to siblings of students who are currently enrolled in the school choice school;~~

~~(C) the district shall give preference to students who reside closer to the school choice school than a different school operated by the district.~~

Sec. 18. REPEALS

~~16 V.S.A. § 822a (public high school choice) and 16 V.S.A. § 823 (elementary tuition) are repealed on July 1, 2027.~~

Sec. 19. 16 V.S.A. § 824 is amended to read:

§ 824. ~~HIGH SCHOOL TUITION PAYMENT TO SCHOOL CHOICE SCHOOLS~~

~~(a) Tuition Payment for high school students attending a school choice school that is an independent school as defined in section 166 of this title shall be paid by the school district in which the student is a resident Agency of Education in an amount equal to the weighted base education amount per student as described in section 4001 of this title. The Agency of Education shall establish rules to govern the schedule and procedures for such payments.~~

~~(b) Except as otherwise provided for technical students, the district shall pay the full tuition charged its students attending a public high school in Vermont or an adjoining state or a public or approved independent school in Vermont functioning as an approved area career technical center, or an independent school meeting education quality standards; provided:~~

~~(1) If a payment made to a public high school or an independent school meeting education quality standards is three percent more or less than the calculated net cost per secondary pupil in the receiving school district or independent school for the year of attendance then the district or school shall be reimbursed, credited, or refunded pursuant to section 836 of this title.~~

~~(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection or of subsection 825(b) of this title, the board of the receiving public school district, public or approved independent school functioning as an area career technical center, or independent school meeting education quality standards may enter into tuition agreements with the boards of sending districts that have terms differing from the provisions of those subsections, provided that the receiving district or school must offer identical terms to all sending districts, and further provided that the statutory provisions apply to any sending district that declines the offered terms. [Repealed.]~~

~~(c) The district shall pay an amount not to exceed the average announced tuition of Vermont union high schools for the year of attendance for its students enrolled in an approved independent school not functioning as a Vermont area career technical center, or any higher amount approved by the electorate at an annual or special meeting warned for that purpose. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 20. 16 V.S.A. § 1071 is amended to read:

§ 1071. SCHOOL YEAR AND SCHOOL DAY

(a) Minimum number of days. Except as provided in this section, each public school shall be maintained and operated for:

(1) At least ~~175~~ 180 student attendance days in each school year. For purposes of this section, a majority of students enrolled in a school must be recorded on the school roll as in attendance on any day counted as a student attendance day.

(2) At least five teacher in-service education days, during which time activities shall be conducted without students present in order to increase the competency of the staff, improve the curriculum of the school, enable teachers to attend State educational meetings, or disseminate student progress information to parents or the community.

(b) Hours of operation. Within the minimum set by the ~~State Board~~ Agency of Education, the school board shall fix the number of hours that shall constitute a school day, ~~subject to change upon the order of the State Board.~~

(c) Unanticipated closings. When a public school is closed for cause beyond the control of the school board, it may petition the ~~State Board~~ Agency of Education for a waiver of the requirements of this section. The petition shall be filed with the ~~State Board~~ Agency of Education within 10 days of each occurrence and not later than June 15 of the school year involved; and the ~~State Board~~ Agency of Education shall act on the petition at its next meeting Agency on a form provided by the Agency. If the petition is approved and a waiver granted, the school district shall be deemed to have satisfied the requirements of this section. ~~If the State Board~~

~~fails to act at that meeting, the petition shall be deemed to have been approved and the waiver granted.~~

(d) [Repealed.]

~~(e) Regional calendar. Before April 1 of each year, the superintendents of schools and the headmasters of public schools not managed by school boards in an area shall meet, and by majority vote, establish a uniform calendar within that area for the following school year. The Secretary shall establish a single statewide calendar. The calendar shall be published before May 1 of each year for the following school year. The calendar shall include student attendance days, periods of vacation, holidays, and teacher in-service education days and shall comply with subsection (a) of this section. ~~Unless permitted by the Secretary, no area served by a regional career technical center shall be divided into two or more calendar regions.~~~~

(f) Additional days. Nothing in this section prohibits a school from scheduling additional days for student attendance or teacher in-service education. However, those days shall not conflict with any applicable school calendar.

(g) Upon application of one or more school districts, after approval by the voters of each such district, the ~~State Board~~ Agency may grant a waiver of the requirements of subsection (a) of this section if it is satisfied that equivalent educational programming will be maintained or improved. The waiver may be granted for any purpose, including the conservation of energy.

Sec. 21. 16 V.S.A. § 1121 is amended to read:

§ 1121. ATTENDANCE BY CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE REQUIRED

A person having the control of a child between the ages of ~~six~~ five and 16 years shall cause the child to attend a public school, an approved or recognized independent school, an approved education program, or a home study program for the full number of days for which that school is held, unless the child:

- (1) is mentally or physically unable so to attend; or
- (2) has completed the tenth grade; or
- (3) is excused by the superintendent or a majority of the school directors as provided in this chapter; or
- (4) is enrolled in and attending a postsecondary school, as defined in subdivision 176(b)(1) of this title, which is approved or accredited in Vermont or another state.

* * * State Funding of Public Education * * *

Sec. 22. TRANSITION YEAR ONE FUNDING

In fiscal year 2026, each school district shall receive the funding approved by its electorate pursuant to 16 V.S.A. chapter 133.

Sec. 23. TRANSITION YEAR TWO FUNDING

In fiscal year 2027, each school district shall receive an amount equal to the funding received in fiscal year 2026, multiplied by three percent. Payments shall be made consistent with 16 V.S.A. § 4011.

Sec. 24. 16 V.S.A. chapter 133 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 133. STATE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Subchapter 1. General Provisions

§ 4000. STATEMENT OF POLICY

(a) The intent of this chapter is to make educational opportunity available to each student in each town on substantially equal terms, in accordance with the Vermont Constitution and the Vermont Supreme Court decision of February 5, 1997, Brigham v. State of Vermont.

(b) [Repealed.]

§ 4001. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

(1) “Average daily membership” of a school district ~~or, if needed in order to calculate the appropriate homestead tax rate, of the municipality as defined in 32 V.S.A. § 5401(9)~~, in any year means:

(A) The full-time equivalent enrollment of students, as defined by the ~~State Board~~ Agency by rule, who are legal residents of the district or municipality attending a school owned and operated by the district, ~~attending a public school outside the district under section 822a of this title, or for whom the district pays tuition to one or more approved independent schools or public schools outside the district~~ during the annual census period. The census period consists of the 11th day through the 30th day of the school year in which school is actually in session.

(B) The full-time equivalent enrollment in the year before the last census period, of any State-placed students as defined in subdivision 11(a)(28) of this title. ~~A school district that provides for the education of its students by paying tuition to an approved independent school or public school outside the district shall not count a State-placed student for whom it is paying tuition for purposes of determining average daily membership. A school district that is~~

receiving the full amount, as defined by the ~~State Board~~ Agency by rule, of the student's education costs under subsection 2950(a) of this title shall not count the student for purposes of determining average daily membership. A State-placed student who is counted in average daily membership shall be counted as a student for the purposes of determining weighted student count.

(C) The full-time equivalent enrollment for each prekindergarten child as follows: If a child is enrolled in 10 or more hours of prekindergarten education per week or receives 10 or more hours of essential early education services per week, the child shall be counted as one full-time equivalent pupil. If a child is enrolled in six or more but fewer than 10 hours of prekindergarten education per week or if a child receives fewer than 10 hours of essential early education services per week, the child shall be counted as a percentage of one full-time equivalent pupil, calculated as one multiplied by the number of hours per week divided by ten. A child enrolled in prekindergarten education for fewer than six hours per week shall not be included in the district's average daily membership. There is no limit on the total number of children who may be enrolled in prekindergarten education or who receive essential early education services.

(2) "Equalized grand list" has the same meaning that equalized education property tax grand list has in 32 V.S.A. chapter 135.

(3), (4), (5) [Repealed.]

~~(6) "Education spending" "means the amount of the school district budget, any assessment for a joint contract school, career technical center payments made on behalf of the district under subsection 1561(b) of this title, and any amount added to pay a deficit pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 1523(b) that is paid for by the school district, but excluding any portion of the school budget paid for from any other sources such as endowments, parental fundraising, federal funds, nongovernmental grants, or other State funds such as special education funds paid under chapter 101 of this title.~~

~~(A) [Repealed.]~~

~~(B) For all bonds approved by voters prior to July 1, 2024, voter-approved bond payments toward principal and interest shall not be included in "education spending" for purposes of calculating excess spending pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 5401(12). [Repealed.]~~

(7) "Long-term membership" of a school district in any school year means the:

(A) average of the district's average daily membership, excluding full-time equivalent enrollment of State-placed students, over two school years, the latter of which is the current school year, plus

(B) full-time equivalent enrollment of State-placed students for the most recent of the two years.

(8) [Repealed.]

(9) “Public school” means an elementary school or secondary school for which the governing board is publicly elected. A public school may maintain evening or summer school for its students and it shall be considered a public school.

(10) “School district” means ~~a town school district, city school district, incorporated school district, the member school districts of an interstate school district, a union school district, a unified union district, or an unorganized town or gore.~~

(11) “School year” means a year beginning on July 1 and ending on the following June 30.

(12) “Weighted long-term membership” of a school district in any school year means the long-term membership adjusted pursuant to section 4010 of this title.

(13) ~~“Base education amount~~ “Categorical base amount” means a number used to calculate categorical grants awarded under this title that is equal to \$6,800.00 per equalized pupil, adjusted as required under section 4011 of this title.

(14) ~~“Per pupil education spending” of a school district in any school year means the per pupil education spending of that school district as determined under subsection 4010(f) of this title.~~ [Repealed.]

(15) “Prekindergarten child” means a three- or four-year-old child who is enrolled in a prekindergarten program offered by or through a school district pursuant to rules adopted under section 829 of this title or who is receiving essential early education services offered pursuant to section 2956 of this title. Prekindergarten child also means a five-year-old child who otherwise meets the terms of this definition if that child is not yet eligible for ~~or enrolled in~~ kindergarten.

(16) “Base amount” means a per pupil amount of \$13,200.00 in fiscal year 2025, which shall be adjusted for inflation annually on or before November 15 by the Secretary of Education. As used in this subdivision, “adjusted for inflation” means adjusting the base dollar amount by the most recent New England Economic Project cumulative price index, as of November 15, for state and local government purchases of goods and services, from fiscal year 2025 through the fiscal year for which the amount is being determined.

(17) “Foundation formula amount” means the base amount multiplied by the school district’s weighted long-term membership as determined under 16 V.S.A. § 4010.

§ 4002. PAYMENT; ALLOCATION

(a) State and federal funds appropriated for services delivered by the ~~supervisory union~~ school district and payable through the Agency shall be paid to the order of the ~~supervisory union~~ school district and administered in accordance with the plan adopted under subdivision 261a(4) of this title. Funding for special education services under section 2969 of this title shall be paid to the ~~supervisory unions~~ school districts in accordance with that section.

(b) The Secretary shall notify the superintendent or chief executive officer of each ~~supervisory union~~ school district in writing of federal or State funds disbursed to ~~member~~ school districts.

§ 4003. CONDITIONS

(a) No school district shall receive any aid under this chapter unless that school district complies with the provisions of law relative to teachers’ salaries, appointment of superintendents, detailed financial reports to the Agency, and any other requirements of law.

(b) Aid to any district shall not be denied unless the district unreasonably refuses to comply with the requirements of law. Any school district denied aid by reason of the provisions of this section shall have the right within 60 days from the date of such denial to appeal to the Superior Court in the county where the district is situated.

Subchapter 2. General State Funding of Public Education

§ 4010. DETERMINATION OF WEIGHTED LONG-TERM MEMBERSHIP
AND PER PUPIL EDUCATION SPENDING

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

- (1) “EL pupils” means pupils described under section 4013 of this title.
- (2) “FPL” means the Federal Poverty Level.

(3) “Weighting categories” means the categories listed under subsection (b) of this section.

(b) Determination of average daily membership and weighting categories. On or before the first day of December during each school year, the Secretary shall determine the average daily membership, as defined in subdivision 4001(1) of this title, of each school district for the current school year and shall perform the following tasks.

(1) Using average daily membership, list for each school district the number of:

- (A) pupils in prekindergarten;
- (B) pupils in kindergarten through grade five;
- (C) pupils in grades six through eight;
- (D) pupils in grades nine through 12;

(E) pupils whose families are at or below 185 percent of FPL, using the highest number of pupils in the district:

(i) that meet this definition under the universal income declaration form; or

(ii) who are directly certified for free and reduced-priced meals; and

(F) EL pupils.

(2)(A) Identify all school districts that have low population density, measured by the number of persons per square mile residing within the land area of the geographic boundaries of the district as of July 1 of the year of determination, equaling:

(i) fewer than 36 persons per square mile;

(ii) 36 or more persons per square mile but fewer than 55 persons per square mile; or

(iii) 55 or more persons per square mile but fewer than 100 persons per square mile.

(B) Population density data shall be based on the best available U.S. Census data as provided to the Agency of Education by the Vermont Center for Geographic Information.

(C) Using average daily membership, list for each school district that has low population density the number of pupils in each of subdivisions (A)(i)–(iii) of this subdivision (2).

~~(3)(A) Identify all school districts that have one or more small schools, which are schools that have an average two-year enrollment of:~~

~~(i) fewer than 100 pupils; or~~

~~(ii) 100 or more pupils but fewer than 250 pupils~~ For each school district, identify any school with fewer than 450 students.

~~(B) As used in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3), “average two-year enrollment” means the average enrollment of the two most recently completed school years, and “enrollment” means the number of pupils who are enrolled in a school operated by the district on October 1. A pupil shall be counted as one whether the pupil is enrolled as a full-time or part-time student. [Repealed.]~~

~~(C) Using average two-year enrollment, list for each school district that has a small school the number of pupils in each of subdivisions (A)(i)–(ii) of this subdivision (3). [Repealed.]~~

~~(c) Reporting on weighting categories to the Agency of Education. Each school district shall annually report to the Agency of Education by a date established by the Agency the information needed in order for the Agency to compute the weighting categories under subsection (b) of this section for that district. In order to fulfill this obligation, a school district that pays public tuition on behalf of a resident student (sending district) to a public school in another school district, an approved independent school, or an out-of-state school (each a receiving school) may request the receiving school to collect this information on the sending district’s resident student, and if requested, the receiving school shall provide this information to the sending district in a timely manner.~~

~~(d) Determination of weighted long-term membership. For each weighting category except the small schools weighting category under subdivision (b)(3) of this section, the Secretary shall compute the weighting count by using the long-term membership, as defined in subdivision 4001(7) of this title, in that category.~~

~~(1) The Secretary shall first apply grade level weights. Each pupil included in long-term membership shall count as one, multiplied by the following amounts:~~

~~(A) prekindergarten—negative 0.54;~~

~~(B) grades six through eight—0.36; and~~

~~(C) grades nine through 12—0.39. [Repealed.]~~

~~(2) The Secretary shall next apply a weight for pupils whose family is at or below 185 percent of FPL. Each pupil included in long-term membership whose family is at or below 185 percent of FPL shall receive an additional weighting amount of ~~1.03~~ 0.75.~~

~~(3) The Secretary shall next apply a weight for EL pupils. Each EL pupil included in long-term membership shall receive an additional weighting amount of ~~2.49~~ 1.50.~~

(4) The Secretary shall then apply a weight for pupils living in low population density school districts. Each pupil included in long-term membership residing in a low population density school district, measured by the number of persons per square mile residing within the land area of the geographic boundaries of the district as of July 1 of the year of determination, shall receive an additional weighting amount of:

(A) 0.15, where the number of persons per square mile is fewer than 36 persons;

(B) 0.12, where the number of persons per square mile is 36 or more but fewer than 55 persons; or

(C) 0.07, where the number of persons per square mile is 55 or more but fewer than 100.

(5) The Secretary shall lastly apply a weight for pupils who attend a an eligible small school. ~~If the number of persons per square mile residing within the land area of the geographic boundaries of a school district as of July 1 of the year of determination is 55 or fewer, then, for~~ For each pupil listed under subdivision (b)(3)(C) of this section (pupils who attend small schools):

~~(A) where the school has fewer than 100 pupils in average two-year enrollment, the school district shall receive an additional weighting amount of 0.21 for each pupil included in the small school's average two-year enrollment; or~~

~~(B) where the small school has 100 or more but fewer than 250 pupils, the school district shall receive an additional weighting amount of 0.07 for each pupil included in the small school's average two-year enrollment, each student in an eligible small school will receive a weighted FTE that is the result of applying the following formula to each eligible small school: $(-0.158 * \text{natural log of (school enrollment)}) + 0.964$ with the result rounded to two decimal places.~~

(6) A school district's weighted long-term membership shall equal long-term membership plus the cumulation of the weights assigned by the Secretary under this subsection.

~~(e) Hold harmless. A district's weighted long-term membership shall in no case be less than 96 and one-half percent of its actual weighted long-term membership the previous year prior to making any adjustment under this subsection. [Repealed.]~~

~~(f) Determination of per pupil education spending. As soon as reasonably possible after a school district budget is approved by voters, the Secretary shall determine the per pupil education spending for the next fiscal year for the~~

~~school district. Per pupil education spending shall equal a school district's education spending divided by its weighted long-term membership.~~
[Repealed.]

(g) Guidelines. The Secretary shall develop guidelines to enable clear and consistent identification of pupils to be counted under this section.

(h) Updates to weights, base education amount and transportation payments. On or before January 1, 2027 and on or before January 1 of every fifth year thereafter, the Agency of Education and the Joint Fiscal Office shall calculate, based on their consensus view, updates to the weights and the base education amount to account for cost changes underlying those weights and the cost of providing a high quality education and shall issue a written report on their work to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Ways and Means, and the Senate Committee on Finance. The General Assembly shall update the weights under this section, the base education amount, and transportation ~~reimbursement~~ categorical aid amounts under section 4016 of this title not less than every five years and the implementation date for the updated weights and transportation ~~reimbursement~~ categorical aid amount shall be delayed by a year in order to provide school districts with time to prepare their budgets. Updates to the weights may include recalibration, recalculation, adding or eliminating weights, or any combination of these actions.

(i) On or before July 1, 2026 the Secretary shall, through rule-making, establish eligibility criteria for students that may receive the small school adjustment as defined in subdivision (d)(5) of this section.

§ 4011. EDUCATION PAYMENTS

(a) Annually, the General Assembly shall appropriate funds to pay for ~~statewide education spending~~ the foundation formula amount as defined under subdivision 4001(17) of this title and the State guarantee as defined under 32 V.S.A. § 5401(19) and a portion of the ~~base education~~ categorical aid amount for each adult education ~~and secondary credential program~~ student as defined in subsection (f) of this section.

(b) For each fiscal year, the categorical aid ~~base education~~ amount shall be \$6,800.00, increased by the most recent New England Economic Project Cumulative Price Index, as of November 15, for state and local government purchases of goods and services from fiscal year 2005 through the fiscal year for which the amount is being determined, plus an additional one-tenth of one percent.

~~(c) Annually, each school district shall receive an education spending payment its foundation formula amount as defined under subdivision 4001(17) of this title and its State guarantee, if applicable to that school district, as defined under 32 V.S.A. § 5401(19) for support of education costs. An unorganized town or gore shall receive an amount equal to its per pupil education spending for that year for each student. No school district shall receive more than its education spending the amount under this subsection.~~

~~(d) [Repealed.]~~

~~(e) [Repealed.]~~

(f) Annually, the Secretary shall pay to a local adult education and literacy provider, as defined in section 942 of this title, that provides an adult education and secondary credential program an amount equal to 26 percent of the categorical aid amount for each student who completes the diagnostic portions of the program, based on an average of the previous two years; 40 percent of the payment required under this subsection shall be from State funds appropriated from the Education Fund and 60 percent of the payment required under this subsection shall be from State funds appropriated from the General Fund.

~~(g) The Secretary shall pay to a school district a percentage of the base education amount for each resident student for whom the district is paying a technical tuition to a regional career technical center but who is not enrolled in the district and therefore not counted in the average daily membership of the district. The percentage of the base education amount to be paid shall be the percentage of the student's full-time equivalent attendance at the career technical center multiplied by 87 percent. [Repealed.]~~

(h) The Secretary shall make all payments required by subchapter 5 of chapter 23 of this title.

(i) Annually, on or before October 1, the Secretary shall send to school boards for inclusion in town reports and publish on the Agency website the following information:

~~(1) the statewide average district per pupil education spending for the current fiscal year; and~~

~~(2) a statewide comparison of student-teacher ratios among schools that are similar in number of students and number of grades.~~

* * *

§ 4013. ENGLISH LEARNERS SERVICES; STATE AID

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1) “Applicable federal laws” mean the Equal Education Opportunities Act (20 U.S.C. § 1703), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d et seq.), and Titles I and III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. §§ 6301 et seq. and 20 U.S.C. §§ 6801 et seq.), each as amended.

(2) “EL services” mean instructional and support personnel and services that are required under applicable federal laws for EL students and their families.

(3) “EL students” or “EL pupils” mean students who have been identified as English learners through the screening protocols required under 20 U.S.C. § 6823(b)(2).

(b) Required EL services. Each school district shall:

(1) screen students to determine which students are EL students and therefore qualify for EL services;

(2) assess and monitor the progress of EL students;

(3) provide EL services;

(4) budget sufficient resources through a combination of State and federal categorical aid and local education spending to provide EL services;

(5) report expenditures on EL services annually to the Agency of Education through the financial reporting system as required by the Agency; and

(6) evaluate the effectiveness of their EL programs and report educational outcomes of EL students as required by the Agency and applicable federal laws.

(c) Agency of Education support and quality assurance. The Agency of Education shall:

(1) provide guidance and program support to all school districts with EL students as required under applicable federal law, including:

(A) professional development resources for EL teachers and support personnel; and

(B) information on best practices and nationally recognized language development standards; and

(2) prescribe, collect, and analyze financial and student outcome data from school districts to ensure that districts are providing high-quality EL services and expending sufficient resources to provide these services.

~~(d) Categorical aid. In addition to the EL weight under section 4010 of this title, a school district that has, as determined annually on October 1 of the year:~~

~~(1) one to five EL students enrolled shall receive State aid of \$25,000.00 for that school year; or~~

~~(2) six to 25 EL students enrolled shall receive State aid of \$50,000.00 for that school year. [Repealed.]~~

~~(e) Annual appropriation. Annually, the General Assembly shall include in its appropriation for statewide education spending under subsection 4011(a) of this title an appropriation to provide aid to school districts for EL services under this section. [Repealed.]~~

~~(f) Payment. On or before November 1 of each year, the State Treasurer shall withdraw from the Education Fund, based on warrant of the Commissioner of Finance and Management, and shall forward to each school district the aid amount it is owed under this section. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

§ 4015. ~~MERGER SUPPORT FOR MERGED DISTRICTS~~

~~(a) A school district that was voluntarily formed under 2010 Acts and Resolves No. 153, 2012 Acts and Resolves No. 156, or 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46, each as amended, and received a merger support grant shall continue to receive that merger support grant, subject to the provisions in subsection (c) of this section.~~

~~(b) A school district that was involuntarily formed under the Final Report of Decisions and Order on Statewide School District Merger Decisions Pursuant to Act 46, Secs. 8(b) and 10 dated November 28, 2018 and that received a small schools grant in fiscal year 2020 shall receive an annual merger support grant in that amount, subject to the provisions in subsection (c) of this section.~~

~~(c)(1) Payment of a merger support grant under this section shall not be made in any year that the school district receives a small school weight under section 4010 of this title.~~

~~(2) Payment of a merger support grant under this section shall continue annually unless explicitly repealed by the General Assembly; provided, however, that the Secretary shall discontinue payment of the grant in the fiscal~~

~~year following the cessation of operations of the school that made the district originally eligible for the grant, and further provided that if the building that houses the school that made the district originally eligible for the grant is consolidated with another school into a renovated or new school building, then the Secretary shall continue to pay the grant during the repayment term of any bonded indebtedness incurred in connection with the consolidation-related renovation or construction. [Repealed.]~~

§ 4016. REIMBURSEMENT FOR TRANSPORTATION EXPENDITURES

(a) ~~A school district or supervisory union that incurs allowable transportation expenditures shall receive a transportation reimbursement grant each year. The grant shall be equal to 50 100 percent of allowable transportation expenditures; provided, however, that in any year the total amount of grants under this subsection shall not exceed the total amount of adjusted base year transportation grant expenditures. The total amount of base year transportation grant expenditures shall be \$10,000,000.00 for fiscal year 1997, increased each year thereafter by the annual price index for state and local government purchases of goods and services. If in any year the total amount of the grants under this subsection exceed the adjusted base year transportation grant expenditures, the amount of each grant awarded shall be reduced proportionately. Transportation grants paid under this section shall be paid from the Education Fund and shall be added to education spending payment receipts paid under section 4011 of this title.~~

(b) ~~In~~ As used in this section, “allowable transportation expenditures” means the costs of transporting students to and from school for regular classroom services and shall not include expenditures for transporting students participating in curricular activities that take place off the school grounds or for transporting students participating in cocurricular activities. The State Board Agency of Education, through rulemaking, shall further define allowable transportation expenditures ~~by rule.~~

(c) ~~A district or supervisory union may apply and the Secretary may pay for extraordinary transportation expenditures incurred due to geographic or other conditions such as the need to transport students out of the school district to attend another school because the district does not maintain a public school. The State Board Agency of Education shall define extraordinary transportation expenditures by rule. The total amount of base year extraordinary transportation grant expenditures shall be \$250,000.00 for fiscal year 1997, increased each year thereafter by the annual price index for state and local government purchases of goods and services. Extraordinary transportation expenditures shall not be paid out of the funds appropriated under subsection (b) of this section for other transportation expenditures. Grants paid under this~~

section shall be paid from the Education Fund and shall be added to education spending payment receipts paid under section 4011 of this title.

* * *

§ 4025. EDUCATION FUND

(a) The Education Fund is established to comprise the following:

(1) all revenue paid to the State from the statewide education tax on nonhomestead and homestead property under 32 V.S.A. chapter 135, which shall not include any revenue raised from the school district spending tax under 32 V.S.A. § 5402(f);

* * *

(b) Monies in the Education Fund shall be used for the following:

(1) To make payments to school districts ~~and supervisory unions~~ for the support of education in accordance with the provisions of section 4028 of this title, other provisions of this chapter, the provisions of 32 V.S.A. chapter 135, and the Flexible Pathways Initiative established by section 941 of this title, but excluding adult education and literacy programs under section 945 of this title.

(2) To cover the cost of fund auditing, accounting, revenue collection, and of short-term borrowing to meet fund cash flow requirements.

~~(3) To make payments required under 32 V.S.A. § 6066(a)(1) and only that portion attributable to education taxes, as determined by the Commissioner of Taxes, of payments required under 32 V.S.A. § 6066(a)(3). The State Treasurer shall withdraw funds from the Education Fund upon warrants issued by the Commissioner of Finance and Management based on information supplied by the Commissioner of Taxes. The Commissioner of Finance and Management may draw warrants for disbursements from the Fund in anticipation of receipts. All balances in the Fund at the end of any fiscal year shall be carried forward and remain a part of the Fund. Interest accruing from the Fund shall remain in the Fund. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

§ 4026. EDUCATION FUND BUDGET STABILIZATION RESERVE;

CREATION AND PURPOSE

* * *

~~(e) The enactment of this chapter and other provisions of the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of which it is a part have been premised upon estimates of balances of revenues to be raised and expenditures to be made under the act for such purposes as education spending payments, categorical~~

~~State support grants, provisions for property tax income sensitivity, payments in lieu of taxes, current use value appraisals, tax stabilization agreements, the stabilization reserve established by this section, and for other purposes. If the stabilization reserve established under this section should in any fiscal year be less than 5.0 percent of the prior fiscal year's appropriations from the Education Fund, as defined in subsection (b) of this section, the Joint Fiscal Committee shall review the information provided pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 5402b and provide the General Assembly its recommendations for change necessary to restore the stabilization reserve to the statutory level provided in subsection (b) of this section.~~

§ 4027. EDUCATION FUND TRANSFER AMOUNTS

~~(a) [Repealed.]~~

~~(b) Annually, on or before June 1, each superintendent shall report to the Agency, on a form prescribed by the Secretary, each education budget that was adopted by May 1 for the following fiscal year by the member districts of the supervisory union and for which no petition for reconsideration has been filed. A superintendent shall report a budget adopted following May 1, to the Agency, between 30 to 40 days following adoption or, if a petition for reconsideration has been filed, within 10 days of final adoption of the budget the final adopted budget approved by the district school board.~~

§ 4028. FUND PAYMENTS TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

~~(a) On or before September 10, December 10, and April 30 of each school year, one-third of the education spending payment under section 4011 of this title base amount as determined under subdivision 4001(17) of this title and any State guarantee as defined under 32 V.S.A. § 5401(19) shall become due to school districts, ~~except that districts that have not adopted a budget by 30 days before the date of payment under this subsection shall receive one-quarter of the base education amount and upon adoption of a budget shall receive additional amounts due under this subsection.~~~~

~~(b) Payments made for special education under chapter 101 of this title, for career technical education under chapter 37 of this title, and for other aid and categorical grants paid for support of education shall also be from the Education Fund.~~

~~(c)(1) Any district that has adopted a school budget that includes high spending, as defined in 32 V.S.A. § 5401(12), shall, upon timely notice, be authorized to use a portion of its high spending penalty to reduce future education spending:~~

~~(A) by entering into a contract with an operational efficiency consultant or a financial systems consultant to examine issues such as~~

~~transportation arrangements, administrative costs, staffing patterns, and the potential for collaboration with other districts;~~

~~(B) by entering into a contract with an energy or facilities management consultant; or~~

~~(C) by engaging in discussions with other school districts about reorganization or consolidation for better service delivery at a lower cost.~~

~~(2) To the extent approved by the Secretary, the Agency shall pay the district from the property tax revenue to be generated by the high spending increase to the district's spending adjustment as estimated by the Secretary, up to a maximum of \$5,000.00. For the purposes of this subsection, "timely notice" means written notice from the district to the Secretary by September 30 of the budget year. If the district enters into a contract with a consultant pursuant to this subsection, the consultant shall not be an employee of the district or of the Agency. A copy of the consultant's final recommendations or a copy of the district's recommendations regarding reorganization, as appropriate, shall be submitted to the Secretary, and each affected town shall include in its next town report an executive summary of the consultant's or district's final recommendations and notice of where a complete copy is available. No district is authorized to obtain funds under this section more than one time in every five years. [Repealed.]~~

~~(d) The Joint Fiscal Office shall prepare a fiscal note for any legislation that requires a supervisory union or school district to perform any action with an associated cost, but does not provide money or a funding mechanism for fulfilling that obligation. Any fiscal note prepared under this subsection shall be completed not later than the date that the legislation is considered for a vote in the first committee to which it is referred.~~

* * *

§ 4030. DATA SUBMISSION; CORRECTIONS

(a) Upon discovering an error or change in data submitted to the Secretary for the purpose of determining payments to or from the Education Fund, a school district shall report the error or change to the Secretary as soon as possible. Any budget deficit or surplus due to the error or change shall be carried forward to the following year.

(b) The Secretary shall use data submitted on or before January 15 prior to the fiscal year that begins the following July 1 in order to calculate the amounts due each school district for any fiscal year for transportation aid due under section 4016 of this title.

(c) The Secretary shall use data corrections regarding approved district budget amounts submitted on or before June 15 prior to the fiscal year that begins the following July 1, in order to calculate the education payments due under section 4011 of this title. However, the Secretary may use data submitted after June 15 and prior to July 15 due to unusual or exceptional circumstances as determined by the Secretary.

(d) The Secretary shall not use data corrected due to an error submitted following the deadlines to recalculate weighted long-term membership under section 4010 of this title. The Secretary shall not adjust average daily membership counts if an error or change is reported more than three fiscal years following the date that the original data was due.

(e) The ~~State Board~~ Agency of Education may adopt rules as necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

§ 4031. ~~UNORGANIZED TOWNS AND GORES~~

~~(a) For a municipality that, as of January 1, 2004, is an unorganized town or gore, its education property tax spending adjustment under 32 V.S.A. § 5401(13) shall be one for purposes of determining the tax rate under 32 V.S.A. § 5402(a)(2).~~

~~(b) For purposes of a claim for property tax credit under 32 V.S.A. chapter 154 by a taxpayer in a municipality affected under this section, the applicable percentage shall not be multiplied by a spending adjustment under 32 V.S.A. § 5401(13). [Repealed.]~~

* * * Education Property Tax Rate Formula * * *

Sec. 25. 32 V.S.A. § 5401 is amended to read:

§ 5401. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(7) "Homestead":

(A) "Homestead" means the principal dwelling and parcel of land surrounding the dwelling, owned and occupied by a resident individual as the individual's domicile or owned and fully leased on April 1, provided the property is not leased for more than 182 days out of the calendar year or, for purposes of the renter credit under subsection 6066(b) of this title, is rented and occupied by a resident individual as the individual's domicile.

* * *

(8) “Education spending” means “education spending” as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 4001(6).

* * *

(12) ~~“Excess spending” means:~~

~~(A) The per pupil spending amount of the district’s education spending, as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 4001(6), plus any amount required to be added from a capital construction reserve fund under 24 V.S.A. § 2804(b).~~

~~(B) In excess of 118 percent of the statewide average district per pupil education spending increased by inflation, as determined by the Secretary of Education on or before November 15 of each year based on the passed budgets to date. As used in this subdivision, “increased by inflation” means increasing the statewide average district per pupil education spending for fiscal year 2025 by the most recent New England Economic Project cumulative price index, as of November 15, for state and local government purchases of goods and services, from fiscal year 2025 through the fiscal year for which the amount is being determined. [Repealed.]~~

~~(13)(A) “Education property tax spending adjustment” means the greater of one or a fraction in which:~~

~~(i)(A) the numerator is the district’s per pupil education spending plus excess spending for the school year, and~~

~~(ii)(B) the denominator is the property dollar equivalent yield for the school year, as defined in subdivision (15) of this section, multiplied by the statewide adjustment.~~

~~(B) “Education income tax spending adjustment” means the greater of one or a fraction in which the numerator is the district’s per pupil education spending plus excess spending for the school year, and the denominator is the income dollar equivalent yield for the school year, as defined in subdivision (16) of this section. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

~~(15) “Property dollar equivalent yield” means the amount of per pupil education spending that would result in a district having a homestead tax rate of \$1.00 per \$100.00 of equalized education property value. [Repealed.]~~

~~(16) “Income dollar equivalent yield” means the amount of per pupil education spending that would result in a district having an income percentage in subdivision 6066(a)(2) of this title of 2.0 percent. [Repealed.]~~

~~(17) “Statewide adjustment” means the ratio of the aggregate education property tax grand list of all municipalities to the aggregate value of the equalized education property tax grand list of all municipalities. [Repealed.]~~

(18) “School district-approved spending” means the spending that a school district approves in excess of the foundation formula amount as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 4001(17) for the fiscal year and for which no existing revenue source is available, provided that no school district shall approve spending in excess of a certain percentage, to be determined annually, of the school district’s foundation formula amount for the fiscal year.

(19) “State guarantee” means an amount equal to the school district’s State guarantee rate multiplied by the school district’s approved spending.

(20) “State guarantee rate” means one minus the ratio of the anticipated aggregate equalized education property tax grand list of the municipal members of a school district per the average daily membership as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 4001(1) of that school district in the following fiscal year to the anticipated aggregate equalized education property tax grand list of the municipal members of a school district per the average daily membership as defined under 16 V.S.A. § 4001(1) of that school district that is the median in the State in the following fiscal year, provided that no school district’s State guarantee rate under this subdivision shall be less than zero.

Sec. 26. 32 V.S.A. § 5402 is amended to read:

§ 5402. EDUCATION PROPERTY TAX LIABILITY

(a) A statewide education tax is imposed on all nonhomestead and homestead property at the following rates:

~~(1) The tax rate for nonhomestead property shall be \$1.59 per \$100.00 divided by the statewide adjustment.~~

(2) The tax rate for homestead property shall be \$1.00 multiplied by the education property tax spending adjustment for the municipality per \$100.00 of equalized education property value as most recently determined under section 5405 of this title. The homestead property tax rate for each municipality that is a member of a union or unified union school district shall be calculated as required under subsection (e) of this section a rate sufficient to raise the foundation formula amount for the school district for the fiscal year after accounting for the forecasted available revenues and the State guarantee. It is the intention of the General Assembly that the statewide education tax rate under this section shall be adopted for each fiscal year by act of the General Assembly.

(b) The statewide education tax shall be calculated as follows:

(1) The Commissioner of Taxes shall determine for each municipality the education tax ~~rates~~ rate under subsection (a) of this section divided by the ~~number resulting from dividing the~~ municipality's most recent common level of appraisal ~~by the statewide adjustment~~. The legislative body in each municipality shall then bill each property taxpayer at the ~~homestead or nonhomestead~~ rate determined by the Commissioner under this subdivision, multiplied by the education property tax grand list value of the property, properly classified as homestead or nonhomestead property and without regard to any other tax classification of the property. Statewide education property tax bills shall show the tax due and the calculation of the rate determined under subsection (a) of this section, divided by ~~the number resulting from dividing the~~ municipality's most recent common level of appraisal ~~by the statewide adjustment~~, multiplied by the current grand list value of the property to be taxed. Statewide education property tax bills shall also include language provided by the Commissioner pursuant to subsection 5405(g) of this title.

(2) Taxes assessed under this section shall be assessed and collected in the same manner as taxes assessed under chapter 133 of this title with no tax classification other than as homestead or nonhomestead property; provided, however, that the tax levied under this chapter shall be billed to each taxpayer by the municipality in a manner that clearly indicates the tax is separate from any other tax assessed and collected under chapter 133, including an itemization of the separate taxes due. The bill may be on a single sheet of paper with the statewide education tax and other taxes presented separately and side by side.

(3) If a district has not voted a budget by June 30, an interim ~~homestead~~ education tax shall be imposed at the ~~base rate determined under subdivision (a)(2)~~ subsection (a) of this section, divided by ~~the number resulting from dividing the~~ municipality's most recent common level of appraisal ~~by the statewide adjustment, but without regard to any spending adjustment under subdivision 5401(13) of this title~~. Within 30 days after a budget is adopted and the deadline for reconsideration has passed, the Commissioner shall determine the municipality's ~~homestead~~ tax rate as required under subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(c)(1) The treasurer of each municipality shall by December 1 of the year in which the tax is levied and on June 1 of the following year pay to the State Treasurer for deposit in the Education Fund one-half of the municipality's statewide ~~nonhomestead tax and one-half of the municipality's~~ homestead education tax, as determined under subdivision (b)(1) of this section.

(2) The Secretary of Education shall determine each municipality's net nonhomestead education tax payment and its net homestead education tax payment to the State based on grand list information received by the Secretary not later than the March 15 prior to the June 1 net payment. Payment shall be accompanied by a return prescribed by the Secretary of Education. Each municipality may retain 0.225 of one percent of the total education tax collected, only upon timely remittance of net payment to the State Treasurer or to the applicable school district or districts. Each municipality may also retain \$15.00 for each late property tax credit claim filed after April 15 and before September 2, as notified by the Department of Taxes, for the cost of issuing a new property tax bill.

(d) [Repealed.]

(e) The Commissioner of Taxes shall determine a homestead education tax rate for each municipality that is a member of a union or unified union school district as follows:

(1) For a municipality that is a member of a unified union school district, use the base rate determined under subdivision (a)(2) of this section and a spending adjustment under subdivision 5401(13) of this title based upon the per pupil education spending of the unified union.

(2) For a municipality that is a member of a union school district:

(A) Determine the municipal district homestead tax rate using the base rate determined under subdivision (a)(2) of this section and a spending adjustment under subdivision 5401(13) of this title based on the per pupil education spending in the municipality who attends a school other than the union school.

(B) Determine the union district homestead tax rate using the base rate determined under subdivision (a)(2) of this section and a spending adjustment under subdivision 5401(13) of this title based on the per pupil education spending of the union school district.

(C) Determine a combined homestead tax rate by calculating the weighted average of the rates determined under subdivisions (A) and (B) of this subdivision (2), with weighting based upon the ratio of union school long-term membership, as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 4001(7), from the member municipality to total long-term membership of the member municipality; and the ratio of long-term membership attending a school other than the union school to total long-term membership of the member municipality. Total long-term membership of the member municipality is based on the number of pupils who are legal residents of the municipality and attending school at public

~~expense. If necessary, the Commissioner may adopt a rule to clarify and facilitate implementation of this subsection (e). [Repealed.]~~

(f)(1) A school district spending tax is imposed on all homestead and nonhomestead property in each member municipality of a school district that approves spending pursuant to subdivision 5401(18) of this chapter. The Commissioner of Taxes shall determine the school district spending tax rate for each school district at a rate sufficient to raise the amount of the school district's approved spending as certified by the Secretary of Education after accounting for any State guarantee due to the school district. The legislative body in each member municipality shall then bill each property taxpayer at the rate determined by the Commissioner under this subsection multiplied by the current grand list value of the property to be taxed. The bill shall show the tax due and the calculation of the rate.

(2) The school district spending tax assessed under this subsection shall be assessed and collected in the same manner as taxes assessed under chapter 133 of this title with no tax classification other than as homestead or nonhomestead property; provided, however, that the tax levied under this chapter shall be billed to each taxpayer by the municipality in a manner that clearly indicates the tax is separate from any other tax assessed and collected under chapter 133 and the statewide education property tax under this section, including an itemization of the separate taxes due. The bill may be on a single sheet of paper with the school district spending tax, the statewide education tax, and other taxes presented separately and side by side.

(3) The treasurer of each municipality shall pay all revenue raised from the school district spending tax imposed under this subsection to its school district pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 426.

Sec. 27. 32 V.S.A. § 5402b is amended to read:

§ 5402b. BASE AMOUNT; STATEWIDE EDUCATION TAX YIELDS

RATE; RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMISSIONER

(a) Annually, not later than December 1, the Commissioner of Taxes, after consultation with the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Administration, and the Joint Fiscal Office, shall estimate the base amount as defined in 32 V.S.A. § 4001(16) for the following fiscal year and calculate and recommend a property dollar equivalent yield, an income dollar equivalent yield, and a nonhomestead property tax rate statewide education property tax rate pursuant to subdivision 5402(a)(1) of this chapter for the following fiscal year. In making these calculations, the Commissioner shall assume the statutory reserves are maintained at five percent pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 4026:

~~(1) the homestead base tax rate in subdivision 5402(a)(2) of this title is \$1.00 per \$100.00 of equalized education property value;~~

~~(2) the applicable percentage in subdivision 6066(a)(2) of this title is 2.0;~~

~~(3) the statutory reserves under 16 V.S.A. § 4026 and this section were maintained at five percent;~~

~~(4) the percentage change in the average education tax bill applied to nonhomestead property and the percentage change in the average education tax bill of homestead property and the percentage change in the average education tax bill for taxpayers who claim a credit under subsection 6066(a) of this title are equal;~~

~~(5) the equalized education grand list is multiplied by the statewide adjustment in calculating the property dollar equivalent yield; and~~

~~(6) the nonhomestead rate is divided by the statewide adjustment.~~

~~(b) For each fiscal year, the property dollar equivalent yield and the income dollar equivalent yield shall be the same as in the prior fiscal year, unless set otherwise by the General Assembly. [Repealed.]~~

~~(c) Annually, on or before December 1, the Joint Fiscal Office shall prepare and publish an official, annotated copy of the Education Fund Outlook. The Emergency Board shall review the Outlook at its meetings. As used in this section, "Education Fund Outlook" means the projected revenues and expenses associated with the Education Fund for the following fiscal year, including projections of different categories of educational expenses and costs.~~

~~(d) Along with the recommendations made under this section, the Commissioner shall include the range of per pupil school district-approved spending between all districts in the State for the previous year.~~

* * *

* * * Conforming Revisions; Statewide Property Tax Rate * * *

Sec. 28. 32 V.S.A. § 5404a(b)(1) is amended to read:

(b)(1) An agreement affecting the education property tax grand list defined under subsection (a) of this section shall reduce the municipality's education property tax liability under this chapter for the duration of the agreement or exemption without extension or renewal, and for a maximum of 10 years. A municipality's property tax liability under this chapter shall be reduced by any difference between the amount of the education property taxes collected on the subject property and the amount of education property taxes

that would have been collected on such property if its fair market value were taxed at the equalized nonhomestead rate for the tax year.

Sec. 29. 32 V.S.A. § 5405(g) is amended to read:

(g) The Commissioner shall provide to municipalities for the front of property tax bills the district homestead property tax rate before equalization, the nonresidential tax rate before equalization, and the calculation process that creates the equalized homestead and nonhomestead tax rates rate. The Commissioner shall further provide to municipalities for the back of property tax bills an explanation of the common level of appraisal, including its origin and purpose.

Sec. 30. 32 V.S.A. § 5410(g) is amended to read:

(g) ~~If the property identified in a declaration under subsection (b) of this section is not the taxpayer's homestead or if the owner of a homestead fails to declare a homestead as required under this section, the Commissioner shall notify the municipality, and the municipality shall issue a corrected tax bill that may, as determined by the governing body of the municipality, include a penalty of up to three percent of the education tax on the property. However, if the property incorrectly declared as a homestead is located in a municipality that has a lower homestead tax rate than the nonhomestead tax rate or if an undeclared homestead is located in a municipality that has a lower nonhomestead tax rate than the homestead tax rate, then the governing body of the municipality may include a penalty of up to eight percent of the education tax liability on the property. If the Commissioner determines that the declaration or failure to declare was with fraudulent intent, then the municipality shall assess the taxpayer a penalty in an amount equal to 100 percent of the education tax on the property, plus any interest and late-payment fee or commission that may be due. Any penalty imposed under this section and any additional property tax interest and late-payment fee or commission shall be assessed and collected by the municipality in the same manner as a property tax under chapter 133 of this title. Notwithstanding section 4772 of this title, issuance of a corrected bill issued under this section does not extend the time for payment of the original bill nor relieve the taxpayer of any interest or penalties associated with the original bill. If the corrected bill is less than the original bill and there are also no unpaid current year taxes, interest, or penalties and no past year delinquent taxes or penalties and interest charges, any overpayment shall be reflected on the corrected tax bill and refunded to the taxpayer. [Repealed.]~~

* * * Statewide Property Tax Credit Repeal; Homestead Exemption

Created * * *

Sec. 31. 32 V.S.A. § 5400 is amended to read:

§ 5400. STATUTORY PURPOSES

* * *

(c) The statutory purpose of the exemption for qualified housing in subdivision 5404a(a)(6) of this title is to ensure that taxes on this rent-restricted housing provided to Vermonters of low and moderate income are more equivalent to property taxed using the State as a homestead rate property and to adjust the costs of investment in rent-restricted housing to reflect more accurately the revenue potential of such property.

* * *

(j) The statutory purpose of the homestead property tax exemption in subdivision 6066(a)(1) of this title is to reduce the property tax liability for Vermont households with low and moderate household income.

Sec. 32. 32 V.S.A. chapter 154 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 154. HOMESTEAD PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION,
MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAX CREDIT, AND RENTER CREDIT

§ 6061. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter ~~unless the context requires otherwise:~~

(1) ~~“Property Municipal property tax credit” means a credit of the prior tax year’s statewide or municipal property tax liability or a homestead owner credit, as authorized under section subdivision 6066(a)(2) of this title, as the context requires chapter.~~

* * *

~~(8) “Annual tax levy” means the property taxes levied on property taxable on April 1 and without regard to the year in which those taxes are due or paid. [Repealed.]~~

(9) “Taxable year” means the calendar year preceding the year in which the claim is filed.

(10) [Repealed.]

(11) “Housesite” means that portion of a homestead, as defined under subdivision 5401(7) of this title but not under subdivision 5401(7)(G) of this title, that includes as much of the land owned by the claimant surrounding the dwelling as is reasonably necessary for use of the dwelling as a home, but in

no event more than two acres per dwelling unit, and, in the case of multiple dwelling units, not more than two acres per dwelling unit up to a maximum of 10 acres per parcel.

(12) "Claim year" means the year in which a claim is filed under this chapter.

(13) "Homestead" means a homestead as defined under subdivision 5401(7) of this title, but not under subdivision 5401(7)(G) of this title, and declared on or before October 15 in accordance with section 5410 of this title.

(14) ~~"Statewide education tax rate" means the homestead education property tax rate multiplied by the municipality's education spending adjustment under subdivision 5402(a)(2) of this title and used to calculate taxes assessed in the municipal fiscal year that began in the taxable year. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

(21) "Homestead property tax exemption" means a reduction in the amount of housesite value subject to the statewide education tax and the school district spending tax in the claim year as authorized under sections 6066 and 6066a of this chapter.

§ 6062. NUMBER AND IDENTITY OF CLAIMANTS; APPORTIONMENT

* * *

(d) Whenever a housesite is an integral part of a larger unit such as a farm or a multi-purpose or multi-dwelling building, property taxes paid shall be that percentage of the total property tax as the value of the housesite is to the total value. Upon a claimant's request, the listers shall certify to the claimant the value of ~~his or her~~ the claimant's homestead and housesite.

* * *

§ 6063. CLAIM AS PERSONAL; CREDIT AND EXEMPTION AMOUNT

AT TIME OF TRANSFER

(a) The right to file a claim under this chapter is personal to the claimant and shall not survive ~~his or her~~ the claimant's death, but the right may be exercised on behalf of a claimant by ~~his or her~~ the claimant's legal guardian or attorney-in-fact. When a claimant dies after having filed a timely claim, the municipal property tax credit and the homestead exemption amount shall be ~~credited~~ applied to the ~~homestead~~ property tax liability of the claimant's estate as provided in section 6066a of this title.

(b) In case of sale or transfer of a residence, after April 1 of the claim year:

(1) any municipal property tax credit amounts amount related to that residence shall be allocated to the seller transferor at closing unless the parties otherwise agree;

(2) any homestead property tax exemption related to that residence based on the transferor's age and household income under subdivision 6066(a)(1) of this chapter shall cease to be in effect upon transfer; and

(3) a transferee who is eligible to declare the residence as a homestead but for the requirement to own the residence on April 1 of the claim year shall, notwithstanding subdivision 5401(7) and subsection 5410(b) of this title, be eligible to apply for a homestead property tax exemption in the claim year when the transfer occurs by filing with the Commissioner of Taxes a homestead declaration pursuant to section 5410 of this title and a claim for exemption on or before the due date prescribed under section 6068 of this chapter.

* * *

§ 6065. FORMS; TABLES; NOTICES

(a) In administering this chapter, the Commissioner shall provide suitable claim forms with tables of allowable claims, instructions, and worksheets for claiming a homestead property tax exemption and municipal property tax credit.

(b) Prior to June 1, the Commissioner shall also prepare and supply to each town in the State notices describing the homestead property tax exemption and municipal property tax credit for inclusion in property tax bills. The notice shall be in simple, plain language and shall explain how to file for a homestead property tax exemption and a municipal property tax credit, where to find assistance filing for a credit or an exemption, or both, and any other related information as determined by the Commissioner. The notice shall direct taxpayers to a resource where they can find versions of the notice translated into the five most common non-English languages in the State. A town shall include such notice in each tax bill and notice of delinquent taxes that it mails to taxpayers who own in that town a residential property, without regard for whether the property was declared a homestead pursuant to subdivision 5401(7) of this title.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, towns that use envelopes or mailers not able to accommodate notices describing the homestead property tax exemption and municipal property tax credit may distribute such notices in an alternative manner.

§ 6066. COMPUTATION OF HOMESTEAD PROPERTY TAX
EXEMPTION, MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAX CREDIT, AND
RENTER CREDIT

(a) ~~An eligible claimant who owned the homestead on April 1 of the year in which the claim is filed shall be entitled to a credit for the prior year's homestead property tax liability amount determined as follows:~~

~~(1)(A) For a claimant with household income of \$90,000.00 or more:~~

~~(i) the statewide education tax rate, multiplied by the equalized value of the housesite in the taxable year;~~

~~(ii) minus (if less) the sum of:~~

~~(I) the income percentage of household income for the taxable year; plus~~

~~(II) the statewide education tax rate, multiplied by the equalized value of the housesite in the taxable year in excess of \$225,000.00.~~

~~(B) For a claimant with household income of less than \$90,000.00 but more than \$47,000.00, the statewide education tax rate, multiplied by the equalized value of the housesite in the taxable year, minus (if less) the sum of:~~

~~(i) the income percentage of household income for the taxable year; plus~~

~~(ii) the statewide education tax rate, multiplied by the equalized value of the housesite in the taxable year in excess of \$400,000.00.~~

~~(C) For a claimant whose household income does not exceed \$47,000.00, the statewide education tax rate, multiplied by the equalized value of the housesite in the taxable year, minus the lesser of:~~

~~(i) the sum of the income percentage of household income for the taxable year plus the statewide education tax rate, multiplied by the equalized value of the housesite in the taxable year in excess of \$400,000.00; or~~

~~(ii) the statewide education tax rate, multiplied by the equalized value of the housesite in the taxable year reduced by \$15,000.00.~~

~~(2) "Income percentage" in this section means two percent, multiplied by the education income tax spending adjustment under subdivision 5401(13)(B) of this title for the property tax year that begins in the claim year for the municipality in which the homestead residence is located~~

(1) An eligible claimant who owned the homestead on April 1 of the claim year shall be entitled to a homestead property tax exemption in the claim year in an amount determined as follows:

(A) for a claimant whose household income is equal to or less than \$47,000.00 and who is 65 years of age or more as of December 31 of the year in which the claimant's household income is taken into account, the exemption shall be 70 percent of the claimant's housesite value, provided the exempt amount of housesite value shall not exceed \$200,000.00;

(B) for a claimant whose household income is equal to or less than \$47,000.00 and who is less than 65 years of age as of December 31 of the year in which the claimant's household income is taken into account, the exemption shall be 60 percent of the claimant's housesite value, provided the exempt amount of housesite value shall not exceed \$200,000.00;

(C) for a claimant whose household income is greater than \$47,000.00 but equal to or less than \$90,000.00, the exemption shall be 50 percent of the claimant's housesite value, provided the exempt amount of housesite value shall not exceed \$200,000.00;

(D) for a claimant whose household income is greater than \$90,000.00 but equal to or less than \$125,000.00, the exemption shall be 10 percent of the claimant's housesite value, provided the exempt amount of housesite value shall not exceed \$50,000.00; and

(E) for a claimant whose household income is greater than \$125,000.00, no amount of housesite value shall be exempt under this section.

(3)(2) A An eligible claimant who owned the homestead on April 1 of the claim year and whose household income does not exceed \$47,000.00 shall also be entitled to ~~an additional~~ a credit amount ~~from~~ against the claimant's municipal taxes for the upcoming fiscal year that is equal to the amount by which the municipal property taxes for the municipal fiscal year that began in the taxable year upon the claimant's housesite exceeds a percentage of the claimant's household income for the taxable year as follows:

If household income (rounded to the nearest dollar) is:	then the taxpayer is entitled to credit for the
	reduced property tax in excess of this percent
	of that income:
\$0.00 — 9,999.00	1.50

\$10,000.00 — 47,000.00 3.00

~~(4) A claimant whose household income does not exceed \$47,000.00 shall also be entitled to an additional credit amount from the claimant's statewide education tax for the upcoming fiscal year that is equal to the amount by which the education property tax for the municipal fiscal year that began in the taxable year upon the claimant's housesite, reduced by the credit amount determined under subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection, exceeds a percentage of the claimant's household income for the taxable year as follows:~~

If household income (rounded to the nearest dollar) is:	then the taxpayer is entitled to credit for the reduced property tax in excess of this percent of that income:
\$0.00 — 9,999.00	0.5
\$10,000.00 — 24,999.00	1.5
\$25,000.00 — 47,000.00	2.0

~~(5)(3) In no event shall the homestead property tax exemption provided for in subdivision (1) of this subsection reduce the housesite value below zero. In no event shall the municipal property tax credit provided for in subdivision (3) or (4) (2) of this subsection exceed the amount of the reduced municipal property tax. The credits under subdivision (4) of this subsection shall be calculated considering only the tax due on the first \$400,000.00 in equalized housesite value.~~

(b)(1) An eligible claimant who rented the homestead shall be entitled to a credit for the taxable year in an amount not to exceed \$2,500.00, to be calculated as follows:

* * *

(c) to be eligible for an ~~adjustment~~ exemption or credit under this chapter, the claimant:

- (1) must have been domiciled in this State during the entire taxable year;
- (2) may not be a person claimed as a dependent by any taxpayer under the federal Internal Revenue Code during the taxable year; and
- (3) in the case of a renter, shall have rented property for at least six calendar months, which need not be consecutive, during the taxable year.

(d) The owner of a mobile home that is sited on a lot not owned by the homeowner may include an amount determined under subdivision 6061(7) of this title as allocable rent paid on the lot with the amount of property taxes paid by the homeowner on the home for the purpose of computation of ~~credits~~ the municipal property tax credit under subdivision (a)(3)(2) of this section, unless the homeowner has included in the claim an amount of property tax on common land under the provisions of subsection (e) of this section.

(e) Property taxes paid by a cooperative, not including a mobile home park cooperative, allocable to property used as a homestead shall be attributable to the co-op member for the purpose of computing the ~~credit~~ of property tax liability of the co-op member under this section. Property owned by a cooperative declared as a homestead may only include the homestead and a pro rata share of any common land owned or leased by the cooperative, not to exceed the two-acre housesite limitation. The share of the cooperative's assessed value attributable to the housesite shall be determined by the cooperative and specified annually in a notice to the co-op member. Property taxes paid by a mobile home park cooperative, allocable to property used as a housesite, shall be attributed to the owner of the housesite for the purpose of computing the ~~credit~~ of property tax liability of the housesite owner under this section. Property owned by the mobile home park cooperative and declared as a housesite may only include common property of the cooperative contiguous with at least one mobile home lot in the park, not to exceed the two-acre housesite limitation. The share attributable to any mobile home lot shall be determined by the cooperative and specified in the cooperative agreement. A co-op member who is the housesite owner shall be entitled to a property tax credit in an amount determined by multiplying the property taxes allocated under this subsection by the percentage of the exemption for which the housesite owner's household income qualifies under subdivision (a)(1) of this section.

(f) [Repealed.]

(g) Notwithstanding subsection (d) of this section, if the land surrounding a homestead is owned by a nonprofit corporation or community land trust with tax exempt status under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3), the homeowner may include an allocated amount as property tax paid on the land with the amount of property taxes paid by the homeowner on the home for the purposes of computation of ~~the credit~~ property tax liability under this section. The allocated amount shall be determined by the nonprofit corporation or community land trust on a proportional basis. The nonprofit corporation or community land trust shall provide to that homeowner, by January 31, a certificate specifying the allocated amount. The certificate shall indicate the proportion of total property tax on the parcel that was assessed for municipal property tax and for statewide

property tax and the proportion of total value of the parcel. A homeowner under this subsection shall be entitled to a property tax credit in an amount determined by multiplying the property taxes allocated under this subsection by the percentage of the exemption for which the homeowner's household income qualifies under subdivision (a)(1) of this section.

(h) A homestead owner shall be entitled to an additional property tax credit equal to one percent of the amount of income tax refund that the claimant elects to allocate to payment of ~~homestead~~ statewide education property tax under section 6068 of this title.

(i) ~~Adjustments~~ The homestead property tax exemption and the municipal property tax credit under subsection (a) of this section shall be calculated without regard to any exemption under subdivision 3802(11) of this title.

§ 6066a. DETERMINATION OF HOMESTEAD PROPERTY TAX

EXEMPTION AND MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

(a) Annually, the Commissioner shall determine the homestead property tax exemption and the municipal property tax credit amount under section 6066 of this title, related to a homestead owned by the claimant, based on the prior taxable year's income and for the municipal property tax credit, crediting property taxes paid in the prior year, and for the homestead property tax exemption, exempting the housesite value in the claim year. The Commissioner shall notify the municipality in which the housesite is located of the amount of the homestead property tax exemption and municipal property tax credit for the claimant for ~~homestead~~ property tax liabilities on a monthly basis. The municipal property tax credit of a claimant who was assessed property tax by a town that revised the dates of its fiscal year, however, is the excess of the property tax that was assessed in the last 12 months of the revised fiscal year, over the adjusted property tax of the claimant for the revised fiscal year, as determined under section 6066 of this title, related to a homestead owned by the claimant.

(b) The Commissioner shall include in the total homestead property tax exemption and municipal property tax credit amount determined under subsection (a) of this section, for credit to the taxpayer for ~~homestead~~ statewide education property tax and school district spending tax liabilities, any income tax overpayment remaining after allocation under section 3112 of this title and setoff under section 5934 of this title, which the taxpayer has directed to be used for payment of property taxes.

(c) The Commissioner shall notify the municipality of any claim and refund amounts unresolved by November 1 at the time of final resolution, including adjudication, if any; provided, however, that towns will not be

notified of any additional credit amounts after November 1 of the claim year, and such amounts shall be paid to the claimant by the Commissioner.

(d) [Repealed.]

(e) At the time of notice to the municipality, the Commissioner shall notify the taxpayer of the homestead property tax credit exemption amount determined under subdivision 6066(a)(1) of this title, ~~the amount determined under subdivision 6066(a)(3) of this title;~~ any additional municipal property credit amounts amount due the homestead owner under ~~section~~ subdivision 6066(a)(2) of this title; the amount of income tax refund, if any, allocated to payment of ~~homestead~~ statewide education property tax liabilities; and any late-claim reduction amount.

(f)(1) For taxpayers and amounts stated in the notice to towns on or before July 1, municipalities shall create and send to taxpayers a ~~homestead~~ property tax bill, instead of the bill required under subdivision 5402(b)(1) of this title, providing the total amount allocated to payment of ~~homestead~~ statewide education property tax liabilities and notice of the balance due. Municipalities shall apply the amount of the homestead property tax exemption allocated under this chapter to current year property taxes in equal amounts to each of the taxpayers' property tax installments that include education taxes and the amount of the municipal property tax credit allocated under this chapter to current year municipal property taxes in equal amounts to each of the taxpayers' property tax installments that include municipal taxes. Notwithstanding section 4772 of this title, if a town issues a corrected bill as a result of the notice sent by the Commissioner under subsection (a) of this section, issuance of the corrected new bill does not extend the time for payment of the original bill nor relieve the taxpayer of any interest or penalties associated with the original bill. If the corrected bill is less than the original bill, and there are also no unpaid current year taxes, interest, or penalties, and no past year delinquent taxes or penalties and interest charges, any overpayment shall be reflected on the corrected tax bill and refunded to the taxpayer.

(2) For homestead property tax exemption and municipal property tax credit amounts for which municipalities receive notice after November 1, municipalities shall issue a new ~~homestead~~ property tax bill with notice to the taxpayer of the total amount allocated to payment of ~~homestead~~ property tax liabilities and notice of the balance due.

(3) The homestead property tax exemption and municipal property tax credit amount determined for the taxpayer shall be allocated first to current year housesite value and property tax on the homestead parcel, next to current-year homestead parcel penalties and interest, next to any prior year homestead

parcel penalties and interest, and last to any prior year housesite value and property tax on the homestead parcel. No homestead property tax exemption or municipal credit shall be allocated to a housesite value or property tax liability for any year after the year for which the claim or refund allocation was filed. No municipal tax-reduction incentive for early payment of taxes shall apply to any amount allocated to the property tax bill under this chapter.

(4) If the homestead property tax exemption or the municipal property tax credit amount as described in subsection (e) of this section exceeds the property tax, penalties, and interest due for the current and all prior years, the municipality shall refund the excess to the taxpayer, without interest, within 20 days of the first date upon which taxes become due and payable or 20 days after notification of the exemption or credit amount by the Commissioner of Taxes, whichever is later.

(g) The Commissioner of Taxes shall pay monthly to each municipality the amount of municipal property tax credit of which the municipality was last notified related to municipal property tax on homesteads within that municipality, as determined by the Commissioner of Taxes.

§ 6067. CREDIT CLAIM LIMITATIONS

(a) Claimant. Only one individual per household per taxable year shall be entitled to a homestead exemption claim or property tax credit claim, or both, under this chapter.

(b) Other states. An individual who received a homestead exemption or credit with respect to property taxes assessed by another state for the taxable year shall not be entitled to receive a credit under this chapter.

(c) Dollar amount. No ~~taxpayer claimant~~ shall receive a renter credit under subsection 6066(b) of this title in excess of \$2,500.00. No ~~taxpayer claimant~~ shall receive a municipal property tax credit under subdivision 6066(a)(3)(2) of this title greater than \$2,400.00 ~~or cumulative credit under subdivisions 6066(a)(1)-(2) and (4) of this title greater than \$5,600.00~~.

§ 6068. APPLICATION AND TIME FOR FILING

(a) A homestead property tax exemption or municipal property tax credit claim or request for allocation of an income tax refund to homestead statewide education property tax payment shall be filed with the Commissioner on or before the due date for filing the Vermont income tax return, without extension, and shall describe the school district in which the homestead property is located and shall particularly describe the homestead property for which the exemption or credit or allocation is sought, including the school parcel account number prescribed in subsection 5404(b) of this title. A renter

credit claim shall be filed with the Commissioner on or before the due date for filing the Vermont income tax return, without extension.

(b)(1) If ~~the~~ a claimant files a municipal property tax credit claim after October 15 but on or before March 15 of the following calendar year, the municipal property tax credit under this chapter:

~~(1)(A)~~ shall be reduced in amount by \$150.00, but not below \$0.00;

~~(2)(B)~~ shall be issued directly to the claimant; and

~~(3)(C)~~ shall not require the municipality where the claimant's property is located to issue an adjusted ~~homestead~~ property tax bill.

(2) If a claimant files a homestead property tax exemption claim under this chapter after October 15 but on or before March 15 of the following calendar year, the claimant shall pay a penalty of \$150.00 and the municipality where the claimant's property is located shall not be required to issue an adjusted property tax bill.

(c) No request for allocation of an income tax refund or for a renter credit claim may be made after October 15. No homestead property tax exemption or municipal property tax credit claim may be made after March 15 of the calendar year following the due date under subsection (a) of this section.

* * *

§ 6070. DISALLOWED CLAIMS

A claim shall be disallowed if the claimant received title to ~~his or her~~ the claimant's homestead primarily for the purpose of receiving benefits under this chapter.

§ 6071. EXCESSIVE AND FRAUDULENT CLAIMS

(a) In any case in which it is determined under the provisions of this title that a claim is or was excessive and was filed with fraudulent intent, the claim shall be disallowed in full and the Commissioner may impose a penalty equal to the amount claimed. A disallowed claim may be recovered by assessment as income taxes are assessed. The assessment, including assessment of penalty, shall bear interest from the date the claim was credited against property tax or income tax or paid by the State until repaid by the claimant at the rate per annum established from time to time by the Commissioner pursuant to section 3108 of this title. The claimant in that case, and any person who assisted in the preparation of filing of such excessive claim or supplied information upon which the excessive claim was prepared, with fraudulent intent, shall be fined not more than \$1,000.00 or be imprisoned not more than one year, or both.

(b) In any case in which it is determined that a claim is or was excessive, the Commissioner may impose a 10 percent penalty on such excess, and if the claim has been paid or credited against property tax or income tax otherwise payable, the municipal property tax credit or homestead exemption shall be reduced or canceled and the proper portion of any amount paid shall be similarly recovered by assessment as income taxes are assessed, and such assessment shall bear interest at the rate per annum established from time to time by the Commissioner pursuant to section 3108 of this title from the date of payment or, in the case of credit of a municipal property tax bill under section 6066a of this title, from December 1 of the year in which the claim is filed until refunded or paid.

(c) ~~In any case in which a homestead is rented by a person from another person under circumstances deemed by the Commissioner to be not at arms-length, the Commissioner may determine the rent constituting property tax for purposes of this chapter. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

§ 6073. ~~REGULATIONS~~ RULES OF THE COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner may, from time to time, ~~issue~~ adopt, amend, and withdraw ~~regulations~~ rules interpreting and implementing this chapter.

§ 6074. AMENDMENT OF CERTAIN CLAIMS

At any time within three years after the date for filing claims under subsection 6068(a) of this chapter, a claimant who filed a claim by October 15 may file to amend that claim with regard to housesite value, ~~housesite education tax~~, housesite municipal tax, and ownership percentage or to correct the amount of household income reported on that claim.

* * * Conforming Revisions; Property Tax Credit Repeal * * *

Sec. 33. 11 V.S.A. § 1608 is amended to read:

§ 1608. ELIGIBILITY FOR PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

Members of cooperative housing corporations shall be eligible to apply for and receive a homestead property tax ~~adjustment exemption and municipal property tax credit~~ under 32 V.S.A. § 6066, subject to the conditions of eligibility set forth therein.

Sec. 34. 32 V.S.A. § 3102(j) is amended to read:

(j) Tax bills prepared by a municipality under subdivision 5402(b)(1) of this title showing only the amount of total tax due shall not be considered confidential return information under this section. For the purposes of calculating ~~credits~~ the homestead property tax exemption and the municipal

property tax credit under chapter 154 of this title, information provided by the Commissioner to a municipality under subsection 6066a(a) of this title and information provided by the municipality to a taxpayer under subsection 6066a(f) shall be considered confidential return information under this section.

Sec. 35. 32 V.S.A. § 3206(b) is amended to read:

(b) As used in this section, “extraordinary relief” means a remedy that is within the power of the Commissioner to grant under this title, ~~a remedy that compensates for the result of inaccurate classification of property as homestead or nonhomestead pursuant to section 5410 of this title through no fault of the taxpayer,~~ or a remedy that makes changes to a taxpayer’s homestead property tax exemption, municipal property tax credit, or renter credit claim necessary to remedy the problem identified by the Taxpayer Advocate.

* * * Education Fund Advisory Committee * * *

Sec. 36. REPEAL; EDUCATION FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The following are repealed on July 1, 2025:

- (1) 32 V.S.A. § 5414 (Creation; Education Fund Advisory Committee).
- (2) 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 183, Sec. 12 (Education Fund Advisory Committee sunset).

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 37. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) The following sections shall take effect on passage:

- (1) Sec. 1 (findings and intent);
- (2) Sec. 2 (16 V.S.A. § 43);
- (3) Sec. 3 (16 V.S.A. § 212);
- (4) Sec. 4 (16 V.S.A. § 164);
- (5) Sec. 5 (16 V.S.A. § 165);
- (6) Sec. 7 (therapeutic schools and salary schedule report);
- (7) Sec. 10 (repeal of 16 V.S.A. chapter 7);
- (8) Sec. 11 (new union school districts);
- (9) Sec. 12 (16 V.S.A. § 2);
- (10) Sec. 14 (16 V.S.A. chapter 11);
- (11) Sec. 18 (repeals of 16 V.S.A. §§ 822a and 823);

- (12) Sec. 22 (transition year one funding);
 - (13) Sec. 23 (transition year two funding);
 - (14) Sec. 36 (Education Fund Advisory Committee); and
 - (15) Sec. 37 (effective dates).
- (b) The following sections shall take effect on July 1, 2027:
- (1) Sec. 6 (16 V.S.A. § 166);
 - (2) Sec. 8 (16 V.S.A. § 241);
 - (3) Sec. 9 (16 V.S.A. § 242);
 - (4) Sec. 13 (16 V.S.A. § 563);
 - (5) Sec. 15 (16 V.S.A. § 564);
 - (6) Sec. 16 (16 V.S.A. § 821);
 - (7) Sec. 17 (16 V.S.A. § 822);
 - (8) Sec. 19 (16 V.S.A. § 824);
 - (9) Sec. 20 (16 V.S.A. § 1071);
 - (10) Sec. 21 (16 V.S.A. § 1121);
 - (11) Sec. 24 (16 V.S.A. chapter 133);
 - (12) Sec. 25 (32 V.S.A. § 5401);
 - (13) Sec. 26 (32 V.S.A. § 5402);
 - (14) Sec. 27 (32 V.S.A. § 5402b);
 - (15) Sec. 28 (32 V.S.A. § 5404a);
 - (16) Sec. 29 (32 V.S.A. § 5405);
 - (17) Sec. 30 (32 V.S.A. § 5410);
 - (18) Sec. 31 (32 V.S.A. § 5400);
 - (19) Sec. 32 (32 V.S.A. chapter 154);
 - (20) Sec. 33 (11 V.S.A. § 1608);
 - (21) Sec. 34 (32 V.S.A. § 3102); and
 - (22) Sec. 35 (32 V.S.A. § 3206).

Thereupon, **Rep. Galfetti of Barre Town** asked and was granted leave of the House to withdraw the amendment.

Pending third reading of the bill, **Reps. Wood of Waterbury, Kornheiser of Brattleboro, Bishop of Colchester, Cole of Hartford, Donahue of Northfield, Eastes of Guilford, Garofano of Essex, Maguire of Rutland City, McGill of Bridport, and Noyes of Wolcott** moved to amend the bill as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 35, 16 V.S.A. § 4010, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 35 to read as follows:

Sec. 35. 16 V.S.A. § 4010 is amended to read:

§ 4010. DETERMINATION OF WEIGHTED LONG-TERM MEMBERSHIP
AND ~~PER PUPIL EDUCATION SPENDING~~ EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITY PAYMENT

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1) “EL pupils” means pupils described under section 4013 of this title.

(2) “FPL” means the Federal Poverty Level.

(3) “Weighting categories” means the categories listed under subsection (b) of this section.

(4) “Child with a disability” has the same meaning as in section 2942 of this title.

(5) “Disability” means any of:

(A) a specific learning disability or a speech or language impairment, each of which is identified as “Category A”;

(B) an emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, developmental delay, or other health impairment, each of which is identified as “Category B”;
or

(C) autism spectrum disorder, deaf-blindness, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, traumatic brain injury, or visual impairment, each of which is identified as “Category C.”

(6) “English language proficiency level” means each of the English language proficiency levels published as a standardized measure of academic language proficiency in WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and available to members of the WIDA consortium of state departments of education.

(7) “Newcomer or SLIFE” means a pupil identified as a New American or as a student with limited or interrupted formal education.

(b) Determination of average daily membership and weighting categories. On or before the first day of December during each school year, the Secretary shall determine the average daily membership, as defined in subdivision 4001(1) of this title, of each school district for the current school year and shall perform the following tasks:

(1) ~~Using~~ using average daily membership, list for each school district the number of:

(A) ~~pupils in prekindergarten;~~

(B) ~~pupils in kindergarten through grade five;~~

(C) ~~pupils in grades six through eight;~~

(D) ~~pupils in grades nine through 12;~~

(E)(1) pupils whose families are at or below 185 percent of FPL, using the highest number of pupils in the district:

(i)(A) that meet this definition under the universal income declaration form; or

(ii)(B) who are directly certified for free and reduced-priced meals; and

(F)(2) EL pupils that have been most recently assessed at an English language proficiency level of:

(A) Level 1;

(B) Level 2 or 3;

(C) Level 4; or

(D) Level 5 or 6;

(3) EL pupils that are identified as Newcomer or SLIFE; and

(4) Children with a disability whose disability is identified as:

(A) Category A;

(B) Category B; or

(C) Category C, provided that a child with multiple disabilities shall be counted solely under this subdivision (C).

(2)(A) ~~Identify all school districts that have low population density, measured by the number of persons per square mile residing within the land area of the geographic boundaries of the district as of July 1 of the year of determination, equaling:~~

- ~~(i) fewer than 36 persons per square mile;~~
- ~~(ii) 36 or more persons per square mile but fewer than 55 persons per square mile; or~~
- ~~(iii) 55 or more persons per square mile but fewer than 100 persons per square mile.~~

~~(B) Population density data shall be based on the best available U.S. Census data as provided to the Agency of Education by the Vermont Center for Geographic Information.~~

~~(C) Using average daily membership, list for each school district that has low population density the number of pupils in each of subdivisions (A)(i)–(iii) of this subdivision (2).~~

~~(3)(A) Identify all school districts that have one or more small schools, which are schools that have an average two-year enrollment of:~~

- ~~(i) fewer than 100 pupils; or~~
- ~~(ii) 100 or more pupils but fewer than 250 pupils.~~

~~(B) As used in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3), “average two-year enrollment” means the average enrollment of the two most recently completed school years, and “enrollment” means the number of pupils who are enrolled in a school operated by the district on October 1. A pupil shall be counted as one whether the pupil is enrolled as a full-time or part-time student.~~

~~(C) Using average two-year enrollment, list for each school district that has a small school the number of pupils in each of subdivisions (A)(i)–(ii) of this subdivision (3).~~

(c) Reporting on weighting categories to the Agency of Education. Each school district shall annually report to the Agency of Education by a date established by the Agency the information needed in order for the Agency to compute the weighting categories under subsection (b) of this section for that district. In order to fulfill this obligation, a school district that pays public tuition on behalf of a resident student (sending district) to a public school in another school district, an approved independent school, or an out-of-state school (each a receiving school) may request the receiving school to collect this information on the sending district’s resident student, and if requested, the receiving school shall provide this information to the sending district in a timely manner.

(d) Determination of weighted long-term membership. For each weighting category except the small schools weighting category under subdivision (b)(3) of this section, the Secretary shall compute the weighting count by using the

long-term membership, as defined in subdivision 4001(7) of this title, in that category.

(1) ~~The Secretary shall first apply grade level weights. Each pupil included in long-term membership shall count as one, multiplied by the following amounts:~~

- ~~(A) prekindergarten—negative 0.54;~~
- ~~(B) grades six through eight—0.36; and~~
- ~~(C) grades nine through 12—0.39. [Repealed.]~~

(2) ~~The Secretary shall next apply a weight for pupils whose family is at or below 185 percent of FPL. Each pupil included in long-term membership whose family is at or below 185 percent of FPL shall receive an additional weighting amount of 1.03~~ 1.02.

(3) ~~The Secretary shall next apply a weight for EL pupils. Each EL pupil included in long-term membership shall receive an additional weighting amount, based on the EL pupil's English language proficiency level, of 2.49:~~

- ~~(A) 2.11, if assessed as Level 1;~~
- ~~(B) 1.41, if assessed as Level 2 or 3;~~
- ~~(C) 1.20, if assessed as Level 4; or~~
- ~~(D) 0.12, if assessed as Level 5 or 6.~~

(4) ~~The Secretary shall then apply a weight for pupils living in low population density school districts. Each EL pupil that is a Newcomer or SLIFE included in long-term membership residing in a low population density school district, measured by the number of persons per square mile residing within the land area of the geographic boundaries of the district as of July 1 of the year of determination, shall receive an additional weighting amount of:~~ 0.42

~~(A) 0.15, where the number of persons per square mile is fewer than 36 persons;~~

~~(B) 0.12, where the number of persons per square mile is 36 or more but fewer than 55 persons; or~~

~~(C) 0.07, where the number of persons per square mile is 55 or more but fewer than 100.~~

(5) ~~The Secretary shall lastly apply a weight for pupils who attend a small school. If the number of persons per square mile residing within the land area of the geographic boundaries of a school district as of July 1 of the year of determination is 55 or fewer, then, for each pupil listed under~~

~~subdivision (b)(3)(C) of this section (pupils who attend small schools) Each child with a disability included in long-term membership shall receive an additional weighting amount, based on the categorization of the child's disability, of:~~

~~(A) where the school has fewer than 100 pupils in average two-year enrollment, the school district shall receive an additional weighting amount of 0.21 for each pupil included in the small school's average two-year enrollment 0.79, if the disability is identified as Category A; or~~

~~(B) where the small school has 100 or more but fewer than 250 pupils, the school district shall receive an additional weighting amount of 0.07 for each pupil included in the small school's average two-year enrollment 1.89, if the disability is identified as Category B; or~~

~~(C) 2.49, if the disability is identified as Category C.~~

(6) A school district's weighted long-term membership shall equal long-term membership plus the cumulation of the weights assigned by the Secretary under this subsection.

(e) Hold harmless. A district's weighted long-term membership shall in no case be less than 96 and one-half percent of its actual weighted long-term membership the previous year prior to making any adjustment under this subsection.

~~(f) Determination of per pupil education spending educational opportunity payment. As soon as reasonably possible after a school district budget is approved by voters, the Secretary shall determine the per pupil education spending for the next fiscal year for the school district. Per pupil education spending shall equal a school district's education spending divided by its weighted long-term membership The Secretary shall determine each school district's educational opportunity payment by multiplying the school district's weighted long-term membership determined under subsection (d) of this section by the base amount.~~

* * *

(h) Updates to weights, base amount, and transportation reimbursement. On or before January 1, ~~2027~~ 2026 and on or before January 1 of every fifth year thereafter, the Agency of Education and the Joint Fiscal Office shall calculate, based on their consensus view, updates to the weights and the base amount, including any inflationary measure, to account for cost changes underlying those weights and shall issue a written report on their work to the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Ways and Means, and the Senate Committee on Finance. The General Assembly shall update the weights under this section, the base amount, and transportation

reimbursement under section 4016 of this title not less than every five years and the implementation date for the updated weights and transportation reimbursement shall be delayed by a year in order to provide school districts with time to prepare their budgets. Updates to the weights may include recalibration, recalculation, adding or eliminating weights, or any combination of these actions.

Second: By striking out Sec. 59, 16 V.S.A. § 4010, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 59 to read as follows:

Sec. 59. 16 V.S.A. § 4010 is amended to read:

§ 4010. DETERMINATION OF WEIGHTED LONG-TERM MEMBERSHIP
AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY PAYMENT

* * *

(d) Determination of weighted long-term membership. For each weighting category, the Secretary shall compute the weighting count by using the long-term membership, as defined in subdivision 4001(7) of this title, in that category.

(1) [Repealed.]

(2) Each pupil included in long-term membership whose family is at or below 185 percent of FPL shall receive an additional weighting amount of ~~1.02~~ 1.00.

(3) Each EL pupil included in long-term membership shall receive an additional weighting amount, based on the EL pupil's English language proficiency level, of:

(A) ~~2.11~~ 1.00, if assessed as Level 1;

(B) ~~1.41~~ 1.00, if assessed as Level 2 or 3;

(C) ~~1.20~~ 1.00, if assessed as Level 4; or

(D) ~~0.12~~ 1.00, if assessed as Level 5 or 6.

(4) Each EL pupil that is a Newcomer or SLIFE included in long-term membership shall receive an additional weighting amount of ~~0.42~~ 1.00.

(5) Each child with a disability included in long-term membership shall receive an additional weighting amount, based on the categorization of the child's disability, of:

(A) ~~0.79~~ 1.00, if the disability is identified as Category A;

(B) ~~1.35~~ 1.00, if the disability is identified as Category B; or

(C) ~~2.49~~ 1.00, if the disability is identified as Category C.

* * *

Which was agreed to.

Pending third reading of the bill, **Rep. Donahue of Northfield** moved to amend the bill in Sec. 1, findings; intent; plan, by striking out subsection (b) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (b) to read as follows:

(b) Intent; plan.

(1) To ensure each student is provided substantially equal educational opportunities that will prepare them to thrive in a 21st-century world, it is the intent of the General Assembly to work strategically, intentionally, and thoughtfully to ensure that each incremental change made to Vermont's public education system provides strength and support to its only constitutionally required governmental service.

(2) It is further the intent of the General Assembly to:

(A) in the 2026 session:

(i) enact new, larger school district boundaries that would be effective July 1, 2026;

(ii) enact updates to career and technical education governance systems, both at the local and statewide levels, that are reflective of the larger public education governance transformation to new, larger school districts;

(iii) create a coordinated and coherent statewide strategy for career and technical education that is responsive to students and the State's workforce needs and that provides opportunities for more integration between career and technical education and traditional high school work;

(iv) enact student-centered updates to career and technical education funding within a foundation formula that does not create competition between sending schools and career and technical education programs for available funds; and

(v) create voting wards within each school district to ensure school board membership is apportioned in such a manner as to achieve substantially equal weighting of the votes of all voters in the election of school board members;

(B) provide or enable the provision of the necessary staffing, resources, and support to the Agency of Education, the Secretary of State's Office, town clerks, and other integral parties to the election system to hold the

first school board member elections within the newly created school districts in a special election in March 2027; and

(C) provide or enable the provision of the necessary staffing, resources, and support to the Agency of Education, State Board of Education, and other integral parties to ensure that the necessary guidance and funding is in place to allow for a smooth and successful transition between the operation of Vermont's current 119 school districts to the new, larger school districts, with new school districts assuming responsibility for the education of all resident students on July 1, 2028.

Pending the question, Shall the bill be amended as offered by Representative Donahue of Northfield?, **Rep. McCoy of Poultney** demanded the Yeas and Nays, which demand was sustained by the Constitutional number. The Clerk proceeded to call the roll and the question, Shall the bill be amended as offered by Representative Donahue of Northfield?, was decided in the negative. Yeas, 60. Nays, 83.

Those who voted in the affirmative are:

Bailey of Hyde Park	Gregoire of Fairfield	Morrissey of Bennington
Bartley of Fairfax	Hango of Berkshire	Nelson of Derby
Bosch of Clarendon	Harrison of Chittenden	Nielsen of Brandon
Boutin of Barre City	Harvey of Castleton	North of Ferrisburgh
Boyden of Cambridge	Higley of Lowell	O'Brien of Tunbridge
Branagan of Georgia	Hooper of Randolph	Oliver of Sheldon
Burditt of West Rutland	Howland of Rutland Town	Page of Newport City
Burt of Cabot	Kascenska of Burke	Parsons of Newbury
Canfield of Fair Haven	Keyser of Rutland City	Pinsonault of Dorset
Casey of Hubbardton	Labor of Morgan	Powers of Waterford
Charlton of Chester	Laroche of Franklin	Pritchard of Pawlet
Coffin of Cavendish	Lipsky of Stowe	Quimby of Lyndon
Demar of Enosburgh	Luneau of St. Albans City	Sibilia of Dover
Dobrovich of Williamstown	Malay of Pittsford	Southworth of Walden
Dolgin of St. Johnsbury	Marcotte of Coventry	Steady of Milton
Donahue of Northfield *	McCoy of Poultney *	Tagliavia of Corinth
Feltus of Lyndon	McFaun of Barre Town	Taylor of Milton
Galfetti of Barre Town *	Micklus of Milton	Toof of St. Albans Town
Goslant of Northfield	Morgan, L. of Milton	Walker of Swanton
Greer of Bennington	Morgan, M. of Milton	Winter of Ludlow

Those who voted in the negative are:

Arsenault of Williston	Durfee of Shaftsbury	Mihaly of Calais
Austin of Colchester	Eastes of Guilford	Minier of South Burlington
Bartholomew of Hartland	Emmons of Springfield	Morrow of Weston
Berbeco of Winooski	Garofano of Essex	Mrowicki of Putney
Birong of Vergennes	Goldman of Rockingham	Nigro of Bennington
Bishop of Colchester	Goodnow of Brattleboro	Noyes of Wolcott
Black of Essex	Graning of Jericho	Nugent of South Burlington

Bluemle of Burlington	Harple of Glover	Ode of Burlington
Bos-Lun of Westminster	Headrick of Burlington	Olson of Starksboro
Brady of Williston *	Holcombe of Norwich	Pezzo of Colchester
Brown of Richmond	Hooper of Burlington	Pouech of Hinesburg
Burke of Brattleboro	Houghton of Essex Junction	Priestley of Bradford
Burkhardt of South Burlington	Howard of Rutland City	Rachelson of Burlington
Burrows of West Windsor	Hunter of Manchester	Satcowitz of Randolph
Campbell of St. Johnsbury	James of Manchester	Scheu of Middlebury
Carris-Duncan of Whitingham	Kimbell of Woodstock	Sheldon of Middlebury
Casey of Montpelier	Kleppner of Burlington	Squirrell of Underhill
Chapin of East Montpelier	Kornheiser of Brattleboro	Stevens of Waterbury
Cina of Burlington	Krasnow of South Burlington	Stone of Burlington
Conlon of Cornwall	Lalley of Shelburne	Surprenant of Barnard
Cooper of Pownal	LaLonde of South Burlington	Sweeney of Shelburne
Corcoran of Bennington	LaMont of Morristown	Tomlinson of Winooski
Cordes of Bristol	Logan of Burlington	Torre of Moretown
Critchlow of Colchester	Long of Newfane	Waszazak of Barre City
Dodge of Essex	Masland of Thetford	Waters Evans of Charlotte
Dolan of Essex Junction	McCann of Montpelier	White of Waitsfield
Duke of Burlington	McGill of Bridport	White of Bethel
		Wood of Waterbury
		Yacovone of Morristown

Those members absent with leave of the House and not voting are:

Christie of Hartford	Town	Wells of Brownington
Cole of Hartford	Maguire of Rutland City	
Dickinson of St. Albans	Morris of Springfield	

Rep. Brady of Williston provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

We are setting in motion hard generational system change but we, the Legislature, have the easy part. Systems are made of people, in this case our kids, their families, and educators across the State. So, when we talk about systems change, we are talking about changing people. I voted no because we shouldn’t rush an already ambitious timeline.”

Rep. Donahue of Northfield provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I think it is unfortunate that we are not willing to tell voters that we do want to try to achieve this crucial and urgent work more quickly if at all possible and reasonable.”

Rep. McCoy of Poultney provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

We just passed the Toof/Houghton amendment to, among other things, move forward dates of commissions in this bill. This amendment aligns the intent language in H.454 to mirror the Toof/Houghton amendment. I vote yes to align all sections, as well as intent language, of this bill.”

Rep. Surprenant of Barnard presiding.

Thereupon, the bill was read the third time.

Pending the question, Shall the bill pass?, **Rep. Cina of Burlington** demanded the Yeas and Nays, which demand was sustained by the Constitutional number. The Clerk proceeded to call the roll and the question, Shall the bill pass?, was decided in the affirmative. Yeas, 87. Nays, 55.

Those who voted in the affirmative are:

Arsenault of Williston	Eastes of Guilford	McFaun of Barre Town *
Austin of Colchester	Emmons of Springfield	McGill of Bridport
Bartholomew of Hartland	Galfetti of Barre Town *	Mihaly of Calais
Berbeco of Winooski *	Garofano of Essex	Minier of South Burlington
Birong of Vergennes	Goldman of Rockingham	Mrowicki of Putney
Bishop of Colchester	Goodnow of Brattleboro	Nigro of Bennington
Black of Essex	Graning of Jericho *	Noyes of Wolcott
Bluemle of Burlington	Greer of Bennington *	Nugent of South Burlington
Boutin of Barre City *	Gregoire of Fairfield *	Ode of Burlington *
Brady of Williston	Headrick of Burlington	Olson of Starksboro *
Brown of Richmond *	Higley of Lowell *	Pezzo of Colchester
Burditt of West Rutland *	Holcombe of Norwich	Pouech of Hinesburg
Burke of Brattleboro	Hooper of Burlington	Priestley of Bradford
Burkhardt of South Burlington	Houghton of Essex Junction	Rachelson of Burlington
Burrows of West Windsor	Howard of Rutland City	Satcowitz of Randolph
Campbell of St. Johnsbury	Hunter of Manchester	Scheu of Middlebury
Carris-Duncan of Whitingham	Keyser of Rutland City	Sheldon of Middlebury *
Casey of Montpelier	Kimbell of Woodstock	Sibilia of Dover *
Chapin of East Montpelier	Kleppner of Burlington	Squirrell of Underhill
Cina of Burlington	Kornheiser of Brattleboro	Stevens of Waterbury
Conlon of Cornwall	Krasnow of South Burlington	Stone of Burlington *
Cooper of Pownal *	Krowinski of Burlington *	Sweeney of Shelburne
Corcoran of Bennington	Lalley of Shelburne	Tomlinson of Winooski
Cordes of Bristol	LaLonde of South Burlington	Torre of Moretown
Critchlow of Colchester	Logan of Burlington *	Waszazak of Barre City
Dodge of Essex	Long of Newfane	Waters Evans of Charlotte
Dolan of Essex Junction	Marcotte of Coventry *	White of Waitsfield
Duke of Burlington	Masland of Thetford	Wood of Waterbury
Durfee of Shaftsbury	McCann of Montpelier	Yacovone of Morristown

Those who voted in the negative are:

Bailey of Hyde Park	Harrison of Chittenden	North of Ferrisburgh
Bartley of Fairfax *	Harvey of Castleton	O'Brien of Tunbridge
Bosch of Clarendon	Hooper of Randolph	Oliver of Sheldon
Bos-Lun of Westminster *	James of Manchester	Page of Newport City
Boyden of Cambridge	Kascenska of Burke	Parsons of Newbury
Branagan of Georgia	Labor of Morgan	Pinsonault of Dorset
Burt of Cabot	LaMont of Morrystown	Powers of Waterford
Canfield of Fair Haven	Laroche of Franklin	Pritchard of Pawlet
Casey of Hubbardton	Lipsky of Stowe	Quimby of Lyndon
Charlton of Chester	Luneau of St. Albans City	Southworth of Walden
Coffin of Cavendish	Malay of Pittsford	Steady of Milton
Demar of Enosburgh	McCoy of Poultney *	Tagliavia of Corinth
Dobrovich of Williamstown	Micklus of Milton	Taylor of Milton
Dolgin of St. Johnsbury	Morgan, L. of Milton	Toof of St. Albans Town
Donahue of Northfield	Morgan, M. of Milton	Walker of Swanton
Feltus of Lyndon	Morrissey of Bennington	White of Bethel
Goslant of Northfield	Morrow of Weston	Winter of Ludlow
Hango of Berkshire	Nelson of Derby	
Harple of Glover	Nielsen of Brandon	

Those members absent with leave of the House and not voting are:

Christie of Hartford	Town	Morris of Springfield
Cole of Hartford	Howland of Rutland Town	Wells of Brownington
Dickinson of St. Albans	Maguire of Rutland City	

Rep. Bartley of Fairfax provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

A constituent asking me to vote no said it best. ‘We can do better but few can do more. H.454 has been touted as a step forward. In reality, it’s a baby step when Vermonters need a leap. This bill does not rectify the mistakes of the past. It doesn’t address the deep economic injustices that our students have endured for decades. And it certainly doesn’t reflect the urgency of the moment. We were elected to this body, and it is our duty to uphold that responsibility. It is unacceptable to expect another body to correct our mistakes.”

Rep. Berbeco of Winooski provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I’m voting yes for Winooski kids and educators and families. More than 20 languages are spoken in our school by the only minority-majority student body in the State. Multi-lingual supports are essential to us. I’m voting yes because my community has hope that these will be protected in the evolution of this legislation.”

Rep. Bos-lun of Westminster provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I come from a rural community that will lose vital small wanted local schools, both public and independent, if this bill moves forward in its current form. School districts of at least 4000 students will not solve our problems but will result in a loss of local control and civic engagement, especially in rural communities. I voted no to preserve small local schools in my rural community.”

Rep. Boutin of Barre City provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I voted yes, but I did so because I want this bill to advance to the Senate, where I hope they will take a more bipartisan approach in drafting a compromise version. I also have to note that the funding model in this bill is favorable to Barre. That being said, what began as a bold and immediate reform proposal by the Governor – one that prioritized student outcomes over political advocacy – has become a lackluster and meandering plan. It will inevitably require us to revisit this third rail in a few years, much like Act 46. I am deeply disappointed where we landed and hope the Senate can make it better.”

Rep Brown of Richmond provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I voted yes today for a hopeful, sustainable future for all Vermont students - the students in my district now and the students in the small rural Vermont district where I attended public school from kindergarten through high school. I want to thank all the members of the education field who testified and supported this bill. We appreciate their commitment to helping us get it right together and the incredible work happening every day in schools across Vermont.”

Rep. Burditt of West Rutland provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I want to be crystal clear. Even though I voted yes for H.454, I do not support this version of the bill. I am reaching across the aisle and voting yes to form an alliance to help keep this bill alive and with it the hopes of Vermonters. My hope is the Senate comes through with their promise of a bipartisan bill with an affordable education system Vermonters told us they wanted in the 2024 election season. Over the last few years I’ve heard a message from the majority party asking where is your plan? A well thought

out plan that would have benefited Vermonters was put forth and the parts that would have given Vermonters the most property tax relief were ignored in this bill.”

Rep. Cooper of Pownal provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I am voting yes because this bill positions Vermont for a future that is already underway: our structures are over-built, our educators are over-stretched, our students are under-resourced. This bill acknowledges the spatial and social realities of our State’s mountains, valleys, and borders, and provides the commonsense need for people to take time to make sound decisions.”

Rep. Galfetti of Barre Town provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

It is with great resistance that I am voting yes on this version of the bill. However, if we do not pass this bill out of the House, the opportunity to reform education funding and stabilize property taxes will be lost. It is my hope that the Senate majority will work with their Vermont Republican counterparts to return a bi-partisan bill as their leadership has already promised. Phil Scott Republicans are the party of now and compromise, not the party of NO!”

Rep. Graning of Jericho provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I vote yes for H.454 because it sets the path to educate all of Vermont’s children, providing equal opportunity across the State. This bill also gives Vermont’s taxpayers needed stability and protections against the fluctuations that come from the inflationary system that we have today,”

Rep. Greer of Bennington provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

Independent schools are a part of our education framework. They serve our students well and make our communities stronger. I vote yes because of the protections we’ve included to protect our elementary schools across rural Vermont.”

Rep. Gregoire of Fairfield provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I do not vote yes today because this bill represents a good faith effort to work collaboratively or in a bipartisan way toward real and lasting solutions. Collaboration and bipartisan have been used as buzz words today. I’d urge

everyone who used those terms to self-reflect on what they actually mean and what that work actually looks like – this is not that. Instead, I vote yes to move the bill to the Senate where we have a commitment to actually work collaboratively to get to a bill that serves the best interests of Vermonters. Vermonters deserve better, far better, and if we choose to truly work together, we can deliver a bill by the end of the session that everyone can be genuinely proud of regardless of party or whether we live in urban or rural areas.”

Rep. Higley of Lowell provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I voted yes, only to move this process forward in hopes that the end product will yield more choices and opportunities for our children, and create an understandable and stable property tax.”

Rep. Krowinski of Burlington provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I voted yes because the status quo is unacceptable for our kids, teachers, and communities. I know change is hard, but we must lead and create stability in our public education system. This is our moment. Let’s show every kid in our State, no matter where they live. They will have the best education at a price we can afford.”

Rep. Logan of Burlington provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I vote yes on H.454 for all Vermonters, and to resist the deceptive rhetoric that haphazard action can deliver the high-quality, affordable public education that we and our children deserve.”

Rep. Marcotte of Coventry provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I reluctantly vote yes. Three committees, three 7-4 votes. The passing of the amendment from the members from St. Albans and Essex Junction gives me a glimmer of hope that we can start working in a bi-partisan manner. The November election sent us a clear message from Vermonters – work together and fix the problems.”

Rep. McCoy of Poultney provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

While I appreciate the work of the Education and Ways and Means Committees, and you Madam Speaker, to get this bill to the floor, I cannot support the bill at this time. I look forward to receiving this bill back from the

Senate with language I can support. Vermonters, and especially our children, deserve nothing less.”

Rep. McFaun of Barre Town provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I voted yes to keep the prospects of education reform alive. If this was the final bill, I couldn’t vote for it. My constituents and Vermonters voted for balance in November. It is my hope that the Senate will return to us a bipartisan bill that most of us can vote for and the Governor can sign. That is in the best interest of the children it will impact. Thank you.”

Rep. Ode of Burlington provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

Today, in H.454, we start where we are, not where we wish to be. H.454 moves our education funding system to the future, with a more fair, stable, predictable funding model for Vermont schools and Vermont taxpayers and with a greater chance for equal educational opportunity for Vermont schoolchildren.”

Rep. Olson of Starksboro provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I voted for H.454 because it contains much that I support, including a good start to reforming our education financing system. There remain issues to work on, including a consequential review of Education Fund spending, including a thoughtful approach to class size, and including the establishment on a permanent basis of fair standards, a fair process, and a community voice before school is closed.”

Rep. Sheldon of Middlebury provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

Public education is the commitment we make to all of our children to give them the opportunity they deserve to become healthy, productive members of society, regardless of who their parents are. High quality schools allow all students to learn and grow to the best of their abilities, obtaining the skills they need to engage productively in their community, the economy, and our democracy. Today, I vote yes for H.454 to give all Vermont students equitable access to the education opportunity they deserve.”

Rep. Sibilia of Dover provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

In 2025, I am grateful to serve in a state legislative body that was able to work through great discomfort and act in a bipartisan manner to keep education reform policy advancing.”

Rep. Stone of Burlington provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I’m voting yes on H.454 because every child in Vermont deserves the chance to learn, grow, and thrive in a school system that won’t let them down. This bill puts students at the heart of our decisions, building a stronger, more stable foundation for their future. It’s not just about education—it’s about doing right by our kids, our communities, and the Vermont we all believe in.”

Speaker presiding.

Message from the Senate No. 39

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 concurrent resolutions originating in the House of the following titles:

H.C.R. 81. House concurrent resolution in memory of former Bakersfield Select Board member Brenda Churchill.

H.C.R. 82. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Fair Haven Union High School Slaters State championship bowling team.

H.C.R. 83. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2024 Green Mountain Council Class of Eagle Scouts.

H.C.R. 84. House concurrent resolution congratulating the Mount Anthony Union High School Patriot wrestling program on winning its 36th consecutive State championship.

H.C.R. 85. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 North Country Union High School Falcons' exemplary snowboarding teams.

H.C.R. 86. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Montpelier High School Solons Division II girls' Nordic championship ski team.

H.C.R. 87. House concurrent resolution congratulating the Montpelier High School Solons boys' basketball program on winning a fifth consecutive Division II championship.

H.C.R. 88. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Thetford Academy inductees into the National Technical Honor Society.

H.C.R. 89. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Fair Haven Union High School Slaters girls' basketball team on winning a second consecutive Division II championship.

H.C.R. 90. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Burlington High School Seahorses Division I championship girls' basketball team.

H.C.R. 91. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Burlington High School Seahorses Division I championship boys' basketball team.

H.C.R. 92. House concurrent resolution honoring the outstanding achievements of the Federal TRIO Programs in Vermont.

H.C.R. 93. House concurrent resolution congratulating Kathleen Lynch of Burlington on being named as the 2025 Vermont Mother of the Year.

H.C.R. 94. House concurrent resolution congratulating Tyler Riggs of Fletcher on the Vermont Forest Products Association naming him Vermont's Outstanding Sawmill Operator 2024.

Adjournment

At three o'clock and ten minutes in the afternoon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at ten o'clock in the forenoon, pursuant to the provisions of J.R.S. 21.

Concurrent Resolutions Adopted

The following concurrent resolutions, having been placed on the Consent Calendar on the preceding legislative day, and no member having requested floor consideration as provided by Rule 16b of the Joint Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, are hereby adopted on the part of the House:

H.C.R. 81

House concurrent resolution in memory of former Bakersfield Select Board member Brenda Churchill

H.C.R. 82

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Fair Haven Union High School Slaters State championship bowling team

H.C.R. 83

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2024 Green Mountain Council Class of Eagle Scouts

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House concurrent resolution congratulating Kathleen Lynch of Burlington on being named as the 2025 Vermont Mother of the Year

H.C.R. 94

House concurrent resolution congratulating Tyler Riggs of Fletcher on the Vermont Forest Products Association naming him Vermont's Outstanding Sawmill Operator 2024

[The full text of the concurrent resolutions appeared in the House Calendar Addendum on the preceding legislative day and will appear in the Public Acts and Resolves of the 2025 Biennial Session.]