

Journal of the House

Thursday, January 15, 2026

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

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Rep. Will Greer of Bennington.

Rules Suspended, House Bills Introduced

Pending first reading of House bills, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and the bills were read the first time by number and referred to committee as follows:

H. 688

By Rep. Dolgin of St. Johnsbury,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to timelines and process for residential evictions

To the Committee on General and Housing.

H. 689

By Reps. Burrows of West Windsor, Chapin of East Montpelier, Greer of Bennington, Howard of Rutland City, LaMont of Morristown, Lueders of Lincoln, and McGill of Bridport,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to financial aid exceptions for individuals with a disability

To the Committee on Human Services.

H. 690

By Rep. Tagliavia of Corinth,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to motor vehicle inspections

To the Committee on Transportation.

H. 691

By Rep. Bartley of Fairfax,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to breastfeeding education and support
To the Committee on Health Care.

H. 692

By Reps. Yacovone of Morristown and Lipsky of Stowe,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to implementing civics education in high school curricula
To the Committee on Education.

H. 693

By Rep. Greer of Bennington,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Bennington concerning the Town police department
To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 694

By Reps. Greer of Bennington, Corcoran of Bennington, Morrissey of Bennington, and Nigro of Bennington,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Bennington concerning the Town Manager
To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 695

By Rep. Greer of Bennington,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Bennington concerning a local option tax on short-term rentals
To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 696

By Rep. Greer of Bennington,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Bennington concerning municipal liens

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 697

By Rep. Oliver of Sheldon,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to first responders' buffers during ongoing public safety emergencies

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 698

By Reps. Feltus of Lyndon, Branagan of Georgia, Burt of Cabot, Dickinson of St. Albans Town, Gregoire of Fairfield, Hango of Berkshire, Keyser of Rutland City, Nelson of Derby, North of Ferrisburgh, Quimby of Lyndon, and Southworth of Walden,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to various changes to 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 73

To the Committee on Education.

H. 699

By Rep. Priestley of Bradford,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to consumer protection from abusive acts or practices

To the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development.

H. 700

By Rep. Casey of Montpelier,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to eliminating tetrahydrocannabinol limits for cannabis flower and cannabis products sold by licensed cannabis retailers

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 701

By Reps. Tomlinson of Winooski, Berbeco of Winooski, and McCann of Montpelier,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the Secretary's role in State support for schools not meeting education quality standards

To the Committee on Education.

H. 702

By Rep. Dolgin of St. Johnsbury,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to criminal trespass and residing on land or premises of another person without authority

To the Committee on Judiciary.

H. 703

By Reps. Galfetti of Barre Town and Casey of Montpelier,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to expanding the Bill of Rights for Sexual Assault Survivors

To the Committee on Judiciary.

H. 704

By Reps. Stevens of Waterbury, Burrows of West Windsor, Cina of Burlington, Cole of Hartford, Dodge of Essex, Duke of Burlington, Howard of Rutland City, LaMont of Morristown, Masland of Thetford, Olson of Starksboro, Rachelson of Burlington, and Tomlinson of Winooski,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the Tenant Representation Pilot Program

To the Committee on General and Housing.

Joint Senate Resolution Adopted in Concurrence**J.R.S. 33**

By Senator Perchlik,

J.R.S. 33. Joint resolution to provide for a Joint Assembly to hear the budget message of the Governor.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the two Houses meet in Joint Assembly on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at one o'clock in the afternoon to receive the budget message of the Governor.

Was taken up, read, and adopted in concurrence.

**Committee Relieved of Consideration and Bill Committed to
Other Committee****H. 393**

Rep. Conlon of Cornwall moved that the Committee on Education be relieved of House bill, entitled

An act relating to the prohibition of requiring face masks in schools

And that the bill be committed to the Committee on Health Care, which was agreed to.

**Committee Relieved of Consideration and Bill Committed to
Other Committee****H. 334**

Rep. Mihaly of Calais moved that the Committee on General and Housing be relieved of House bill, entitled

An act relating to limiting employer restrictions on individuals separating from employment

And that the bill be committed to the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, which was agreed to.

Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered**H. 649**

Rep. White of Bethel, for the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, to which had been referred House bill, entitled

An act relating to captive insurance companies

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

Sec. 1. 8 V.S.A. § 6010 is amended to read:

§ 6010. LEGAL INVESTMENTS

* * *

(d) No risk retention group shall make a loan to or investment in its members or affiliates of its members. This prohibition shall not apply to any loan or investment in effect prior to January 1, 2026.

Sec. 2. 8 V.S.A. § 6007 is amended to read:

§ 6007. REPORTS AND STATEMENTS

(a) Captive insurance companies shall not be required to make any annual report except as provided in this chapter.

(b) Prior to March 1 of each year, and prior to March 15 of each year in the case of pure captive insurance companies, association captive insurance companies, sponsored captive insurance companies, industrial insured captive insurance companies, or agency captive insurance companies, each captive insurance company shall submit to the Commissioner a report of its financial condition, verified by oath of two of its executive officers or, in the case of a captive insurance company formed as a limited liability company or as a reciprocal insurer, of two individuals authorized by the governing board.

~~(c) Each captive insurance company shall report using generally accepted accounting principles, statutory accounting principles, or international financial reporting standards unless the Commissioner requires, approves, or accepts the use of any other comprehensive basis of accounting, in each case with any appropriate or necessary modifications or adaptations thereof required or approved or accepted by the Commissioner for the type of insurance and kinds of insurers to be reported upon, and as supplemented by additional information required by the Commissioner. As used in this section, "statutory accounting principles" means the accounting principles codified in the NAIC Accounting Practices and Procedures Manual. Upon application for admission, a captive insurance company shall select, with explanation, an accounting method for reporting. Any change in a captive insurance company's accounting method shall require prior approval. Except as otherwise provided, each risk retention group shall file its report in the form required by subsection 3561(a) of this title, and each risk retention group shall comply with the requirements set forth in section 3569 of this title.~~

(d) The Commissioner shall by rule propose the forms in which pure captive insurance companies, association captive insurance companies, sponsored captive insurance companies, and industrial insured captive insurance companies shall report. ~~Subdivision 6002(c)(3) of this title shall~~

~~apply to each report filed pursuant to this section, except that such subdivision shall not apply to reports filed by risk retention groups.~~

~~(e)~~(e) On or before March 1 of each year, in a form and manner prescribed by the Commissioner, each risk retention group shall file with the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) a copy of its annual statement convention blank, the signed jurat page, the actuarial certification, and any other additional filings prescribed by the Commissioner for the preceding year. Any amendments and addendums to the annual statement filing subsequently filed with the Commissioner shall also be filed with the NAIC.

(f) Each year, in a form and manner prescribed by the Commissioner, each risk retention group shall file with the NAIC a copy of the quarterly statements exhibiting its condition and affairs for the period beginning on January 1 of the current calendar year through and including the last day of the quarter for which the report is being made. The first quarterly statement shall be filed on or before May 15. The second quarterly statement shall be filed on or before August 15. The third quarterly statement shall be filed on or before November 15. If any of the dates specified in this subsection falls on a day other than a business day, then the quarterly statement is due on or before the first business day preceding such date. Information filed with the NAIC shall include a jurat page. A copy of any amendments and addendums to a quarterly statement subsequently filed with the Commissioner shall also be filed with the NAIC.

(g) The Commissioner may adopt by rule additional filing requirements for risk retention groups. All risk retention group annual and quarterly financial statements shall be filed electronically with the NAIC.

(h) Any pure captive insurance company, association captive insurance company, sponsored captive insurance company, industrial insured captive insurance company, or agency captive insurance company may make written application for filing the required report on a fiscal year-end. If an alternative reporting date is granted:

(1) the annual report is due 75 days after the fiscal year-end; and

(2) in order to provide sufficient detail to support the premium tax return, the captive insurance company shall file prior to March 15 of each year for each calendar year-end, the premium schedule of the "Vermont Captive Insurance Company Annual Report."

(i) Subdivision 6002(c)(3) of this title shall apply to each report filed pursuant to this section, except that such subdivision shall not apply to a report filed by a risk retention group.

Sec. 3. 8 V.S.A. § 6034i is added to read:

§ 6034i. CERTIFYING STATEMENT AFTER COMMENCEMENT OF
BUSINESS

(a) Within 30 days after commencing business, each protected cell shall file with the Commissioner a statement under oath or affirmation certifying that the protected cell possessed the requisite funding prior to commencing business, including any required collateral in accordance with the protected cell's approved plan of operation.

(b) The statement required by subsection (a) of this section shall be signed by the following:

(1) for an unincorporated protected cell, the president and secretary of the sponsored captive insurance company;

(2) for an incorporated protected cell, its president and secretary; and

(3) for a protected cell formed as a limited liability company or as a reciprocal insurer, two individuals authorized by the governing board.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

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

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 60

Rep. Bos-Lun of Westminster, for the Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to establishing the Farm Security Special Fund to provide grants for farm losses due to weather conditions

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) In 2023 and 2024, Vermont experienced extreme flooding and other climate-fueled disasters that devastated farms and other working lands businesses across the State.

(2) Many existing State and federal programs that are designed to support farms and forestry operations are difficult to access, are administratively burdensome, are not equitably distributed to small- and medium-scale farmers and forestry operations, and currently do not meet the needs of Vermont farmers and forestry operations in a holistic way.

(3) In particular, because federal crop insurance programs are not designed to serve the needs of smaller scale or more diversified farming operations, many Vermont farmers are not covered by crop insurance.

(4) The State should establish a permanent funding support program to:

(A) maintain the viability of farms and forestry operations in Vermont in order to ensure food security, climate resilience, rural economic vitality, and environmental health;

(B) continuously invest in farms and forestry operations in a way that makes them more resilient to current and future challenges; and

(C) provide a source of relief funds permanently available to farmers and forestry operations impacted by climate emergencies and extreme weather.

Sec. 2. 6 V.S.A. chapter 207 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 207. PROMOTION AND, MARKETING, AND SUPPORT OF
VERMONT FARMS, FOODS, AND PRODUCTS

* * *

Subchapter 4. Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund

§ 4631. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Eligible weather condition” means any of the following weather conditions that are found to be closely correlated with agricultural or forest operation income losses:

(A) high winds;

(B) excessive moisture, intense precipitation, or flooding;

(C) extreme heat;

(D) abnormal freeze conditions;

(E) a forest fire or wild fire event;

(F) hail;

(G) drought; or

(H) any other severe weather or growing conditions impacting agricultural or forestry operations income, as determined by the Review Board.

(2) "Farm" means a parcel or parcels of land owned, leased, or managed by a person and devoted primarily to farming and that is subject to regulation under the Required Agricultural Practices.

(3) "Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund Review Board" or "Review Board" means the Board established under section 4634 of this title.

(4) "Farming" has the same meaning as in section 2.16 of the Required Agricultural Practices.

(5) "Forestry operation" has the same meaning as in 10 V.S.A. § 2602.

§ 4632. FARM AND FORESTRY OPERATIONS SECURITY SPECIAL

FUND

(a) There is established the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets and that shall be managed in accordance with 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5. The Fund shall consist of:

(1) funds transferred by the General Assembly;

(2) funds from public and private sources that the Secretary accepts for the Fund; and

(3) funds from federal government aid for State support of farmers or forestry operations suffering income loss due to weather conditions.

(b) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall ensure language accessibility of the Fund through procurement and provision of interpretation and translation services.

(c) All balances in the Fund at the end of any fiscal year shall be carried forward and remain part of the Fund.

§ 4633. FARM AND FORESTRY OPERATIONS SECURITY SPECIAL
FUND; PAYMENTS

(a) The Secretary, after consultation with the Review Board, shall award payments from the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund to persons owning farms and forestry operations that have incurred financial losses or expenses due to an eligible weather condition.

(1) Payments from the Fund shall be in an amount that reimburses a farm or forestry operation for up to 50 percent of the unreimbursed, uninsured, or otherwise uncovered losses due to eligible weather conditions, up to a maximum annual award of five percent of the undesignated and unreserved funds in the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund at the beginning of each fiscal year, provided that the award shall not exceed \$150,000.00 per qualified applicant farm or forestry operation per year.

(2) The Secretary may verify the occurrence of an eligible weather condition claimed under this section through a site visit or through use of available data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, from other federal or State certified weather data sources, or from other public or private weather or satellite data or models.

(3) Losses reimbursable by a payment under this section include:

(A) wages or compensation;

(B) replacement of lost income from destroyed crops, impacted livestock, or timber;

(C) debt payments or other ongoing expenses;

(D) costs of replanting;

(E) livestock feed replacement costs;

(F) infrastructure or equipment repair and replacement;

(G) repair of farm roads, roads necessary to access farms, repair of washed out or otherwise damaged logging roads;

(H) inability to access harvested timber due to flooding or other weather conditions; and

(I) other losses as determined by the Secretary after consultation with the Review Board.

(b) The Secretary shall develop a streamlined application for awards under this section that shall include:

(1) a brief description of the damage that occurred;

(2) attestation of an eligible weather condition or event;

(3) an estimate of losses; and

(4) a year-end report of farm or forestry operation income and expenses.

(c) An application for an award under this section may be made at any time, and the Secretary may only close the application process upon award of all appropriated funds for the relevant fiscal year.

(d) Applications for an award under this section shall be processed in the order received for each quarter, but an application shall not be ready for evaluation until the Secretary determines that the application is administratively complete and includes all documentation required by the Secretary.

(e) All administratively complete applications shall be evaluated by the Review Board. Within 15 days following receipt of an administratively complete application, the Review Board by majority vote shall recommend to the Secretary whether to issue a payment to the applicant. If the Review Board recommends an award under this section, the Secretary shall issue the award within 15 days following the date of the Review Board's recommendation.

(f) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets may use up to \$67,500.00 annually from the Fund for the purposes of administering payments from the Fund.

§ 4634. FARM AND FORESTRY OPERATIONS SECURITY SPECIAL

FUND REVIEW BOARD

(a) Creation. There is created the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund Review Board, which for administrative purposes shall be attached to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.

(b) Organization of Board. The Board shall be composed of:

(1) the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets or designee, who shall serve as chair;

(2) the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation or designee;

(3) the State Chief Recovery Officer or designee;

(4) representatives of three agricultural organizations who can demonstrate expertise in dealing with all sizes and types of farms in Vermont, whether through granting funds, offering technical assistance, or advocacy, and who have a proven track record of working with farmers, appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets;

(5) two farmers who have received relief funding, appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets; and

(6) two forestry operators, appointed by the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

(c) Member terms; conflict.

(1) The members designated in subdivision (b)(3) of this section shall be appointed to initial terms of two years. Thereafter, each appointed member shall serve a term of three years or until the member's earlier resignation or removal. The members designated in subdivision (b)(4) of this section shall be appointed to initial terms of one year. The members designated in subdivision (b)(5) of this section shall be appointed to initial terms of two years. Thereafter, each appointed member shall serve a term of three years or until the member's earlier resignation or removal. A vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority for the remainder of the unexpired term. An appointed member shall not serve more than three consecutive three-year terms.

(2) If a Board member has a conflict of interest, as that term is defined by 3 V.S.A. § 1201, regarding review of any application for a payment under this section, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets may appoint an alternate member to maintain a quorum of the Board to review an application and recommend whether payment should be awarded.

(d) Powers.

(1) The Review Board shall review applications for assistance under this section, assess the accuracy and validity of the applications, and recommend to the Secretary applicants who should receive assistance under this section.

(2) The Board annually shall report to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Agriculture the total documented Vermont farm and forestry operations financial losses from eligible weather conditions averaged over the previous three calendar years.

(3) In order to ensure that the Fund is meeting the needs of Vermont's agricultural community and forestry operations community, the Review Board annually shall review the application process, eligibility criteria, distribution, and accessibility of the Fund. The Review Board annually shall recommend to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Agriculture ways to improve the effectiveness of the Fund.

(e) Officers; committees. The Board may elect officers, establish one or more committees or subcommittees, and adopt such procedural rules as it shall determine necessary and appropriate to perform its work.

(f) Quorum; meetings; voting. A majority of the sitting members shall constitute a quorum, and action taken by the Board may be authorized by a majority of the members present and voting at any regular or special meeting at which a quorum is present. The Board may meet as an advisory body under 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 2.

(g) Compensation. Private sector members shall be entitled to per diem compensation authorized under 32 V.S.A. § 1010(b) for each day spent in the performance of their duties, and each member shall be reimbursed from the Fund for the member's actual and necessary expenses incurred in carrying out the member's duties.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: "An act relating to establishing the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund to provide payments for farm losses due to weather conditions"

Rep. Stevens of Waterbury, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the report of the Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry be amended as follows:

First: In Sec. 1, findings, in subdivision (1), after "and other" and before "disasters" by striking out "climate-fueled" and inserting in lieu thereof "weather-based"

and in subdivision (4)(A), after "food security," and before "resilience, rural economic" by striking out "climate"

and in subdivision (4)(C), after "operations impacted by" and before the period by striking out "climate emergencies and extreme weather" and inserting in lieu thereof "weather-based emergencies"

Second: In Sec. 2, 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, in the new subchapter heading, by striking out "Subchapter 4" and inserting in lieu thereof "Subchapter 5"

Third: In Sec. 2, 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, in section 4631, in the section heading, by striking out "4631" and inserting in lieu thereof "4641"

Fourth: In Sec. 2, 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, in section 4631, in subdivision (3), by striking out "4634" and inserting in lieu thereof "4644"

Fifth: In Sec. 2, 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, in section 4632, in the section heading, by striking out “4632” and inserting in lieu thereof “4642”

Sixth: In Sec. 2, 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, in section 4633, in the section heading, by striking out “4633” and inserting in lieu thereof “4643”

and by striking out subsection (b) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

(b) The Secretary shall develop a streamlined application for awards under this section that shall include:

(1) a brief description of the damage that occurred;

(2) attestation of an eligible weather condition or event;

(3) a list of any State grants or loans received for the purposes of the farm or forestry operation business in the past five years, to include amount, source, and purposes of the funding received;

(4) an estimate of losses; and

(5) a year-end report of farm or forestry operation income and expenses.

and by striking out subsection (f) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

(f) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets may pay reasonable administrative expenses from the Fund for purposes of administering the requirements of this subchapter.

Seventh: In Sec. 2, 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, in section 4634, in the section heading, by striking out “4634” and inserting in lieu thereof “4644”

Eighth: In Sec. 2, 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, in section 4634, in subdivision (c)(1), in the first sentence, by striking out “subdivision (b)(3)” and inserting in lieu thereof “subdivision (b)(4)”

and in subdivision (c)(1), in the third sentence, by striking out “subdivision (b)(4)” and inserting in lieu thereof “subdivision (b)(5)”

and in subdivision (c)(1), in the fourth sentence, by striking out “subdivision (b)(5)” and inserting in lieu thereof “subdivision (b)(6)”

Ninth: By adding a Sec. 2a to read as follows:

Sec. 2a. CONTINGENCY OF FUNDING

The duty to implement Sec. 2 of this act (Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund) is contingent upon an appropriation of funds in fiscal year 2027 or subsequent fiscal years from the General Fund to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for the specific purposes described in Sec. 2 of this act.

Tenth: In Sec. 3, effective date, by striking out “2025” and inserting in lieu thereof “2026”

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to establishing the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund to provide payments for farm and forestry operation losses due to weather conditions”

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry was amended as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations. Thereupon, the report of the Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry, as amended, was agreed to and third reading was ordered.

House Resolution Adopted

H.R. 11

House resolution authorizing limited remote committee voting through the remainder of calendar year 2026

Was taken up and adopted.

Adjournment

At three o'clock and fifty-eight minutes in the afternoon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until tomorrow at nine o'clock and thirty minutes in the forenoon.