

Journal of the House

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

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

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Rep. Chris Keyser of Rutland City.

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. 791

By Reps. Priestley of Bradford, Berbeco of Winooski, Burrows of West Windsor, Cole of Hartford, Donahue of Northfield, Graning of Jericho, Headrick of Burlington, Holcombe of Norwich, Kleppner of Burlington, McCann of Montpelier, McGill of Bridport, Mrowicki of Putney, Nugent of South Burlington, Ode of Burlington, Pouech of Hinesburg, Rachelson of Burlington, Scheu of Middlebury, Sibilia of Dover, Sweeney of Shelburne, Tomlinson of Winooski, and Torre of Moretown,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to State government and information privacy

To the Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure.

H. 792

By Reps. Priestley of Bradford, Berbeco of Winooski, Burrows of West Windsor, Cole of Hartford, Graning of Jericho, Headrick of Burlington, Holcombe of Norwich, McCann of Montpelier, McGill of Bridport, Mrowicki of Putney, Nugent of South Burlington, Ode of Burlington, Pouech of Hinesburg, Rachelson of Burlington, Scheu of Middlebury, Sweeney of Shelburne, Tomlinson of Winooski, and Torre of Moretown,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to liability standards for developers and deployers of artificial intelligence systems

To the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development.

H. 793

By Reps. Satcowitz of Randolph, Priestley of Bradford, White of Bethel, Bos-Lun of Westminster, Burrows of West Windsor, Chapin of East Montpelier, Cole of Hartford, Graning of Jericho, Headrick of Burlington, Holcombe of Norwich, Hooper of Randolph, Hoyt of Hartford, Logan of Burlington, McCann of Montpelier, McGill of Bridport, Mrowicki of Putney, Nugent of South Burlington, Ode of Burlington, Olson of Starksboro, Pouech of Hinesburg, Rachelson of Burlington, Scheu of Middlebury, Sibia of Dover, Tomlinson of Winooski, and Torre of Moretown,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to removing the power of Vermont corporations to spend money on election activities

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 794

By Reps. Logan of Burlington, Cina of Burlington, and Tomlinson of Winooski,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to increasing taxes on higher income earners and creating the School Construction Aid Special Fund

To the Committee on Ways and Means.

H. 795

By Reps. Greer of Bennington and Hango of Berkshire,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to children's camps

To the Committee on Human Services.

H. 796

By Rep. Campbell of St. Johnsbury,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to public electric vehicle supply equipment standards of service

To the Committee on Transportation.

H. 797

By Reps. Christie of Hartford, Burrows of West Windsor, and Rachelson of Burlington,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to an interdisciplinary model of legal representation for children and families involved in proceedings related to child abuse or neglect

To the Committee on Judiciary.

H. 798

By Rep. Dodge of Essex,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to impersonating a law enforcement officer

To the Committee on Judiciary.

H. 799

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

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the Free Degree Promise Program

To the Committee on Education.

H. 800

By Reps. Cole of Hartford, Maguire of Rutland City, McFaun of Barre Town, and McGill of Bridport,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to a single, statewide area agency on aging

To the Committee on Human Services.

H. 801

By Rep. Cina of Burlington,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to improving State and regional operations

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 802

By Rep. Long of Newfane,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to adjusting the census grant for inflation
To the Committee on Education.

H. 803

By Reps. Marcotte of Coventry, Duke of Burlington, Graning of Jericho,
Olson of Starksboro, Priestley of Bradford, and White of Bethel,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to apprenticeship programs
To the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development.

H. 804

By Rep. Mrowicki of Putney,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to companion chatbots
To the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development.

H. 805

By Reps. North of Ferrisburgh and Olson of Starksboro,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to water resources of the State
To the Committee on Environment.

H. 806

By Rep. McGill of Bridport,
House bill, entitled
An act relating to cannabis advertising
To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 807

By Rep. Burrows of West Windsor,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the elimination of compulsory attendance requirements when incidents of hazing, harassment, or bullying are involved

To the Committee on Education.

H. 808

By Rep. Burrows of West Windsor,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the Title 16 definition of harassment

To the Committee on Education.

H. 809

By Reps. Cina of Burlington, Logan of Burlington, and Tomlinson of Winooski,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the repeal of 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 73

To the Committee on Education.

H. 810

By Reps. Malay of Pittsford, Bailey of Hyde Park, Bartholomew of Hartland, Bosch of Clarendon, Boyden of Cambridge, Burditt of West Rutland, Charlton of Chester, Coffin of Cavendish, Demar of Enosburgh, Feltus of Lyndon, Goslant of Northfield, Greer of Bennington, Higley of Lowell, Hooper of Randolph, Keyser of Rutland City, Kimbell of Woodstock, Labor of Morgan, Masland of Thetford, Morgan, L. of Milton, Morgan, M. of Milton, Nielsen of Brandon, O'Brien of Tunbridge, Pinsonault of Dorset, and Walker of Swanton,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to protections for covered bridges

To the Committee on Transportation.

H. 811

By Reps. Birong of Vergennes and Hango of Berkshire,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to election of Adjutant and Inspector General of the Vermont National Guard

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

House Resolution Placed on Calendar**H.R. 12**

Offered by Representatives Donahue of Northfield, Sibia of Dover, Arsenault of Williston, Austin of Colchester, Bartholomew of Hartland, Bartley of Fairfax, Berbeco of Winooski, Birong of Vergennes, Bishop of Colchester, Black of Essex, Bluemle of Burlington, Boyden of Cambridge, Brady of Williston, Branagan of Georgia, Brown of Richmond, Burke of Brattleboro, Burkhardt of South Burlington, Burt of Cabot, Campbell of St. Johnsbury, Carris Duncan of Whitingham, Casey of Montpelier, Cina of Burlington, Conlon of Cornwall, Cooper of Pownal, Critchlow of Colchester, Dodge of Essex, Dolan of Essex Junction, Duke of Burlington, Eastes of Guilford, Emmons of Springfield, Feltus of Lyndon, Galfetti of Barre Town, Garofano of Essex, Goldman of Rockingham, Graning of Jericho, Harple of Glover, Headrick of Burlington, Hooper of Randolph, Hooper of Burlington, Houghton of Essex Junction, Howard of Rutland City, Hoyt of Hartford, James of Manchester, Kleppner of Burlington, Kornheiser of Brattleboro, Krasnow of South Burlington, Krowinski of Burlington, Lalley of Shelburne, LaLonde of South Burlington, Lipsky of Stowe, Logan of Burlington, Long of Newfane, Lueders of Lincoln, Luneau of St. Albans City, Maguire of Rutland City, Marcotte of Coventry, Masland of Thetford, McCann of Montpelier, McFaun of Barre Town, Morrow of Weston, Nigro of Bennington, Nugent of South Burlington, Olson of Starksboro, Pouech of Hinesburg, Priestley of Bradford, Rachelson of Burlington, Scheu of Middlebury, Squirrel of Underhill, Stone of Burlington, Sweeney of Shelburne, Tomlinson of Winooski, Torre of Moretown, Waszazak of Barre City, Waters Evans of Charlotte, Wood of Waterbury, and Yacovone of Morristown

House resolution expressing support for the principles behind the statement of Governor Philip B. Scott regarding the federal surge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents in the State of Minnesota

Whereas, on January 5, 2026, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security deployed approximately 3,000 federal agents, drawn from both ICE and CBP, to the metropolitan Twin Cities area in Minnesota, and

Whereas, on January 24, 2026, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, CBP agents fatally shot a U.S. citizen at the site of an anti-ICE demonstration, the second such shooting of a protester against ICE operations in the same month, and

Whereas, these and multiple other events pertaining to the methods of enforcing immigration law have triggered large protests both in and out of the State of Minnesota, as well as in Vermont, and

Whereas, two of our fundamental constitutional rights are “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” and that “no person shall ... be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law,” and

Whereas, in response to the events in Minnesota, on January 25, 2026, Governor Philip B. Scott issued the following statement:

“Enough ... it’s not acceptable for American citizens to be killed by federal agents for exercising their God-given and constitutional rights to protest their government.

“At best, these federal immigration operations are a complete failure of coordination of acceptable public safety and law enforcement practices, training, and leadership.

“At worst, it’s a deliberate federal intimidation and incitement of American citizens that’s resulting in the murder of Americans. Again, enough is enough.

“The President should pause these operations, de-escalate the situation, and reset the federal government's focus on truly criminal illegal immigrants. In the absence of Presidential action, Congress and the Courts must step up to restore constitutionality,” and

Whereas, this legislative body desires to speak in unity with the Governor on this urgent topic and to address this crisis in our nation, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the House of Representatives:

That this legislative body expresses its support for the principles behind the statement of Governor Philip B. Scott regarding the immigration enforcement actions that ICE and CBP, known as Operation Metro Surge, are currently conducting in the State of Minnesota, *and be it further*

Resolved: That this legislative body stands firm in its defense of the rights of all under the U.S. Constitution and in its commitment to standards that coordinate acceptable public safety and law enforcement practices, training, and leadership, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Clerk of the House be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Governor Philip B. Scott, President Donald J. Trump, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, and the Vermont Congressional Delegation.

Was read by title and placed on the Action Calendar on the next legislative day pursuant to House Rule 52.

Joint Senate Resolution Adopted in Concurrence**J.R.S. 38**

By Senator Baruth,

J.R.S. 38. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on January 30, 2026.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, January 30, 2026, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, February 3, 2026.

Was taken up, read, and adopted in concurrence.

Journalized Remarks Rescinded and Expunged

Rep. Walker of Swanton moved that the House rescind its vote to journalize his remarks – which appear on page 2856 of this past Friday's House Journal – and expunge those remarks from the Journal, which was agreed to.

**Senate Proposal of Amendment to House Proposal of Amendment
Not Concurred in; Committee of Conference Requested and Appointed****S. 23**

The Senate concurred in the House proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment thereto on Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to the use of synthetic media in elections

The Senate concurred in the House proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment thereto as follows:

First: In Sec. 1, 17 V.S.A. chapter 35, subchapter 4, in section 2031, by striking out subdivisions (1) and (2) in their entireties and inserting in lieu thereof new subdivisions (1) and (2) to read as follows:

(1) “Deceptive and fraudulent synthetic media” means synthetic media that appears to a reasonable person to be a realistic representation of an individual that does any of the following:

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

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

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

Second: In Sec. 1, 17 V.S.A. chapter 35, subchapter 4, in section 2032, in subsection (a), by striking out subdivisions (1) and (2) in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof new subdivisions (1) and (2) to read as follows:

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

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

Third: In Sec. 1, 17 V.S.A. chapter 35, subchapter 4, in section 2032, in subsection (a), in the last sentence, by striking out the words “created or”.

Pending the question, Shall the House concur in the Senate proposal of amendment to House proposal of amendment?, **Rep. Birong of Vergennes** moved that the House refuse to concur and ask for a Committee of Conference, which was agreed to, and the Speaker appointed as members of the Committee of Conference on the part of the House:

Rep. Birong of Vergennes

Rep. Hango of Berkshire

Rep. Waters Evans of Charlotte

Third Reading; Bill Passed

H. 532

House bill, entitled

An act relating to mandatory retirement of college professors

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

Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered**H. 270**

Rep. Lueders of Lincoln, for the Committee on Health Care, to which had been referred House bill, entitled

An act relating to confidentiality for peer support counseling among emergency service providers

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. 18 V.S.A. § 7257c is added to read:

§ 7257c. CONFIDENTIALITY; PEER SUPPORT FOR EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDERS

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Emergency service provider” means an individual:

(A) currently recognized by a Vermont fire department as a firefighter;

(B) currently licensed by the Department of Health as an emergency medical technician, an emergency medical responder, an advanced emergency medical technician, or a paramedic;

(C) currently certified as a law enforcement officer by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council, including constables and sheriffs;

(D) currently employed by the Department of Corrections as a probation, parole, or correctional facility officer;

(E) currently certified by the Vermont Enhanced 911 Board as a 911 call taker or employed as an emergency communications dispatcher providing service for an emergency service provider organization;

(F) currently registered as a ski patroller at a Vermont ski resort with the National Ski Patrol or Professional Ski Patrol Association;

(G) currently working as a mental health professional in a crisis setting who is licensed, certified, or rostered, respectively, to provide mental health services as a physician pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 23 or 33; an advance practice registered nurse specializing in psychiatric mental health pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 28; a psychologist pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 55; a peer support provider or peer recovery support specialist pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 60; a social worker pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 6; an alcohol and drug abuse counselor pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 62; a clinical mental health counselor pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 65; a marriage and family

therapist pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 76; a psychoanalyst pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 77; an applied behavior analyst pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 95; or a nonlicensed or noncertified psychotherapist, noncertified psychoanalyst, or any other professional that provides mental health services; or

(H) currently serving as a medical examiner or assistant medical examiner as appointed by the Chief Medical Examiner.

(2) “Employer” means an entity that employs or oversees emergency service providers working in a paid or volunteer capacity.

(3) “Peer support communication” means an oral or written communication made in the course of a peer support session; a note or report arising out of a peer support session; or a record of a peer support session.

(4) “Peer support program” means a program to provide support services to emergency service providers working in a paid or volunteer capacity.

(5) “Peer support session” means an individual or group peer support session provided by a peer support specialist for emergency service providers who have been involved in a potentially traumatizing event or are suffering from cumulative or chronic emotional stress by reason of their employment or volunteer service or related to other personal matters.

(6)(A) “Emergency service peer support specialist” means an individual who:

(i) has been designated by an employer to serve as a member of an employer-based peer support program or designated by a peer support program to act as a peer support resource;

(ii) has received training in providing peer support to emergency service providers who have been involved in potentially traumatizing events by reason of their employment or volunteer service; or

(iii) is otherwise a member of an organized and recognized Vermont peer support program.

(B) “Emergency service peer support specialist” shall not be construed to have the same meaning as a “certified peer support provider” defined pursuant to 26 V.S.A. § 3191.

(b)(1) Except as provided in subsection (d) of this section:

(A) any peer support communication made by a participant in a peer support session of a peer support program led by an emergency service peer

support specialist shall not be disclosed by any individual participating in the peer support session; and

(B) any peer support communication relating to a peer support session led by an emergency service peer support specialist between the emergency service peer support specialist and another staff member of the peer support program or between staff members of a peer support program shall not be disclosed by any individual participating in the peer support communication.

(2) Written peer support communications are exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept confidential. The Public Records Act exemptions created in this section shall not be subject to the provisions of 1 V.S.A. § 317(e) (repeal of Public Records Act exemptions).

(c) Except as provided by subsection (d) of this section, any peer support communication made by a participant or emergency service peer support specialist in a peer support session led by an emergency service peer support specialist shall not be admissible in a judicial, administrative, or arbitration proceeding, including during any discovery conducted as part of an adjudicatory proceeding. Limitations on disclosure imposed by this subsection shall not include knowledge acquired by an emergency service provider from observations made during the course of employment or volunteer service or information acquired by the emergency service provider during the course of employment or volunteer service that is otherwise subject to discovery or introduction into evidence.

(d)(1) Confidentiality protections described in subsections (b) and (c) of this section shall not apply to the following information as it pertains to an individual designated to receive such information in the normal course of the individual's professional responsibilities:

(A) any threat of suicide or homicide made by a participant of a peer support session or any information conveyed in a peer support session relating to a threat of suicide or homicide;

(B) any information relating to the abuse of a child or vulnerable adult or other information that is required to be reported by law;

(C) any admission of conduct likely to pose a risk to public safety; or

(D) any admission of a plan to commit a crime.

(2) Nothing in this section shall prohibit:

(A) any communications between emergency service peer support specialists regarding a peer support session or between an emergency service

peer support specialist and another staff member of a peer support program; and

(B) an emergency service peer support specialist or an emergency service provider participating in a peer support session from disclosing personal experiences or emotions discussed during the peer support session to the extent that such a disclosure is consistent with the participant's obligations under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-191, and its associated regulations.

(e) An employer, emergency service peer support specialist, or peer support program shall not be subject to civil liability for any injuries or damages arising from the provision of peer support services or for any disclosure made in violation of this section by an emergency service provider who participates in a peer support session unless the conduct of the employer, emergency service peer support specialist, or peer support program constitutes gross negligence, recklessness, or intentional misconduct.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: "An act relating to confidentiality in peer support sessions for emergency service providers"

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

Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered

H. 516

Rep. Pinsonault of Dorset, for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, to which had been referred House bill, entitled

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

Reported in favor of its passage when amended as follows:

In Sec. 2, 24 App. V.S.A. chapter 117, in section 402, in the first sentence, following "resident of the Town of Essex," by striking out "cemetery commissioners," and inserting in lieu thereof "~~cemetery commissioners~~,"

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

Adjournment

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