

Journal of the House

Wednesday, February 11, 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 a string quartet comprising Kathy Andrews of Brattleboro, Melanie Dexter of Shaftsbury, Marcia Cassidy of Norwich, and Rep. Zon Eastes of Guilford.

House Bills Introduced

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

H. 896

By Rep. Canfield of Fair Haven,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to creating a New England Organ Bank specialty license plate

To the Committee on Transportation.

H. 897

By Reps. Arsenault of Williston, Dobrovich of Williamstown, Chapin of East Montpelier, Hooper of Burlington, James of Manchester, McGill of Bridport, Nugent of South Burlington, Ode of Burlington, Olson of Starksboro, Page of Newport City, Pezzo of Colchester, Pouech of Hinesburg, Pritchard of Pawlet, Satcowitz of Randolph, Sibia of Dover, Southworth of Walden, and Sweeney of Shelburne,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to prohibiting the use of social media by children

To the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development.

H. 898

By the Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure,
House bill, entitled

An act relating to copper-based to fiber-based telecommunications network transitions and consumer protections

Pursuant to House Rule 48, placed on the Notice Calendar.

H. 899

By Reps. Marcotte of Coventry and Graning of Jericho,
House bill, entitled

An act relating to financing multiunit housing through the Vermont Economic Development Authority

To the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development.

Bill Referred to Committee on Ways and Means**H. 635**

House bill, entitled

An act relating to eliminating Department of Corrections supervisory fees

Appearing on the Notice Calendar, and pursuant to House Rule 35(a), affecting the revenue of the State, was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Joint Senate Resolution Adopted in Concurrence**J.R.S. 40**

By Senator Baruth,

J.R.S. 40. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on February 13, 2026.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, February 13, 2026, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, February 17, 2026.

Was taken up, read, and adopted in concurrence.

Ceremonial Readings**H.C.R. 181**

Offered by Representatives Marcotte of Coventry, Wood of Waterbury, Bishop of Colchester, Bosch of Clarendon, Boutin of Barre City, Carris Duncan of Whitingham, Cooper of Pownal, Duke of Burlington, Garofano of Essex, Graning of Jericho, McGill of Bridport, Micklus of Milton, Olson of Starksboro, Priestley of Bradford, and White of Waitsfield

House concurrent resolution congratulating the winners of the 2025 Spirit of the ADA Award

Whereas, the State of Vermont recognizes the value and capabilities of its workforce, and it has a strong commitment to equal opportunity for all, regardless of disability, race, color, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, or national origin, and

Whereas, our State, its people, and its economy benefit when all Vermonters of all abilities are provided the opportunity to contribute their skills, talents, and gifts as part of Vermont's workforce, and

Whereas, the Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities (the Committee) annually presents the Spirit of the ADA Award to businesses that reflect the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act in their employment practices, and

Whereas, the criteria that the Committee uses to select award recipients include creating an accessibility recruitment and hiring process, incorporating on-the-job accommodations, providing accessible physical structures to ensure that there is success for all employees, and implementing an overall employment strategy that includes hiring people with disabilities, and

Whereas, the 2025 Spirit of the ADA Award winners are: American Meadows; August First; Ava's Home Care Services; Birnn Chocolates of Vermont; Blackwell Bookkeeping; C.P. Dudley Store; Cassella Waste Systems, Inc.; Copley Hospital; Eastview at Middlebury; Elevate; Fairfield Inn and Suites Waterbury/Stowe by Marriott; Garden Path Elder Living/Bradley House; Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity, Swanton; JaniTech; Maplefields, Morrisville; Ocean State Job Lots, Morrisville; Price Chopper, Morrisville; Price Chopper, West Rutland; Sonnox; Special Needs Support Center (SNSC); Stella Healthcare Group; the Barre Partnership; TRIO Community Meals; Vermont Granite Museum; Von Trapp Family Lodge & Resort; and Walmart, Rutland, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly congratulates the winners of the 2025 Spirit of the ADA Award, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to each recipient of a 2025 Spirit of the ADA Award.

Having been adopted in concurrence on Friday, January 30, 2026 in accord with Joint Rule 16b, was read.

H.C.R. 189

Offered by All Members of the House

Offered by All Members of the Senate

House concurrent resolution designating February 11, 2026, as Disability Advocacy Day at the State House

Whereas, the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights (VCDR), founded in 1974, serves as a statewide coalition of disability rights organizations working to protect and advance people with disabilities, and

Whereas, the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, Pub. L. No. 101–336 (1990) (ADA), as amended, established comprehensive civil rights protections for persons with disabilities, and

Whereas, in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581 (1999), the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that unnecessary institutionalization of people with disabilities constitutes discrimination under the ADA, and

Whereas, the closure of the Brandon Training School in 1993 marked a historic moment in Vermont’s disability rights progress, ending the State’s operation of institutional facilities for persons with disabilities, and

Whereas, in Vermont, the prevalence of persons with disabilities is increasing, and they now represent one in four Vermonters, and

Whereas, recent State data shows that academic achievement and high school graduation rates for persons with disabilities and for students studying under an Individual Education Program are lower compared to the overall rates for the student population, and these education disparities have long-term life implications, and

Whereas, persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing voting, securing employment, finding housing, and arranging for transportation, and are more likely to contemplate suicide, and

Whereas, despite these challenges, persons with disabilities make impressive and praiseworthy societal contributions in Vermont, and

Whereas, Disability Advocacy Day has occurred at the State House for many years and provides an important opportunity to recognize progress while acknowledging ongoing challenges, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly designates February 11, 2026, as Disability Advocacy Day at the State House, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to VCDR.

Having been adopted in concurrence on Friday, February 6, 2026 in accord with Joint Rule 16b, was read.

H.C.R. 192

Offered by Representatives McGill of Bridport, Bishop of Colchester, Cole of Hartford, Donahue of Northfield, Eastes of Guilford, Garofano of Essex, Maguire of Rutland City, Wood of Waterbury, and Yacovone of Morristown

House concurrent resolution recognizing February 11, 2026, as National 211 Day in Vermont and celebrating the outstanding community contributions of Vermont 211

Whereas, Vermont 211 is a nationally accredited health and human services helpline that the United Way of Vermont operates, and it provides statewide information and referral services, and

Whereas, Vermont 211 offers streamlined and easy access to over 1,100 community-based agencies that serve Vermonters via phone, text, email, and website, with 3,270 programs and 11,900 services, and

Whereas, the dedicated Vermont 211 staff vets and updates information about the resources in the organization's robust database, and

Whereas, Vermont 211 employs a team of eight trained and empathetic specialists, who, in a safe and confidential manner, are available to work with Vermonters and help assess their community service needs, and

Whereas, for more than 20 years, Vermont 211 has delivered this vital community resource to Vermonters daily and in emergency situations, and

Whereas, in 2025, Vermont 211 received over 61,000 contacts via phone calls, texts, and emails, resulting in over 22,000 referrals, and

Whereas, the most commonly requested services were for basic needs, such as access to housing, utilities, and public assistance, and

Whereas, through its response to nonemergency calls, Vermont 211 helps maintain the integrity of the 911 system, and

Whereas, Vermont 211 supports the Department for Children and Families, managing its general assistance after-hours calls from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 a.m., Monday through Friday, as well as on weekends and holidays, and

Whereas, this special organization collaborates with Vermont Emergency Management prior to, during, and after regional, statewide, and national emergencies such as flooding and pandemics, and

Whereas, the member organizations of the Vermont Food Security Roadmap Coalition value Vermont 211 as an essential partner for the facilitation of robust food support services, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly recognizes February 11, 2026, as National 211 Day in Vermont and celebrates the outstanding community contributions of Vermont 211, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Vermont 211.

Having been adopted in concurrence on Friday, February 6, 2026 in accord with Joint Rule 16b, was read.

Report of Committee of Conference Adopted

S. 23

The Speaker placed before the House the following Committee of Conference report:

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

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

An act relating to the use of synthetic media in elections

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

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

Subchapter 4. Use of Synthetic Media in Elections

§ 2031. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

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

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

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

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

§ 2032. DISCLOSURE OF DECEPTIVE AND FRAUDULENT

SYNTHETIC MEDIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ 2033. PENALTIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subchapter 5. Enforcement and Investigation

§ 2041. ENFORCEMENT

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

§ 2042. CIVIL INVESTIGATIONS

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

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

(3) The Attorney General or a State's Attorney shall serve notice of the time, place, and cause of such examination or attendance or notice of the cause of the demand for written responses personally or by certified mail upon such person at that person's principal place of business or, if such place is not known, to that person's known address. Such notice shall include a statement that a knowing and intentional violation of this chapter is subject to criminal prosecution.

(4) Any book, record, paper, memorandum, or other information produced by any person pursuant to this section shall not, unless otherwise ordered by a court of this State for good cause shown, be disclosed to any person other than the authorized agent or representative of the Attorney General or a State's Attorney or another law enforcement officer engaged in

legitimate law enforcement activities unless with the consent of the person producing the same, except that any transcript of oral testimony, written responses, documents, or other information produced pursuant to this section may be used in the enforcement of this chapter, including in connection with any civil action brought under this subchapter or subsection (c) of this section.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

authorized by this section shall take precedence on the docket over all other cases.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

SEN. BRIAN P. COLLAMORE

SEN. TANYA C. VYHOVSKY

SEN. JOHN S. MORLEY III

Committee on the part of the Senate

REP. MATTHEW J. BIRONG Jr.

REP. LISA A. HANGO

REP. CHEA WATERS EVANS

Committee on the part of the House

Which was considered and adopted on the part of the House.

Adjournment

At four o'clock and twenty 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.