

Journal of the House

Thursday, February 26, 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 State House Singers.

Message from the Senate No. 21

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 passed Senate bill of the following title:

S. 210. An act relating to access to autopsy reports.

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

The Senate has considered a bill originating in the House of the following title:

H. 516. An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Essex.

And has passed the same in concurrence.

House Bills Introduced

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

H. 917

By the Committee on Ways and Means,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to military affairs

Pursuant to House Rule 35(a), materially affecting the revenue of one or more municipalities, to the Committee on Ways and Means.

H. 918

By Reps. Harple of Glover, Olson of Starksboro, and Yacovone of Morristown,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to membership on school district boards

To the Committee on Education.

Bill Referred to Committee on Ways and Means**H. 549**

House bill, entitled

An act relating to eligibility of detainees to obtain a State-issued nondriver identification card

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.

Pending Entry on the Notice Calendar**Bill Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means****H. 841**

House bill, entitled

An act relating to miscellaneous animal welfare procedures

Pending entry 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 Referred to Committee**J.R.S. 42**

By Senator Vyhovsky,

J.R.S. 42. J.R.S. 42 Joint resolution condemning the Russian Federation's military and political actions in Ukraine and especially their impact on Ukrainian children.

Whereas, the large-scale Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, significantly extended its already existing occupation of sovereign Ukrainian territory, and

Whereas, this occupation was initiated with the February–March 2014 invasion of Crimea, which the Russians quickly annexed, premised on the dubious election they ordered and controlled, and later in 2014 Russia invaded the Donbas region of Ukraine, and

Whereas, these illegal invasions are violative of Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter that provides “All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations,” and

Whereas, according to the Brookings Institution, these Russian actions also “violated the agreement among the post-Soviet states in 1991 to accept the then-existing republic borders.... the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances for Ukraine and [the] 1997 Ukrainian-Russian Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership,” and

Whereas, the continuing presence and reinforcement of Russian military personnel, the ongoing land-based warfare, and the unrelenting onslaught of missiles and drones on civilian infrastructure, which have wrought havoc and loss of life on Ukrainians located far from the front lines of ground combat, including leaving millions of civilians without regular heating and power for months during Ukraine’s harsh winter, have all severely and negatively impacted daily life in Ukraine, and

Whereas, the war’s effect on Ukrainian children has been devastating, and

Whereas, on March 9, 2022, Russian forces attacked a maternity hospital in Mariupol, Ukraine, a key event in a multimonth siege on that Ukrainian city, and, according to the Mayor of Mariupol, over 20,000 Ukrainians perished due to this attack, and

Whereas, the Yale School of Public Health Humanitarian Research Lab (the Lab) has identified at least 210 sites where Russians have relocated Ukrainian children, which are located in either Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine or within Russia’s internationally recognized borders, and they include camps or centers dedicated to the systematic reeducation (attempting to change the children’s language and cultural heritage) or militarization of Ukrainian children, and in some instances they serve as a facilitator for involuntary Russian family adoptions, and

Whereas, Lab researchers assessed there is “a substantial basis for violations of the 1949 Geneva Convention and [the] 1977 Additional Protocol and Rome Statute of the International Court (Rome Statute) that amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity,” and

Whereas, Maria Lvova-Belova, the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights of the Russian Federation, is closely associated with her nation’s policy of abducting Ukrainian children, now numbering in the thousands, facilitating their forced relocation, and, in some instances, their involuntary adoption into Russian families or forced placement in the Russian military, and

Whereas, on June 16, 2022, the proxy Russian government of the occupied Kherson region of Ukraine announced that all newborns would be granted Russian citizenship and that orphans will also be registered as Russian citizens; further, on July 11, 2022, Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres ordered an investigation into the deaths and injuries of Ukrainian children, and

Whereas, according to the Office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian military casualties now exceed 390,000 wounded and 55,000 dead; the nation’s Ministry of Internal Affairs, with collaboration from on the ground nongovernmental organizations, reports that between 80,000 and 90,000 Ukrainian soldiers are missing, and the vast majority are presumed dead; the United Nations reports verifiable civilian casualties exceeding 41,000 wounded and 15,000 dead in communities the Russians did not occupy quickly in 2022, and therefore, for example, not including the separate estimated Mariupol casualty count, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly condemns the Russian Federation’s illegal invasion of sovereign and internationally recognized Ukrainian territory, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the General Assembly condemns the Russian Federation’s abduction and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children; the large network of camps and centers that facilitate the cultural and linguistic reeducation of Ukrainian children and the corresponding impact on the future of Ukraine’s cultural, linguistic, and national identity; and the involuntary adoption and military induction of seized Ukrainian children, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the General Assembly strongly urges the government of the Russian Federation to cease immediately its bombardment of Ukrainian infrastructure, withdraw its forces from Ukraine's internationally recognized territory, and return to Ukraine all children whom it has forcefully removed, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Russian Federation and Ukrainian ambassadors to the United States, President Donald J. Trump, and the Vermont Congressional Delegation.

Was read by title, treated as a bill, and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs pursuant to House Rule 52.

Action on Bill Postponed

H. 205

House bill, entitled

An act relating to agreements not to compete

Was taken up and, pending third reading, on motion of **Rep. Duke of Burlington**, action on the bill was postponed two legislative days.

Action on Bill Postponed

H. 635

House bill, entitled

An act relating to eliminating Department of Corrections supervisory fees

Was taken up and, pending second reading, on motion of **Rep. Emmons of Springfield**, action on the bill was postponed two legislative days.

Third Reading; Bill Passed

H. 566

House bill, entitled

An act relating to sealing post-charge court diversion records upon successful completion

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

Report of Committee of Conference Adopted

H. 790

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 House Bill entitled:

H. 790. An act relating to fiscal year 2026 budget adjustments.

Respectfully reports that it has met and considered the same and recommends that the House accede to the Senate proposal of amendment and that the Senate proposal of amendment be further amended as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 37. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 37. to read as follows:

Sec. 37. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. B.330 is amended to read:

Sec. B.330 Disabilities, aging, and independent living - advocacy and independent living grants

Grants	<u>24,909,492</u>	<u>25,125,975</u>
Total	<u>24,909,492</u>	<u>25,125,975</u>
Source of funds		
General fund	8,585,909	8,804,020
Federal funds	7,321,114	7,191,114
Global Commitment fund	<u>9,002,469</u>	<u>9,130,841</u>
Total	<u>24,909,492</u>	<u>25,125,975</u>

Second: By striking out Sec. 44. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 44. to read as follows:

Sec. 44. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. B.347 is amended to read:

Sec. B.347 Total human services

Source of funds		
General fund	1,428,803,059	1,461,126,849
Special funds	231,430,533	232,655,939
Tobacco fund	23,088,208	23,088,208
State health care resources fund	31,074,772	31,074,772
Federal funds	1,946,078,413	1,993,089,108
Global Commitment fund	2,148,606,890	2,213,122,801
Internal service funds	403,853	403,853
Interdepartmental transfers	32,694,090	32,694,090
Permanent trust funds	<u>25,000</u>	<u>25,000</u>
Total	5,842,204,818	5,987,280,620

Third: In Sec. 51., by striking out 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. B.1100(t)(2) and inserting in lieu thereof:

(2) ~~\$500,000~~ \$885,000 General Fund for a grant to Vermont Foodbank for the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Program;

* * *

Fourth: By striking out Sec. 79. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 79. to read as follows:

Sec. 79. HOUSING ASSISTANCE

(a) In fiscal year 2026 and fiscal year 2027, while the General Assembly is not in session the Emergency Board shall have the authority to transfer part of the appropriation in 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. B.1101(b)(2) to the Department for Children and Families for the purpose of assisting a housing authority to avoid termination of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 housing choice vouchers that would otherwise be lost as the result of federal action.

(b) If funds are transferred for this purpose, they may be made available at the request of a housing authority for one of the following purposes:

(1) to maintain a current housing assistance payment in use or to prevent the retirement of a housing assistance payment currently in use by the housing authority; or

(2) with prior written approval from HUD, to provide funding to a housing authority in order to prevent the termination of assistance to current housing choice voucher participants.

(c) If funds are transferred for this purpose, an affirmative vote of the majority of a housing authority's commissioners shall be required prior to a housing authority requesting funds.

(d) A housing authority shall notify the Department for Children and Families of its intent to request funds and submit a report on its financial need, including evidence that the request conforms to applicable HUD requirements and is a necessary and proper expense, to the Department on or before April 15, 2026.

(e) On or before May 1, 2026, the Department for Children and Families, in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development, shall:

(1) establish procedures for validating that such expenditures conform to applicable HUD requirements and are a necessary and proper expense prior to issuing funds; and

(2) establish guidelines to ensure that funds are distributed based upon need.

(f) If funds are transferred for this purpose, the Department for Children and Families shall report to the Joint Fiscal Committee at its September 2026 meeting and submit a written report on or before January 15, 2027, to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on the status of the appropriation.

(g) As used in this section, “housing authority” has the same meaning as in 24 V.S.A. § 4002.

Fifth: By striking out Sec. 83. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 83. to read as follows:

Sec. 83. DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES PAYMENT REFORM; IMPLEMENTATION

(a)(1) In fiscal year 2026, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living shall adjust the developmental disabilities home- and community-based services payment model to reflect per-member, per-month payments to designated and specialized service agencies that are calculated based on a minimum-assumed utilization rate of 65 percent. Reconciliation shall occur in compliance with the developmental disabilities home- and community-based services payment reform rules and the False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C. § 3729 et seq.

(2) Each agency currently below the 65 percent threshold and requiring financial stabilization shall prepare and submit a financial stabilization plan to the Department on or before October 1, 2027. The Department shall review the stabilization plan and work with the proposing agencies toward the goal of stabilization and sustainability.

(b) The designated and specialized service agencies shall submit to the Department on or before April 1, 2026, all information deemed necessary by the Department to enable it to perform a comprehensive fiscal analysis and to implement resolutions to address barriers that inhibit an increase in service delivery utilization.

(c)(1) On or before April 15, 2026, the Agency of Human Services and the Departments of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living and of Vermont Health Access shall convene a meeting with the Chairs of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, the House Committee on Human Services, and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, or their designees, and with the designated and specialized service agencies and other key members of the developmental disabilities services delivery system. At the

meeting, the parties shall discuss efforts that support the growth of a sustainable developmental disabilities services delivery system in which:

(A) increased service utilization meets the needs and goals of individuals and families and drives the designated and specialized service agencies' success;

(B) Medicaid compliance is assured; and

(C) all State and federal rules are adhered to.

(2) At the meeting, the parties shall also develop and recommend concrete solutions to mitigate short-term financial impacts and Medicaid compliance risks associated with the implementation of developmental disabilities services payment reform, to the extent permitted under federal Medicaid rules.

(d) On or before May 1, 2026, the Department shall submit a written progress report to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare detailing recommended solutions, anticipated fiscal impacts to the designated and specialized service agencies, implementation timelines, and compliance safeguards, including how measures, such as the transitional utilization methodology, shall ensure continuity of care, prevent service disruption, and mitigate Medicaid compliance risks for providers and the State during the first year of payment reform implementation, to the extent permitted under federal Medicaid rules.

(e) If funds previously appropriated to the Agency of Human Services are insufficient to provide the State match needed to make the payment adjustment in subsection (a) of this section, notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 308b, the Commissioner of Finance and Management shall unreserve an amount of funds equal to the deficiency from the Human Services Caseload Reserve and, notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 706, transfer an amount of funds equal to the deficiency to the Agency of Human Services.

Sixth: By striking out Sec. 86. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 86. to read as follows:

Sec. 86. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. E.330 is added to read:

Sec. E.330 DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES, AGING AND
INDEPENDENT LIVING; VERMONT CENTER FOR
INDEPENDENT LIVING; FUNDING

(a) Of the General Fund appropriation in Sec. B.330 of this act, \$55,000 shall be granted to the Vermont Center for Independent Living to provide home-delivered meals to individuals with disabilities under 60 years of age.

ANDREW J. PERCHLIK

VIRGINIA V. LYONS

RICHARD A. WESTMAN

Committee on the part of the Senate

ROBIN P. SCHEU

MARTHA A. FELTUS

TIFFANY BLUEMLE

Committee on the part of the House

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

Adjournment

At three o'clock and fifty-two 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.