

Journal of the House

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

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

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Rep. James Gregoire of Fairfield.

Message from the Governor

“March 31, 2026

The Honorable Jill Krowinski
Speaker of the House
115 State Street, Drawer 33
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-2301

Dear Speaker Krowinski:

I have the honor to inform you that I have appointed Kumulia “Kase” Long of Milton, Vermont to serve in the General Assembly, representing House District Chittenden-Franklin.

Sincerely,

Philip B. Scott
Governor

PBS/fc

cc: Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Secretary of State
BetsyAnn Wrask, Clerk of the House”

New Member Announced and Appointed to Committee

Rep. Long of Milton, who was recently appointed by the Governor to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Chris Taylor of Milton, having taken and subscribed the oath administered by the Clerk, as required by the Constitution and laws of the State, was seated and then appointed by the Speaker to the Committee on Education.

House Bills Introduced

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

H. 953

By Reps. Birong of Vergennes and North of Ferrisburgh,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to approval of an amendment to the charter of the Town of Pantton

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

H. 954

By Reps. Lipsky of Stowe, LaMont of Morristown, and Yacovone of Morristown,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to approval of an amendment to the charter of the Town of Stowe

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

Senate Bills Referred

Senate bills of the following titles were severally taken up, read the first time, and referred to committee as follows:

S. 64

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to amendments to the scope of practice for optometrists

To the Committee on Health Care.

S. 278

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to cannabis

To the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

**Pending Entry on the Notice Calendar
Bill Referred to the Committee on Appropriations**

H. 952

House Committee bill, entitled

An act relating to capital construction and State bonding budget adjustment

Pending entry on the Notice Calendar, and pursuant to House Rule 35(a), carrying an appropriation, was referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

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

S. 218

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to reducing chloride contamination of State waters

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 Adopted in Concurrence

J.R.S. 47

By Senator Baruth,

J.R.S. 47. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on April 3, 2026.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, April 3, 2026, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, April 7, 2026.

Was taken up, read, and adopted in concurrence.

Ceremonial Readings

H.C.R. 217

Offered by Representatives Burditt of West Rutland, Canfield of Fair Haven, Bosch of Clarendon, Brown of Richmond, Casey of Hubbardton, Harvey of Castleton, Howard of Rutland City, Howland of Rutland Town, Keyser of Rutland City, Maguire of Rutland City, Malay of Pittsford, McCoy of Poughkeepsie, Nielsen of Brandon, Pinsonault of Dorset, Pritchard of Pawlet, Taylor of Mendon, and Winter of Ludlow

Offered by Senators Collamore, Weeks, and Williams

House concurrent resolution congratulating McNeil & Reedy of Rutland City on 70 years as a superb men's clothing retailer

Whereas, on April 16, 1956, James F. McNeil and George Reedy opened a new store at 81 Merchants Row in Rutland City specializing in the sale of high-quality men's suits at a time when downtown Rutland was a thriving retail hub and men's suits were in steady demand, and

Whereas, James McNeil brought pertinent retailing experience from both the Varsity Shop and the men's and boys' department at the Economy Store, and

Whereas, McNeil & Reedy served as the local franchise for Bond Clothing Stores, Inc., a premier men's clothing manufacturer, and

Whereas, across the ensuing decades, McNeil & Reedy's inventory diversified, evolving into a full-service men's clothing store and the largest purveyor of suit and tuxedo rentals in Vermont, and

Whereas, the founder's twin sons, Jim and John McNeil, continued their father's legacy as the store's joint proprietors, succeeding in downtown Rutland despite the advent of suburban shopping malls, national clothing chains, and the increasing popularity of online shopping, and

Whereas, McNeil & Reedy weathered these developments, providing expert tailoring and personalized service and engendering customer loyalty, and

Whereas, the third generation of the store's McNeil family leadership, Casey McNeil, has recently assumed the helm, bringing his background in finance and a modern perspective on retail management, and

Whereas, since inheriting the family's merchandising legacy, Casey McNeil has redesigned the store, expanded the tailoring department, broadened the inventory, introduced new heritage and performance lines, and emphasized materials and craftsmanship, and

Whereas, 2026 plans at industry-admired McNeil & Reedy include further design enhancements, the introduction of new tailored clothing lines, and the expansion of cigar offerings, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly congratulates McNeil & Reedy of Rutland City on 70 years as a superb men's clothing retailer, *and be it further*

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

Having been adopted in concurrence on Friday, March 13, 2026 in accord with Joint Rule 16b, was read.

H.C.R. 230

Offered by All Members of the House

House concurrent resolution recognizing April 2026 as National Child Abuse Prevention Month in Vermont and honoring Prevent Child Abuse Vermont for a half century of outstanding community leadership and service

Whereas, the societal scourge of child abuse can threaten children’s tranquility and family cohesiveness and harmony, and

Whereas, recognizing the severity of this societal problem, Congress enacted the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974, Pub. L. No. 93–247, and

Whereas, key findings in CAPTA are that “child abuse or neglect can result in the death of a child,” and that “the problem of child abuse and neglect requires a comprehensive approach,” and

Whereas, CAPTA was intended to address these challenges through the creation of a federal Office on Child Abuse and Neglect; grants to states, Native American organizations, and public and private organizations; and improved federal coordination and monitoring, and

Whereas, in Vermont, the nonprofit organization dedicated to child abuse prevention is Prevent Child Abuse Vermont (PCAVT), which, since 1976, has worked to lessen the presence of child abuse in our State, and

Whereas, in 2025, PCAVT served 7,694 adults; 3,451 children; and indirectly supported an additional 86,481 children, and

Whereas, PCAVT has shown that it is possible to reduce the occurrence of child abuse in Vermont by training adults on the perils of child abuse; investing in programs that strengthen families and communities; enabling children to develop positive relationships with caring adults; and creating effective partnerships between schools, health providers, community organizations, businesses, and families, and

Whereas, in 1982, Congress adopted S.J. Res. 149 to designate an annual National Child Abuse Prevention Week and to spotlight the issue and raise greater awareness, and, since 1983, every American President has issued a National Child Abuse Prevention Month proclamation, and

Whereas, in 2026, PCAVT is observing its 50th anniversary, an occasion meriting legislative recognition for PCAVT’s continuing dedication to an important cause, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly recognizes April 2026 as National Child Abuse Prevention Month in Vermont and honors Prevent Child Abuse Vermont for a half century of outstanding community leadership and service, *and be it further*

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

Having been adopted in concurrence on Friday, March 27, 2026 in accord with Joint Rule 16b, was read.

Remarks Journalized

On motion by **Rep. Sweeney of Shelburne**, the following remarks by **Reps. Burditt of West Rutland and Berbeco of Winooski** were ordered printed in the Journal:

Rep. Burditt of West Rutland offered the following remarks:

“Madam Speaker:

Topper McFaun! It's what I always call out when Top walks into the room. I love you Top.

I'm going to say a few words about Topper, and I hope I'll be able to convey the admiration and respect I have for this man.

I first met Topper about 16 years ago. I sat on his right-hand side for four years. At the time I had no idea I would come to respect him more than most humans on this rock! I found out early on Top would have my back if he thought it was appropriate. I also found out he had a mischievous streak in him.

Being a bit of a mischievous freshman myself—as a lot of freshman are—we had a woman in our Human Services Committee explaining the different women's programs in the State. She explained the first one and I asked if there was a comparable men's program. She said ‘No’ and I simply said ‘Ok.’ She explained another women’s program. I again raised my hand and asked if there was a comparable men’s program, and her answer was ‘No’ again. Well, she finished her third program, and I again raised my hand. She rolled her eyes, and I asked the question, if there was a comparable men's program? With a sigh, she said ‘**No.**’

After her fourth program explanation I felt an elbow in my side and Top leaned over to me and said, ‘I got this.’ Top raised his hand and the relief on her face that someone else was asking a question was a welcome change. Topper proceeded to ask, ‘Is there a men's program that's

comparable to that women's program?' Our Chair, Rep. Ann Pugh, was as frustrated as the witness and threw her hands in the air and ended the testimony!

A couple things Top shared with me about his early days that most don't know about him was that in Boston he was a chauffeur for a prominent Boston businessman and if you make the mistake and say he is from Boston, you will be corrected—he's from Cambridge.

Top is the consummate Family Man, and with his retirement, it's not the first time he redirected his life for his family.

If you have ever seen him and his 'best friend,' as he calls his wife Maryann, interact, it's a thing of beauty. They still act like a couple of high school sweethearts, not like a couple that has been together for decades. So much love...

He is the most caring, compassionate, warm hearted, kind man you will ever meet!

Top and I have a ritual that a few have seen. For several bienniums now, I have sought him out on the first day to kiss the ring. For me, it started out as a humorous salute to him and morphed into a show of respect that he more than deserves.

I'm going to be 70 years old in a few months and I have a mentor for life in Top. You see, Madam Speaker, a big part of me wants to be like Topper. I think it's important to remember where you came from but also have something to look forward to. I want to be more like Topper. So, with that Top, don't forget us here under the Golden Dome, but continue to look forward with your Best Friend Maryann. You've got a great family, and a lot of life left to live."

Rep. Berbeco of Winooski offered the following remarks:

"Madam Speaker:

I want to just take a moment to recognize a member of this body as he steps away from this Chamber to more fully live his life with the love of his life.

The member from Barre Town has spent the last four years with me in room 42 on the House Committee on Health Care. We have heard others speak to the arc of his professional impact on this State, which has been tremendous. I can speak to the last four years, and in that room, a harmonizing force that member has been. He hasn't done that by dominating the conversation. He has done it by listening—truly listening—and by doing that, he has brought us along with him. When we've had moments—things

were tense or different perspectives on things, the member has really grounded us and if you're lucky, that's through a story. Those stories often remind us of who we work for and why we do this work and what exactly we need to do. His story telling is an art—it's not just simple reflections. His stories connect us. They make space for others, especially people that aren't in the room or at the table. And his stories have helped us see each other more clearly and more humanely.

It's not often that I've met someone able to fully live their life and to really love so deeply, and to show joy in both of those. Ultimately, I feel the most special thing is that he is able to share it through story. It's very rare and it made us all work better. So, as he leaves, I ask that we don't just thank the member from Barre Town—that we carry on his beautiful spirit of service and collaboration that he has modeled for us. Listening with care, leading with respect, and remembering that the stories that we tell and that we take time to hear, really shape the kind of place that this can be—that we can be in room 42, in this Chamber, and in Vermont. So thank you to the member for continuing to make stories.”

Bill Amended; Third Reading; Bill Passed

H. 657

House bill, entitled

An act relating to enabling unaccompanied homeless youth to obtain certain services without parental consent

Was taken up and, pending third reading of the bill, **Reps. Arsenault of Williston and Goodnow of Brattleboro** moved to amend the bill as follows:

First: In Sec. 4, 33 V.S.A. § 4908, by striking out subsection (f) in its entirety and by inserting a new subsection (f) in lieu thereof to read as follows:

(f) Immunity for liability. Any entity, provider, or health care professional who relies in good faith on a certification form presented by a person who claims to be a certified unaccompanied youth pursuant to this section shall be immune from liability for such reliance, unless the entity, provider, or health care professional acted with gross negligence.

Second: In Sec. 4a, 13 V.S.A. § 1311, by striking out subsection (c) in its entirety and inserting a new subsection (c) in lieu thereof to read as follows:

(c) Exempt from the prohibitions of subdivisions (b)(1) and (2) of this section are:

(1) a shelter, or the directors, agents, or employees of a shelter, designated by the Commissioner for Children and Families pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 5304, provided that the requirements of 33 V.S.A. § 5303(b) are satisfied; ~~and~~

(2) a person who has taken the child into custody pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 5251 or 5301; and

(3) a person providing assistance pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 4908.

Which was agreed to. Thereupon, the bill was read the third time and passed.

Third Reading; Bill Passed

H. 941

House bill, entitled

An act relating to municipal regulation of agriculture

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

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

S. 210

Rep. Steady of Milton, for the Committee on Human Services, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to access to autopsy reports

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment in Sec. 1, 18 V.S.A. § 505, in subsection (b), by striking out subdivision (2) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subdivision (2) to read as follows:

(2)(A) An individual who is not authorized to receive the autopsy report pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection (b) may petition the Probate Division of the Superior Court for a copy of the autopsy report. The petition shall contain an affidavit attesting to the petitioner's relationship to the decedent and the reason the petitioner is seeking the autopsy report. The petitioner shall notify the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the State's Attorney of the county in which the death occurred within five days after filing the petition. The Office and the State's Attorney shall have an opportunity to respond within 14 days after notice. If the Superior Court finds that the petitioner has demonstrated good cause for the petitioner to obtain the autopsy report, it shall order the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to provide a

copy to the petitioner, in whole or in part, and may place restrictions on the petitioner's dissemination of the copy provided.

(B) In determining good cause under subdivision (A) of this subdivision (b)(2), the Superior Court shall consider:

(i) the relationship of the petitioner to the decedent and decedent's family;

(ii) whether the disclosure is necessary for the public evaluation of governmental performance;

(iii) the seriousness of intrusion into the decedent and decedent family's privacy;

(iv) whether the disclosure is by the least intrusive means available, including whether and to what degree redaction of some portions of the autopsy report is appropriate;

(v) the availability of similar information in other public records regardless of form; and

(vi) whether the disclosure interferes with an ongoing criminal investigation.

(C) Nothing in this subdivision (2) shall prohibit a petitioner from refileing a petition for a copy of an autopsy report upon a material change in information.

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

Message from the Senate No. 36

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 bills of the following titles:

S. 142. An act relating to a pathway to licensure for internationally trained physicians and medical graduates.

S. 190. An act relating to the Green Mountain Care Board, reference-based pricing, and studying the creation of a Public Health Benefit Authority.

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

Adjournment

At one o'clock and fifty-five minutes in the afternoon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until tomorrow at one o'clock in the afternoon.