

Journal of the House

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

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

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Jason Lorber, Comedian, leadership coach, and former House Member, Burlington.

Message from the Senate No. 50

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 considered a bill originating in the House of the following title:

H. 951. An act relating to making appropriations for the support of the government.

And has passed the same in concurrence with proposal of amendment in the adoption of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

Joint House Resolution Referred to Committee

J.R.H. 11

Offered by Representatives Cole of Hartford, Austin of Colchester, Berbeco of Winooski, Brady of Williston, Burke of Brattleboro, Carris Duncan of Whitingham, Chapin of East Montpelier, Charlton of Chester, Cooper of Pownal, Critchlow of Colchester, Goldman of Rockingham, Gregoire of Fairfield, Headrick of Burlington, Logan of Burlington, McGill of Bridport, Morrow of Weston, Nugent of South Burlington, Priestley of Bradford, Sibia of Dover, Stevens of Waterbury, Sweeney of Shelburne, Tomlinson of Winooski, and Wells of Brownington

House joint resolution strongly urging Congress to enact H.R. 5356, The “National Infrastructure Bank Act of 2025”

Whereas, in 2025, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) awarded the nation’s infrastructure a grade of C, finding that expenditures of \$9,139,000,000,000.00 (not an inflation-adjusted figure) were required on or before the year 2033 to satisfy these shortfalls, and

Whereas, in 2023, ASCE assigned Vermont infrastructure an overall grade of C and specifically assigned grades of C for drinking water, C+ for solid waste, C- for stormwater, D+ for wastewater, C+ for roads, and C for dams, and

Whereas, in 2025, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) projected that at current levels of investment, on or before 2031, more than 60 percent of the State's roads are expected to lapse into either poor or very poor condition, and, on or before 2035, without increased State investment, the condition of Vermont's roads will experience further deterioration, and

Whereas, according to the *2025 State of Homelessness in Vermont Report*, as of June 2025, there were at least 4,588 unhoused Vermonters, a 200 percent surge since 2020, representing one of the highest per capita rates in the nation, a statistic attributed in part to the lack of affordable housing, and

Whereas, in September 2025, U.S. Representative Danny K. Davis of Illinois, along with other members of the U.S. House of Representatives, introduced H.R. 5356, The "National Infrastructure Bank Act of 2025" to create "a United States public deposit bank [that] would provide direct loans and other financing of up to \$5,000,000,000,000.00 for qualifying infrastructure projects without requiring additional Federal taxes or deficits," and

Whereas, the proposed National Infrastructure Bank (NIB) is modeled on the late 18th- and early 19th-century First and Second Banks of the United States, the subsequent national banking system that President Lincoln instituted, and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation created during the Great Depression era, and

Whereas, as proposed in H.R. 5356, NIB-funded projects would pay Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wages, adhere to Buy America provisions, and provide significant financial assistance to businesses that minorities, women, or disadvantaged persons own, and

Whereas, the intent of establishing the NIB is to provide infrastructure financing nationwide, in addition to existing federal and state money, which the ASCE finds inadequate to meet the nation's infrastructure needs, and

Whereas, the types of projects that would be covered include broadband buildout; repairing roads and bridges; renovating water systems, including removal of lead service lines; constructing affordable housing; and other similar projects, and

Whereas, a number of state legislatures and local government bodies across the country have introduced or passed resolutions in support of congressional enactment of H.R. 5356, and

Whereas, among the organizational endorsements in support of H.R. 5356 are the National Association of Counties; the Council of State Governments East, which includes Vermont; the National Black Caucus of State Legislators; the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators; the National Asian Pacific American Caucus of State Legislators; the U.S. High Speed Rail Association; the American Sustainable Business Council; and the United Association representing plumbers and steamfitters, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly strongly urges Congress to enact H.R. 5356, The “National Infrastructure Bank Act of 2025,” *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Governor Philip B. Scott, President Donald J. Trump, and the Vermont Congressional Delegation.

Was read by title, treated as a bill, and referred to the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development pursuant to House Rule 52.

Joint Senate Resolution Adopted in Concurrence

J.R.S. 51

By Senator Baruth,

J.R.S. 51. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on May 1, 2026.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, May 1, 2026, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, May 5, 2026.

Was taken up, read, and adopted in concurrence.

Ceremonial Reading

H.C.R. 261

Offered by Representative Noyes of Wolcott

House concurrent resolution recognizing May 2026 as Older Americans Month and designating May 6, 2026, as Age Strong Vermont Day

Whereas, the life experience, knowledge, and contributions of older Vermonters are invaluable societal assets, making Vermont a state with considerable historical knowledge and professional experience, and

Whereas, May is celebrated nationally every year as Older Americans Month, a time to recognize older adults' invaluable contributions, to highlight aging trends, and to reaffirm Vermont's commitment to serving older adults, and

Whereas, according to the U.S. Census' American Community Survey, as of 2024, 22.8 percent of Vermont's population is 65 years of age or older, and

Whereas, this demographic reality presents opportunities to capitalize on the diverse experiences, expertise, and skills of older Vermonters, and

Whereas, since the enactment of the Older Vermonters Act (2020 Acts and Resolves No. 156), State government, the nonprofit sector, and the private sector have partnered to establish Age Strong VT, Vermont's first multisector plan on aging, which was released in January 2024, and

Whereas, Age Strong VT focuses on the State's changing age demographics through an examination of affordable aging; healthy aging for all; social connection; infrastructure for the future, including housing, transportation, and community design; elder justice; family caregiver support; and strengthening overall systems of support, and

Whereas, the Departments of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living and of Health are jointly overseeing an Age Strong VT implementation process that is now in its third year and that involves other State offices, local communities, and other organizations, including the General Assembly, and

Whereas, the designation of a specific day during Older Americans Month to celebrate the Age Strong VT initiative will serve to emphasize the project's societal importance, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly recognizes May 2026 as Older Americans Month and designates May 6, 2026, as Age Strong Vermont Day, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, and to the Commissioner of Health.

Having been adopted in concurrence on Friday, April 17, 2026 in accord with Joint Rule 16b, was read.

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

S. 230

Rep. Bartley of Fairfax, for the Committee on General and Housing, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to fair employment practices

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. 21 V.S.A. § 471 is amended to read:

§ 471. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

* * *

(5) "Employee" means a person who, in consideration of direct or indirect gain or profit, has been continuously employed by the same employer for a period of one year for an average of at least 30 hours per week or meets the service requirement set forth in 29 C.F.R. § 825.801 (airline flight crew employees) or 29 C.F.R. § 825.110(c)(3) (full-time teachers, as defined in 29 C.F.R. § 825.102, of an elementary or secondary school system or institution of higher education).

* * *

Sec. 2. 21 V.S.A. § 495d is amended to read:

§ 495d. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

* * *

(15) "Crime victim" means any of the following:

(A) a person who has obtained a relief from abuse order issued under 15 V.S.A. § 1103;

(B) a person who has obtained an order against stalking or sexual assault issued under 12 V.S.A. chapter 178;

(C) a person who has obtained an order against abuse of a vulnerable adult issued under 33 V.S.A. chapter 69; ~~or~~

(D)(i) a victim as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 5301, provided that the victim is identified as a crime victim in an affidavit filed by a law enforcement official with a prosecuting attorney of competent state or federal jurisdiction; and

(ii) shall include the victim's child, foster child, parent, spouse, stepchild or ward of the victim who lives with the victim, or a parent of the victim's spouse, provided that the individual is not identified in the affidavit as the defendant; or

(E) a person who is a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking and who has supporting documentation from any one of the following sources:

(i) a court or law enforcement or other government agency;

(ii) a domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking assistance program;

(iii) a legal, clerical, medical, or other professional from whom the person has received counseling or other assistance concerning domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; or

(iv) a self-attestation by the person describing the circumstances supporting the person's status as a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking for which no further corroboration shall be required unless otherwise mandated by law.

* * *

(18) "Domestic violence" has the same meaning as in 15 V.S.A. § 1151 and includes the definition of "abuse" in 15 V.S.A. § 1101.

(19) "Sexual assault" has the same meaning as in 12 V.S.A. § 5131.

(20) "Stalking" has the same meaning as in 12 V.S.A. § 5131.

Sec. 3. 21 V.S.A. § 495g is amended to read:

§ 495g. ~~PROVISION APPLICABLE TO COLLEGE PROFESSORS~~

~~Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prohibit any institution of higher education as defined by section 1201(a) of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965 from retiring any employee who is serving under a contract of unlimited tenure, who attains 70 years of age. Any employee whose tenure contract is terminated may, in the discretion of the institution, be allowed to continue in the employ of the institution on a nontenured basis. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 3a. 21 V.S.A. § 383 is amended to read:

§ 383. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Labor or designee.

(2) “Employee” means any individual employed or permitted to work by an employer except:

* * *

(H) outside salespersons; ~~and~~

(I) students working during all or any part of the school year or regular vacation periods; and

(J) elected and appointed municipal officers.

* * *

Sec. 3b. 21 V.S.A. § 495q is added to read:

§ 495q. AGREEMENTS NOT TO COMPETE; PROHIBITION

(a) Nonexempt employees. Agreements not to compete between an employer and a nonexempt employee, per the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. §§ 201–219, are prohibited as presumptively coercive and a restraint on trade, unless bargained for as part of a collective bargaining agreement.

(b) Health care providers.

(1) Any provision in a contract or agreement that creates or establishes the terms of a partnership, employment, or any other form of professional relationship with a health care provider regarding the health care provider’s provision of health care services in Vermont shall be void and unenforceable if the provision:

(A) includes a restriction on the right of the health care provider to provide health care services in any geographical area for any period of time after the termination of such partnership, agreement, or professional relationship;

(B) limits the ability of a separating health care provider to provide notice of the provider’s change of employment to individuals to whom the separating provider provided direct health care services;

(C) restricts a health care provider from making disparaging statements about another party to the contract or agreement, or about another person specified in the agreement as a third-party beneficiary of the agreement;

(D) is inconsistent with Vermont law; or

(E) requires litigation arising from the performance of the contract or agreement in Vermont to be conducted in another state.

(2) The notice provided in subdivision (1)(B) of this subsection may include the following information:

(A) that the health care provider is continuing to practice the provider's profession;

(B) the health care provider's new professional contact information;
and

(C) the recipient's right to choose a health care provider.

(3) The provisions in subdivision (1) of this subsection do not apply to restrictions that limit a health care provider who contracts with a third-party company for nonclinical business support services from opening a business within a specific territory supported by a different third-party company providing nonclinical services.

(c) Retaliation and remedies. An employer shall not discharge or in any other manner retaliate against an employee who exercises or attempts to exercise the employee's rights under this section. The provisions against retaliation in subdivision 495(a)(8) of this subchapter and the penalty provisions of section 495b of this subchapter shall apply to this section.

(d) Effective date. This section shall apply to agreements not to compete entered into on or after July 1, 2026.

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 General and Housing agreed to, and third reading was ordered.

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

S. 179

Rep. Goodnow of Brattleboro, for the Committee on Judiciary, to which had been referred the Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to the Uniform Disclaimer of Property Interests Act

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence.

Rep. Kimbell of Woodstock, for the Committee on Ways and Means, reported in favor of its passage in concurrence.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up and read the second time.

Pending the question, Shall the bill be read a third time?, **Rep. Goodnow of Brattleboro** moved that the House propose to the Senate to amend the bill in Sec. 1, 14 V.S.A. chapter 129, in subsection 4105(c), after the word "minor" by inserting the word "child"

Which was agreed to. Thereupon, third reading was ordered.

**Third Reading;
Bill Passed in Concurrence with Proposal of Amendment**

S. 173

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to vocational rehabilitation

Was taken up, read the third time, and passed in concurrence with proposal of amendment.

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

S. 142

Rep. Taylor of Mendon, for the Committee on Health Care, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

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

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. PATHWAY TO LICENSURE FOR INTERNATIONALLY

TRAINED PHYSICIANS; REPORT

(a) On or before January 15, 2027, the Department of Health, in collaboration with the Board of Medical Practice, shall provide to the House Committees on Health Care and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Government Operations a report detailing a pathway to licensure for internationally trained physicians. The report shall include the following information:

(1) a summary of other states' processes for licensing internationally trained physicians to practice medicine and, if available, data on the outcomes of these processes and related programs;

(2) a description of the external resources needed to evaluate the education, experience, and examinations of internationally trained physicians and the availability of these resources;

(3) a proposal for licensing internationally trained physicians to practice medicine in Vermont, including potential qualifications and supervision requirements for licensure, proposed requirements for recency of practice, a summary of any additional resources and statutory authority needed, and a plan and timeline for implementing the licensing program; and

(4) any additional information that the Department deems relevant to a robust consideration of the issues related to licensing internationally trained physicians to practice medicine in Vermont.

(b) In preparing the report required by this section, the Department shall consult with other states that have implemented licensing programs for internationally trained physicians; the Windham County Branch of the NAACP; third-party credentialing services; the Vermont Medical Society; the Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems; and other advocacy organizations, researchers, and other entities whose expertise is relevant to developing the report.

Sec. 2. 26 V.S.A. § 1391 is amended to read:

§ 1391. QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEDICAL LICENSURE

* * *

(g) Internationally trained physicians. The Board may issue:

(1) a provisional license to practice at a participating health care facility, as defined in section 1397 of this chapter, to an internationally trained physician who meets the requirements for provisional licensure established by the Board by rule pursuant to section 1396 of this chapter; and

(2) a full license to an internationally trained physician who has successfully completed the pathway to licensure established by the Board by rule pursuant to section 1396 of this chapter.

Sec. 3. 26 V.S.A. § 1396 is added to read:

§ 1396. PATHWAY TO LICENSURE FOR INTERNATIONALLY

TRAINED PHYSICIANS; RULEMAKING

Pursuant to the authority of the Commissioner in subsection 1351(e) of this chapter, the Board shall adopt rules in accordance with 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 as needed to enable the licensure of internationally trained physicians as set forth in subsection 1391(g) of this chapter. The rules adopted by the Board shall reflect the least restrictive form of regulation necessary to protect the public interest and shall include:

(1) the qualifications necessary for an internationally trained physician to obtain a provisional license to practice at a participating health care facility, as defined in section 1397 of this chapter;

(2) the standards for participating health care facilities to use for the evaluation and assessment of the holder of a provisional license; and

(3) the additional qualifications necessary for an internationally trained physician to obtain a full license to practice medicine in this State following successful completion of the provisional licensure period.

Sec. 4. 26 V.S.A. § 1397 is added to read:

§ 1397. PARTICIPATING HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Health care facility” means a hospital, federally qualified health center, or community health center.

(2) “Participating health care facility” means a health care facility that meets the requirements of this section and has the capacity to provide an assessment and evaluation program designed in accordance with rules adopted by the Board pursuant to section 1396 of this chapter to evaluate an internationally trained physician holding a provisional license issued pursuant to subdivision 1391(g)(1) of this chapter.

(b) In order to be eligible to be a participating health care facility for purposes of subdivision 1391(g)(1) and section 1396 of this chapter, a health care facility shall:

(1) agree to provide medical mentoring, evaluation, assessment, and support in navigating the U.S. health care system by one or more fully licensed physicians employed by the health care facility to a provisionally licensed physician using an evaluation and assessment system that meets the standards established by the Board by rule pursuant to section 1396 of this chapter;

(2) ensure that the mentoring, evaluation, assessment, and support of a provisionally licensed physician is provided by one or more physicians who are licensed under 26 V.S.A. chapter 33 or this chapter and who are physically located in Vermont and that the provisionally licensed physician provides services only to patients physically located in Vermont;

(3) carry medical malpractice insurance covering the provisionally licensed physician for the duration of that physician's employment by the participating health care facility; and

(4) not retaliate against or discipline a provisionally licensed physician for making a complaint or pursuing enforcement of an employment-related claim.

Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) Sec. 1 (pathway to licensure for internationally trained physicians; report) and this section shall take effect on passage.

(b) Sec. 3 (26 V.S.A. § 1396; pathway to licensure for internationally trained physicians; rulemaking) shall take effect on July 1, 2027.

(c) Secs. 2 (26 V.S.A. § 1391; qualifications for medical licensure) and 4 (26 V.S.A. § 1397; participating health care facilities) shall take effect on July 1, 2028.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: "An act relating to a pathway to licensure for internationally trained physicians"

Rep. Branagan of Georgia, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommended that the bill pass in concurrence with the proposal of amendment recommended by the Committee on Health Care.

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; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to; Third Reading Ordered

S. 227

Rep. Brady of Williston, for the Committee on Education, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to creating immigration protocols in Vermont schools

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. PURPOSE

The purpose of this act is to secure the right of every child to equal access to a free public education and to a school that is safe from intimidation and fear, regardless of immigration status. In order to ensure the right to educational equality, schools must take steps to protect the integrity of school learning environments for all children, so that no parent is discouraged from sending a child to, and no child is discouraged from attending, school, including due to the threat of immigration enforcement on a school campus.

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. chapter 33 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 33. FIRE AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS DRILLS
AND, SAFETY PATROLS, AND IMMIGRATION PROTOCOLS

* * *

§ 1486. IMMIGRATION PROTOCOLS

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1)(A) “Law enforcement officer” has the same meaning as in 20 V.S.A. § 2351a and includes any officer of a federal law enforcement agency or any person acting on behalf of a local, state, or federal law enforcement agency.

(B) “Law enforcement officer” does not include a school resource officer or safety officer who is stationed at a school.

(2) “Nonpublic area of a school” means an area of a school that normally requires authorization to enter, consistent with the policy required by section 1484 of this chapter, and includes any area a superintendent or head of school or designee determines to be nonpublic.

(3) “School” means a public school or an independent school approved under section 166 of this title.

(b) Immigration resources and support.

(1) A superintendent or head of school shall:

(A) distribute the immigration resource guide developed by the Office of the Attorney General pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection (b) to staff, students, and family members of students;

(B) at each school the superintendent or head of school oversees, designate at least one individual to serve as a resource for immigration-related matters who shall receive on an ongoing basis updated information and training material as provided to the superintendent or head of school by the Office of the Attorney General; and

(C) provide support, to the greatest extent possible, to a student with regard to immigration-related concerns, including connecting the student and the student's family with an immigration advocacy institution and similar resources.

(2)(A) The Office of the Attorney General, in consultation with the Agency of Education, shall develop an immigration resource guide that shall:

(i) include immigration- and civil rights-related resources; information regarding standby guardianships pursuant to 14 V.S.A § 2626a; and a list of immigration, human rights, and relevant advocacy organizations available to provide immigration assistance to students and staff; and

(ii) be developed in a manner that serves to protect the privacy and safety of students and staff.

(B) The Office of the Attorney General shall review the guide at least once annually and send any updates made to the guide to the Agency of Education for distribution to all superintendents and heads of schools not later than 30 days after completing the update.

(c) Student information privacy. School districts and independent schools are prohibited from:

(1) collecting or requesting information regarding citizenship or immigration status of a student or of a family member of the student except as required by State or federal law or as required to administer a State- or federally supported educational program;

(2) disclosing a student's immigration status, citizenship, place of birth, nationality, or national origin:

(A) in any database that the school maintains; or

(B) as directory information, as that term is defined by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and 34 C.F.R. Part 99; and

(3) voluntarily sharing student information, including immigration status, citizenship, place of birth, nationality, national origin, sexual orientation, status as a survivor of domestic violence or sexual assault, status as a recipient of public assistance, or school discipline records, with a third party unless required to do so by State or federal law.

(d) Law enforcement on-site and requests for information.

(1) A superintendent or head of school shall:

(A) subject to subdivision (B) of this subdivision (1), be the sole authority to admit a law enforcement officer who appears on an immigration-related matter into a nonpublic area of school; and

(B) designate at least one individual who works at each school to serve as a designee of the superintendent or head of school in the event that the superintendent or head of school is not present when the law enforcement officer appears on-site.

(2) The superintendent or head of school or designee shall not allow a law enforcement officer appearing on an immigration-related matter into a nonpublic area of a school unless the officer provides official identification and a judicial warrant that authorizes entrance into a specific area of the school and names a specific individual located within the school who is subject to a search or arrest.

(3) Absent a judicial warrant pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection, no school or individual working at a school shall reveal any information about a student or school staff member in response to an immigration-related request from a law enforcement officer unless otherwise required by law.

(4) As used in this subsection, “immigration-related matter” and “immigration-related request” mean an administrative warrant, civil warrant, immigration detainer, or any other document or request that pertains to an individual’s immigration or citizenship status.

(e) Immigration agreements.

(1) Except as required by State or federal law, no school, school district, or supervisory union shall enter into an agreement with a State, local, or federal government entity that furthers the enforcement of any immigration law.

(2)(A) Any proposed agreement pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection (e) that purports to be required by State or federal law shall be subject to review by the superintendent or head of school after the superintendent or head of school has consulted with the Office of the Attorney General.

(B) The superintendent or head of school shall provide a recommendation on the proposed agreement to the school’s appropriate governing body after the superintendent’s or head of school’s review pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (2).

(f) Applicability. Nothing in this section is intended to prohibit or impede any public agency from complying with the lawful requirements of 8 U.S.C. §§ 1373 and 1644. To the extent any school, school district, or supervisory union policy or practice conflicts with the lawful requirements of 8 U.S.C. §§ 1373 and 1644, the policy or practice is, to the extent of such conflict, abolished.

(g) Policy required.

(1) Model policy and recommended procedures. On or before January 1, 2027, the Agency of Education, in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, the Vermont Independent Schools Association, and the Vermont School Boards Association, shall develop, and review at least annually, a model policy along with recommended procedures that reflect the requirements set forth in subsections (c) and (d) of this section.

(2) Adoption of policy and procedures.

(A) Beginning with the 2027–2028 school year, each school board shall develop, adopt, ensure the enforcement of, and make available in the manner described under subdivision 563(1) of this title an immigration protocol policy that shall be at least as stringent as the model policy developed by the Agency. Any school board that fails to adopt a policy shall be presumed to have adopted the most current model policy published by the Agency.

(B) Beginning with the 2027–2028 school year, each independent school shall develop, adopt, and ensure the enforcement of an immigration protocol policy that shall be at least as stringent as the model policy developed by the Agency. Any approved independent school that fails to adopt a policy shall be presumed to have adopted the most current model policy published by the Agency.

Sec. 3. IMMIGRATION RESOURCE GUIDE

The Office of the Attorney General shall complete the immigration resource guide required pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 1486(b)(2) on or before August 1, 2026, and shall send the completed guide to the Agency of Education for distribution to all superintendents and heads of schools on or before August 31, 2026.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

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

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

S. 298

Rep. Waters Evans of Charlotte, for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to creating the Vermont Voting Rights Act

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:

* * * Voter Protections Act * * *

Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

This act may be cited as the “Voter Protections Act of 2026.”

Sec. 2. 17 V.S.A. chapter 35 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 35. OFFENSES AGAINST THE PURITY OF ELECTIONS

* * *

Subchapter 2. Penalties Upon Voters

* * *

§ 1972. ~~SHOWING BALLOT; INTERFERENCE WITH VOTER~~

(a) A voter who, except in cases of assistance as provided in this title, allows ~~his or her~~ the voter’s ballot to be seen by another person with an apparent intention of letting it be known how ~~he or she~~ the voter is about to vote or makes a false statement to the presiding officer at an election as to ~~his or her~~ the voter’s inability to mark ~~his or her~~ the voter’s ballot or places a distinguishing mark on ~~his or her~~ the voter’s ballot ~~or a person who interferes with a voter when inside the guard rail or who, within the building in which the voting is proceeding, endeavors to induce a voter to vote for a particular candidate,~~ shall be fined \$1,000.00.

(b) ~~It shall be the duty of the election officers to see that the offender is duly prosecuted for a violation of this section.~~

* * *

§ 1975. INTERFERENCE WITH VOTERS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

(a) No person shall intentionally or recklessly intimidate, threaten, or coerce, or attempt to intimidate, threaten, or coerce:

(1) any other person for the purpose of:

(A) obstructing the right of the other person to vote or to vote as the other person may choose; or

(B) causing the other person to vote for, or not to vote for, any candidate for public office or public question at any election; or

(2) a public servant, an election official, or a public employee for the purpose of obstructing the administration of an election.

(b) A person who violates subsection (a) of this section shall be imprisoned not more than two years or fined not more than \$2,000.00, or both.

§ 1976. IMPAIRMENT OF VOTING RIGHTS OF REGISTERED VOTERS

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to deny, impair, or otherwise adversely affect the right to vote of any registered voter.

* * *

Subchapter 4. Use of Synthetic Media in Elections

* * *

Subchapter 5. Enforcement and Investigation

* * *

Subchapter 6. Voter Protections

§ 2045. VOTE DENIAL OR DILUTION

(a) No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by the State or any municipality in a manner that results in a denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen of the United States to vote based on race or color, membership in a language minority group, or having a disability as defined in 9 V.S.A. § 4501.

(b) A violation of subsection (a) of this section is established if, on the basis of the totality of circumstances, it is shown that the political processes leading to nomination or election in the State or a municipality are not equally open to participation by members of a protected class in that its members have less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political processes or to elect representatives of their choice. The extent to which members of a protected class have been elected to office in the State or municipality is one circumstance that may be considered.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to establish a right to have members of a protected class elected in numbers equal to their proportion in the population.

(d) As used in this section:

(1) "Municipality" means a town, city, village, school district, or other political subdivision that holds public elections.

(2) "Protected class" means a group of citizens protected from discrimination based on race or color, membership in a language minority group, or having a disability as defined in 9 V.S.A. § 4501.

§ 2046. CIVIL ACTIONS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL

(a) Whenever the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a violation of this subchapter has occurred and that the rights of any voter or group of voters have been affected by such violation, the Attorney General may initiate a civil action in the Civil Division of the Superior Court in the county in which the alleged violation has occurred for appropriate relief.

(b) In such civil action, the court may:

(1) award such preventive relief, including a permanent or temporary injunction, restraining order, or other order against the person responsible for a violation of this title, as is necessary to ensure the full enjoyment of the rights granted by this title;

(2) assess a civil penalty against the respondent of not more than \$5,000.00 for a first violation and of not more than \$25,000.00 for any subsequent violation; and

(3) issue an order requiring reimbursement to the State of Vermont for the reasonable value of its services and its expenses in investigating and prosecuting the action.

* * * Voter Checklists * * *

Sec. 3. 17 V.S.A. § 2154 is amended to read:

§ 2154. STATEWIDE VOTER CHECKLIST

* * *

(c)(1) Any person wishing to obtain a copy of all of the statewide voter checklist ~~must~~, a municipality's portion of the statewide voter checklist, or any other municipal voter checklist shall swear or affirm, under penalty of perjury pursuant to 13 V.S.A. chapter 65, that the person will not:

(A) use the checklist for commercial purposes; or

(B) knowingly disclose the checklist to any foreign government or to a federal agency or commission or to a person acting on behalf of a foreign government or of such a federal entity in circumvention of the prohibited purposes for using the checklist set forth in subdivision (b)(2) of this section.

(2) The In the case of the statewide voter checklist, the affirmation shall be filed with the Secretary of State. In the case of a municipality's portion of the statewide voter checklist or any other municipal voter checklist, the affirmation shall be filed with the municipal clerk.

* * *

* * * Disclosures for Candidates for State, Legislative, and
County Office * * *

Sec. 4. 17 V.S.A. § 2414 is amended to read:

§ 2414. CANDIDATES FOR STATE AND, LEGISLATIVE, AND
COUNTY OFFICE; DISCLOSURE FORM

* * *

(f)(1) The State Ethics Commission shall provide informational resources to candidates and answer candidates' questions regarding the requirements of this section, how to accurately complete and submit the disclosure form, and the penalties for failing to properly file the disclosure form pursuant to section 2415 of this title. The Commission shall make available on its web page the disclosure form, preprepared responses to frequently asked questions, and any informational resources and materials that it deems necessary to adequately inform candidates of how to comply with the provisions of this section. Upon contact by a candidate, the Commission shall provide answers to the candidate's questions by email or by phone, whichever the candidate may prefer.

(2) The Office of the Secretary of State shall provide hyperlinks from its web page connecting to the disclosure form and other materials and resources required of the State Ethics Commission pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

Sec. 5. SUSPENSION OF DISCLOSURE PENALTIES FOR
CANDIDATES FOR STATE, LEGISLATIVE, AND COUNTY
OFFICE

Notwithstanding 17 V.S.A. § 2415, through May 30, 2027, the State Ethics Commission shall not enforce against any delinquent filers, nor shall the Office of the Secretary of State notify the State Ethics Commission of the names of delinquent filers, nor shall the candidates for State office, county office, State Senator, and State Representative be otherwise penalized for delinquent filing a disclosure.

* * * Safety Protections for Candidates * * *

Sec. 6. 17 V.S.A. § 2901 is amended to read:

§ 2901. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(7) “Expenditure” means a payment, disbursement, distribution, advance, deposit, loan, or gift of money or anything of value, paid or promised to be paid, for the purpose of influencing an election, advocating a position on a public question, or supporting or opposing one or more candidates.

(A) Expenditures may include those expenses that are necessary to allow a candidate to campaign, such as expenses for the care of a dependent family member that are incurred as a direct result of campaign activity or for the provision of monitoring systems, protective detail, and cybersecurity related to a candidate’s security.

* * *

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to voter protections”

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 was ordered.

Favorable Reports; Second Reading; Third Reading Ordered

H. 902

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 City of Barre

Reported in favor of its passage.

Rep. Waszazak of Barre City, for the Committee on Ways and Means, reported in favor of its passage.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, and third reading ordered.

Joint House Resolution Adopted

J.R.H. 10

Joint resolution authorizing the 2026 Green Mountain Girls State educational program to use the State House

Was taken up and adopted on the part of the House.

Adjournment

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