

Journal of the House

Thursday, May 21, 2026

At ten o'clock in the forenoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

Devotional Exercises

A moment of silence was observed in lieu of a devotional.

Ceremonial Reading

H.C.R. 305

Offered by All Members of the House

House concurrent resolution honoring former Representative Francis Matthew (Topper) McFaun for his exemplary public and community service

Whereas, throughout his life, Topper McFaun has been known by this distinctive nickname, which his mother bestowed on him before his birth with optimistic aspirations, and which he has undeniably surpassed, and

Whereas, growing up in a poor neighborhood of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and residing in the home of his elderly great-great-grandfather, Topper McFaun learned the importance of wrangling meal invitations from neighbors, and

Whereas, Topper McFaun's leadership potential was exhibited as captain of his high school boys' hockey and cross-country teams, and

Whereas, immediate post-high school factory employment motivated him to walk (which was more affordable than public transit) to Boston University, where he secured admission, skated as a men's hockey Terrier, and earned a bachelor's degree in education, and

Whereas, after U.S. Army service and teaching in the Cambridge, Massachusetts, public school system, Topper McFaun and his Brownsville wife, Mary Howland, moved to Vermont, where he directed a youth employment program at the formerly named Central Vermont Community Action Council Inc. and then thrived during a 38-year State executive branch career focused on human services and employment-related matters, and

Whereas, he chaired the Barre Town Selectboard, served as Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation president, and was a member of the Barre Area Development Corporation, and

Whereas, for nearly two decades, Topper McFaun coached the Spaulding High School Crimson Tide boys' hockey team, which won five Division I championship game berths and two consecutive divisional titles, and

Whereas, in 2004, Barre Town's voters elected Topper McFaun to represent them in the House of Representatives, where he was a respected legislator, developed many friendships, and served as the House Committee on Health Care vice chair, and

Whereas, on April 3, 2026, after nearly 11 terms as a distinguished and proud member of the House of Representatives, Topper McFaun said farewell to life under the Golden Dome, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly honors former Representative Francis Matthew (Topper) McFaun for his exemplary public and community service, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to former Representative Topper McFaun.

Having been adopted in concurrence on Friday, May 15, 2026 in accord with Joint Rule 16b, was read.

Senate Proposal of Amendment Concurred in

H. 921

The Senate proposed to the House to amend House bill, entitled
An act relating to alcoholic beverages

The Senate proposed to the House to amend the bill as follows:

First: In Sec. 2, 7 V.S.A. § 224, in subdivision (c)(1), following "not more than" by striking out "10" and inserting in lieu thereof the word "five"

Second: In Sec. 6, 7 V.S.A. § 271, after the period at the end of subsection (g), by inserting "A licensed manufacturer of malt beverages shall retain copies of records of distribution and sales made pursuant to this subsection. Annually, on or before January 15, a licensed manufacturer shall report to the Division in a manner and form required by the Commissioner the total amount of malt beverages distributed pursuant to this subsection during the preceding 12 months."

Third: By striking out Sec. 7, 7 V.S.A. § 271 in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 7 to read as follows:

Sec. 7. [Deleted.]

Fourth: By adding two new sections to be Secs. 11 and 12 and a reader assistance heading to read as follows:

* * * Caterer's License * * *

Sec. 11. 7 V.S.A. § 2 is amended to read:

§ 2. DEFINITIONS

As used in this title:

* * *

(5) "Caterer's license" means a license issued by the Board of Liquor and Lottery authorizing the holder of a first-class license or first- and third-class licenses to serve alcoholic beverages at a function ~~located on premises other than those occupied by a first-, first- and third-, or second-class licensee to sell alcoholic beverages pursuant to section 241 of this title.~~

* * *

Sec. 12. 7 V.S.A. § 241 is amended to read:

§ 241. CATERER'S LICENSE; COMMERCIAL CATERING LICENSE

(a) The Board of Liquor and Lottery may issue a caterer's license or a commercial catering license to a person who holds a first-class license or first- and third-class licenses. The holder of a caterer's license is authorized to serve alcoholic beverages at a function located on premises other than those occupied by another first-, first- and third-, or second-class licensee to sell alcoholic beverages. The holder of a caterer's license may host not more than five functions per calendar year located on the license holder's own first-, first- and third-, or second-class licensed premises.

* * *

Fifth: By renumbering Sec. 11, effective dates, to be Sec. 13 and in subsection (b) of the new Sec. 13 by striking out the sentence "Sec. 7 shall take effect on July 1, 2028." and inserting in lieu thereof "[Deleted.]"

Sixth: In Sec. 13, effective dates, in subsection (a), following "This section and Secs. 9" by striking out "and 10 (deleting 2026 sunset of special venue serving permits for retail establishments)" and inserting in lieu thereof "through 12"

Which proposal of amendment was considered and concurred in.

**Senate Proposal of Amendment Concurred in with Further Proposal of
Amendment Thereto; Rules Suspended, Messaged to the Senate
Forthwith**

H. 907

The Senate proposed to the House to amend House bill, entitled
An act relating to legislative review of reporting requirements

The Senate proposed to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Repeal of Reporting Requirements * * *

Sec. 1. 3 V.S.A. § 2313 is amended to read:

§ 2313. PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS AND GRANTS

(a) The Chief Performance Officer shall assist agencies as necessary in developing performance measures for contracts and grants.

~~(b) Annually, on or before July 30 and as part of any other report requirement to the General Assembly set forth in this subchapter, the Chief Performance Officer shall report to the General Assembly on the progress by rate or percent of how many State contracts and grants have performance accountability requirements and the rate or percent of contractors' and grantees' compliance with those requirements. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 2. 3 V.S.A. § 331 is amended to read:

§ 331. TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES

* * *

(c)(1) The Commissioner may authorize the continued employment of a person in a temporary capacity for more than 1,280 hours in any one calendar year if the Commissioner determines, in writing, that a bona fide emergency exists for the appointing authority that requires such continued employment.

* * *

(3) The Commissioner may authorize seasonal employment in a specific position for a period of between seven and 12 months if the Commissioner determines, in writing, that the nature and duties of the position require the employment of a person for a period of more than seven months in a 12-month period. The Commissioner shall not authorize seasonal employment for a period of more than seven months in a 12-month period if the authorization is intended to circumvent, or has the effect of circumventing, the policies and purposes of the classified service under this chapter. ~~Annually, on or before January 15, the Commissioner shall submit a report to the House Committee~~

~~on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations:~~

~~(A) the total number of positions in seasonal employment that have been authorized for a period of between seven and 12 months during the prior calendar year;~~

~~(B) the agency or department that each position identified in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3) is assigned to; and~~

~~(C) the period of time that each identified position is authorized for.~~

* * *

Sec. 3. 6 V.S.A. § 2972 is amended to read:

§ 2972. POWERS AND DUTIES

* * *

(b) Included among the powers of the Council in connection with the enforcement of this chapter are the powers to require reports from any person subject to this chapter; to adopt, rescind, modify, and amend all proper and necessary rules and orders to administer this chapter, which rules and orders shall be adopted by publication in the manner prescribed by the Council and shall have the force and effect of law when not inconsistent with existing laws; to administer oaths, subpoena witnesses, take depositions, and certify to official acts; to require any dealer to keep such true and accurate records and to make such reports covering purchases, sales, and receipts of dairy products and related matters as the Council deems reasonably necessary for effective administration, which records shall be open to inspection by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets at any reasonable time and as often as may be necessary, but information thus obtained shall not be published or be open to public inspection in any manner revealing any individual dealer's identity, except as required in proceedings to enforce compliance; and to keep accurate books, records, and accounts of all of its dealings; ~~and to make annually a full report of its doings to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the Governor, which shall show the amount of money received and the expenditures thereof. The report shall be submitted on or before January 15.~~ The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall perform the administrative work of the Council as directed by the Council. The Council shall reimburse the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for the cost of services performed by the Agency.

* * *

Sec. 4. 6 V.S.A. § 4810 is amended to read:

§ 4810. AUTHORITY; COOPERATION; COORDINATION

* * *

(d) Cooperation and coordination. The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall coordinate with the Secretary of Natural Resources in implementing and enforcing programs, plans, and practices developed for reducing and eliminating agricultural nonpoint source pollutants and discharges from farms. The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall cooperate with the Secretary of Natural Resources in the implementation of the federal Clean Water Act for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall implement the State's comprehensive, complementary nonpoint source program. The Secretary of Agriculture, Food, and Markets and the Secretary of Natural Resources shall coordinate regarding program administration; grant negotiation; grant sharing; implementation of the antidegradation policy including to new sources of agricultural nonpoint source pollutants, and watershed planning activities to comply with Pub. L. No. 92-500. In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 1259(i), the Secretary of Natural Resources, in consultation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, shall issue a document that sets forth the respective roles and responsibilities of the Agency of Natural Resources in implementing the federal Clean Water Act on farms and the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets' roles and responsibilities in implementing the State's complementary nonpoint source program on farms. The document shall be consistent with and equivalent with the federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit regulations for discharges from CAFOs. The document will replace the memorandum of understanding between the agencies. The allocation of duties under this chapter between the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Secretary of Natural Resources shall be consistent with the Secretary's duties, established under the provisions of 10 V.S.A. § 1258(b), to comply with Pub. L. No. 92-500. The Secretary of Natural Resources shall be the State lead person in applying for federal funds under Pub. L. No. 92-500 but shall consult with the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets during the process. The agricultural nonpoint source program may compete with other programs for competitive watershed projects funded from federal funds. The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall be represented in reviewing these projects for funding. Actions by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets under this chapter concerning agricultural nonpoint source pollution shall be consistent with the water quality standards and water pollution control requirements of 10 V.S.A. chapter 47 and the federal Clean Water Act as amended. In addition, the Secretary of

Agriculture, Food and Markets shall coordinate with the Secretary of Natural Resources in implementing and enforcing programs, plans, and practices developed for the proper management of composting facilities when those facilities are located on a farm. ~~The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Secretary of Natural Resources shall each develop three separate measures of the performance of the agencies under the federal Clean Water Act and State nonpoint source regulatory authority, and annually on or before January 15, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Secretary of Natural Resources shall submit separate reports to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry, the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, and the House Committee on Environment regarding the success of each agency in meeting its selected performance measures.~~

Sec. 5. 10 V.S.A. § 1978 is amended to read:

§ 1978. RULES

* * *

(e)(1) The Secretary shall periodically review and, if necessary, revise the rules adopted under this chapter to ensure that the technical standards remain current with the known and proven technologies regarding potable water supplies and wastewater systems.

* * *

~~(3) The Technical Advisory Committee shall provide annual reports, starting January 15, 2003, to the Chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions. The reports shall include information on the following topics: the implementation of this chapter and the rules adopted under this chapter; the number and type of alternative or innovative systems approved for general use, approved for use as a pilot project, and approved for experimental use; the functional status of alternative or innovative systems approved for use as a pilot project or approved for experimental use; the number of permit applications received during the preceding calendar year; the number of permits issued during the preceding calendar year; and the number of permit applications denied during the preceding calendar year, together with a summary of the basis of denial. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

Sec. 6. 16 V.S.A. § 164 is amended to read:

§ 164. STATE BOARD; GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES

The State Board shall engage local school board members and the broader education community and, consistent with the provisions of this title, its own rules, and rules adopted by the Secretary, establish and regularly update a long-term strategic vision for the delivery of educational services in Vermont; advise the General Assembly, the Governor, and the Secretary of Education on high-priority educational policies and issues as they arise; and act in accordance with legislative mandates, including the adoption of rules and executing special assignments. In addition to other specified duties, the Board shall:

* * *

~~(17) Report annually on the condition of education statewide and on a supervisory union and school district basis. The report shall include information on attainment of standards for student performance adopted under subdivision (9) of this section, number and types of complaints of hazing, harassment, or bullying made pursuant to chapter 9, subchapter 5 of this title and responses to the complaints, financial resources and expenditures, and community social indicators. The report shall be organized and presented in a way that is easily understandable by the general public and that enables each school, school district, and supervisory union to determine its strengths and weaknesses. To the extent consistent with State and federal privacy laws and regulations, data on hazing, harassment, or bullying incidents shall be disaggregated by incident type, including disaggregation by ethnic groups, racial groups, religious groups, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, and English language learner status. The Secretary shall use the information in the report to determine whether students in each school, school district, and supervisory union are provided educational opportunities substantially equal to those provided in other schools, school districts, and supervisory unions pursuant to subsection 165(b) of this title. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

Sec. 7. 16 V.S.A. § 829 is amended to read:

§ 829. PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION

* * *

(e) Rules. The Secretary of Education and the Commissioner for Children and Families shall jointly develop and agree to rules and present them to the State Board for adoption under 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 as follows:

* * *

(10) To establish a system by which the Agency of Education and Department for Children and Families shall jointly monitor and evaluate prekindergarten education programs to promote optimal results for children that support the relevant population-level outcomes set forth in 3 V.S.A. § 2311 and to collect data that will inform future decisions. ~~The Agency and Department shall be required to report annually to the General Assembly in January.~~ At a minimum, the system shall monitor and evaluate:

* * *

Sec. 8. 18 V.S.A. § 4635 is amended to read:

§ 4635. PRESCRIPTION DRUG COST TRANSPARENCY

* * *

~~(d)(1) The Attorney General shall provide a report to the General Assembly on or before December 1 of each year based on the information received from manufacturers pursuant to this section. The Attorney General shall post the report and the public version of each manufacturer's information submitted pursuant to subdivision (c)(1)(B)(ii) of this section on the Office of the Attorney General's website.~~

(2) The Green Mountain Care Board shall post on its website ~~the report prepared by the Attorney General pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection~~ and the public version of each manufacturer's information submitted pursuant to subdivision (c)(1)(B)(ii) of this section, and may inform the public of the availability of the report and the manufacturers' justification information.

* * *

Sec. 9. 28 V.S.A. § 104 is amended to read:

§ 104. NOTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY PLACEMENTS

* * *

~~(e) The Commissioner of Corrections shall annually, by January 15, report to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions on the implementation of this section during the previous 12 months. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 10. 33 V.S.A. § 4305 is amended to read:

§ 4305. COORDINATED SYSTEM OF CARE

* * *

~~(c) The Commissioners of Mental Health and for Children and Families and the Secretary of Education shall jointly submit to the General Assembly a report on the status of programs for children and adolescents with a severe~~

~~emotional disturbance and their families, which shall include a system of care plan. The report shall be submitted together with the general appropriation bill provided for by 32 V.S.A. § 701. The system of care plan shall:~~

~~(1) identify the characteristics and number of children and adolescents with a severe emotional disturbance in need of appropriate services, describe the educational, residential, mental health or other treatment services needed, describe currently available programs and resources, recommend a plan to meet the needs of such children, recommend priorities for the continuation or development of programs and resources, and make an assessment of the success of such programs; and~~

~~(2) provide information as available on the extent to which children and adolescents with a severe emotional disturbance have not received services, the characteristics and number of those children and adolescents who have not received services and recommendations on how to address their identified needs. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

Sec. 11. 2010 Acts and Resolves No. 161, Sec. 20 is amended to read:

Sec. 20. VERMONT CENTER FOR CRIME VICTIM SERVICES

The sum of \$50,000 is appropriated to the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services for Americans with Disabilities Act improvements at domestic violence shelters. ~~Annually, on or before December 1, the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services shall file with the commissioner of buildings and general services a report which details the status of the improvements funded in whole or in part by state capital appropriations.~~

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Total Appropriation – Section 20 | \$50,000 |
|----------------------------------|----------|

Sec. 12. REPEALS

The following are repealed:

(1) 6 V.S.A. § 4825 (report concerning activities in support of water quality financial and technical assistance);

(2) 2007 Acts and Resolves No. 65, Sec. 112a(b)(2)(A) (report on utilization of services and expenses under Choices for Care);

(3) 2008 Acts and Resolves No. 192, Sec. 5.221(b) (report on use of appropriations for household weatherization);

(4) 2012 Acts and Resolves No. 113, Sec. 3 (report on Genuine Progress Indicator);

(5) 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 58, Sec. C.106 (Vermont Health Connect monthly reports);

(6) 2014 Acts and Resolves No. 179, Sec. E.100.5(g) (report on resources made available from the Vermont Enterprise Fund);

(7) 2014 Acts and Resolves No. 195, Secs. 3(f) and 4(b) (evaluate goals and performance of pretrial services and precharge programs);

(8) 2013 Acts and Resolves No. 68, Sec. 3 (report on concussions suffered by student athletes);

(9) 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 174, Sec. 1(c)(2) (Auditor report filed if a privatization contract has not achieved the required cost savings or complied with required performance measures); and

(10) 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 79, Sec. 10(b) (report on status of the Broadband Innovation Grant Program).

* * * Reports Extended Until 2030 Review * * *

Sec. 13. REPORTS REPEAL DELAYED

The reports set forth in this section shall not be subject to review under the provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) until July 1, 2030:

(1) 3 V.S.A. § 168(f)(6) (Racial Disparities in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Advisory Panel report and recommendations);

(2) 10 V.S.A. § 280ee(d) (Vermont Economic Development Authority report concerning Broadband Expansion Loan Program activities);

(3) 10 V.S.A. § 325m(g) (Rural Economic Development Initiative report);

(4) 13 V.S.A. § 5256 (Office of Defender General annual report);

(5) 13 V.S.A. § 5415(c) (Department of Public Safety report concerning sex offender registry compliance);

(6) 18 V.S.A. § 909(e) (EMS Advisory Committee report concerning progress toward goals of five-year plan);

(7) 20 V.S.A. § 2367 (Vermont Criminal Justice Council report concerning use of electronic control devices);

(8) 20 V.S.A. § 2366(d) (Vermont Criminal Justice Council report concerning fair and impartial policing policies and training);

(9) 20 V.S.A. § 4624 (Department of Public Safety report on drone use);

(10) 24 V.S.A. § 1892(g) (quadrennial analysis of recommendations and conclusions of the tax increment financing capacity study and report);

(11) 29 V.S.A. § 160(e) (Department of Buildings and General Services Property Management Revolving Fund annual report);

(12) 32 V.S.A. § 3340(a) (Vermont Economic Progress Council report concerning Vermont Employment Growth Incentive Program).

* * * Reports Exempted from 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) * * *

Sec. 14. 3 V.S.A. § 3902 is amended to read:

§ 3902. OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

* * *

(d) Annually, the Office shall provide a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Energy and Digital Infrastructure, and to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Natural Resources and Energy on appropriations utilizing existing resources within State government available in the Office of Economic Opportunity's weatherization data management system that compiles performance data available on households weatherized in the past year to include the:

(1) number of households weatherized;

(2) average program expenditure per household for energy efficiency;

(3) average percent in energy savings;

(4) energy and nonenergy benefits combined;

(5) benefits saved for every dollar spent;

(6) average savings per unit for heating fuels;

(7) gallons of oil saved related to the equivalent number of homes heated;

(8) projected number of households to be weatherized in the current program year;

(9) projected program expenditures for the current program year ending March 31;

(10) total number of all units that had weatherization deferred, and the reasons why;

(11) number of rental units that had weatherization deferred, and the reasons why;

(12) number of rental units deferred specifically because of vermiculite;

(13) backlog of deferred rental units deferred specifically because of vermiculite; and

(14) potential energy savings for all deferred weatherization that do not require disturbing the vermiculite.

Sec. 15. 3 V.S.A. § 1226 is amended to read:

§ 1226. COMMISSION REPORTS

* * *

(c) The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under subsection (b) of this section.

Sec. 16. 4 V.S.A. § 608 is amended to read:

§ 608. FUNCTIONS

* * *

(e) On or before the tenth Thursday after the convening of each biennial and adjourned session, the Committee shall report to the General Assembly its recommendation whether the candidates should continue in office, with any amplifying information that it may deem appropriate, in order that the General Assembly may discharge its obligation under Chapter II, § 34 of the Constitution of the State of Vermont Constitution. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subsection.

* * *

Sec. 17. 6 V.S.A. § 4710 is amended to read:

§ 4710. VERMONT FARM AND FOREST VIABILITY PROGRAM

* * *

(f) In collaboration with the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board shall report in writing to the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and the House Committees on Agriculture and Forestry and on Commerce and Economic Development on or before January 31 of each year with a report on the activities and performance of the Farm and Forest Viability Program. At a minimum, the report shall include an evaluation of the Program utilizing the performance goals and performance measures established in consultation with the Advisory Board under subsection (d) of this section. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subsection.

* * *

Sec. 18. 6 V.S.A. § 4825 is amended to read:

§ 4825. REPORTS

(a) Annually by January 15 of each year, the Secretary shall report to the General Assembly regarding activities in support of the objectives of this subchapter, including use of State, federal, and private funds:

* * *

(b) The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this section.

Sec. 19. 10 V.S.A. § 11 is amended to read:

§ 11. TREASURER'S LOCAL INVESTMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

* * *

(e) Report. On or before January 15, the Advisory Committee annually shall submit a report to the Senate Committees on Appropriations, on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, on Finance, and on Government Operations and the House Committees on Appropriations, on Commerce and Economic Development, on Ways and Means, and on Government Operations and Military Affairs. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subsection. The report shall include the following:

* * *

Sec. 20. 10 V.S.A. § 531 is amended to read:

§ 531. THE VERMONT TRAINING PROGRAM

* * *

(k) Report. Annually on or before January 15, the Secretary shall submit a report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subsection. In addition to the reporting requirements under section 540 of this title, the report shall identify:

* * *

Sec. 21. 10 V.S.A. § 2609a is amended to read:

§ 2609a. INCOME FROM LEASE OF MOUNTAINTOP
COMMUNICATION SITES

Annually on or before February 15, the Agency of Natural Resources shall submit a report to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy and the House ~~Committees~~ Committee on Energy and Technology and on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife Digital Infrastructure containing an itemization of the income generated through the end of the previous fiscal year from the use of sites for communication purposes. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this section.

Sec. 22. 10 V.S.A. § 6503 is amended to read:

§ 6503. LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL

(a) The Committee shall report to the General Assembly its recommendation to approve or not to approve the petition for the facility together with such additional information and comment it deems appropriate. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subsection.

* * *

Sec. 23. 32 V.S.A. § 311 is amended to read:

§ 311. RETIREMENT FUNDS INTEGRITY REPORT

* * *

(b) ~~At the request of the House or Senate Committee on Government Operations or on Appropriations~~ Committee on Appropriations or on Government Operations and Military Affairs, the Senate Committee on Appropriations or on Government Operations, or the Joint Public Pension Oversight Committee, the State Treasurer and the Commissioner of Finance and Management shall present to the requesting committees the recommendations submitted under 3 V.S.A. § 471(n) and 16 V.S.A. § 1942(r).

(c) The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this section.

Sec. 24. 32 V.S.A. § 588 is amended to read:

§ 588. SPECIAL FUNDS; ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

All special funds shall be organized and managed in accordance with the provisions of this section.

* * *

(6) Accounting and reporting.

* * *

(B) In addition, the Commissioner shall annually report a list of any special funds created during the fiscal year. The list shall furnish for each fund its name, authorization, and revenue source or sources. The report for the prior fiscal year shall be submitted to the General Assembly through the Joint Fiscal Committee on or before December 1 of each year. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subdivision.

Sec. 25. 3 V.S.A. § 3303 is amended to read:

§ 3303. REPORTING, RECORDS, AND REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

(a) Annual report and budget. The Secretary shall submit to the House Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on Institutions, concurrent with the Governor's annual budget request required under 32 V.S.A. § 306, an annual report for information technology and cybersecurity. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subsection. The report shall reflect the priorities of the Agency and shall include:

* * *

* * * Reports Modified * * *

Sec. 26. 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 119, Sec. 8 is amended to read:

Sec. 8. REPORTING; UTILIZATION BY SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS

(a) The Executive Director of the Division of Fire Safety shall, on or before February 1 of each even year, report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on General, Housing, and Military Affairs, and on Government Operations and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Government Operations regarding:

* * *

(b) The Director of the Office of Professional Regulation shall, on or before February 1 of each even year, report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on General, Housing, and Military Affairs, and on Government Operations and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Government Operations regarding:

* * *

(c) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles shall, on or before February 1 of each even year, report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on General, Housing, and Military Affairs, and on Government Operations and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Government Operations regarding the number of service members and veterans who, during the previous calendar year, were certified to perform inspections without being required to pass an examination as provided pursuant to 23 V.S.A. § 1227(b)(2).

(d) The Commissioner of Health shall, on or before February 1 of each even year, report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on General, Housing, and Military Affairs, and on Government Operations and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and on Government Operations regarding the number of service members and veterans who, during the previous calendar year, were deemed to have knowledge of the prevention of food-borne disease, be able to apply the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point principles, and have met the criteria for “demonstration of knowledge” requirements set forth by the Department of Health in rule for the purposes of obtaining a food establishment license as provided pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 4303(b) and the total number of food establishment licenses issued to those service members and veterans.

Sec. 27. 2011 Acts and Resolves No. 59, Sec. 15 is amended to read:

Sec. 15. COURT ADMINISTRATOR REPORT ON PUBLIC RECORDS
CASES

On or before January 15, 2012, and ~~annually~~ on even years thereafter, the Vermont court administrator’s office shall report to the senate and house committees on government operations regarding contested cases filed in the civil division of the superior court involving disputes under the Public Records Act, as set forth in 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 4. The report shall include the number of Public Records Act contested cases filed annually in the civil division of the superior court, the disposition of such cases, and whether attorney’s fees were awarded in any of the cases. The court administrator shall submit a copy of a report required under this section to the secretary of state at the same time the report is submitted to the senate and house committees on government operations.

Sec. 28. 4 V.S.A. § 40 is amended to read:

§ 40. REPORT ON TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES

(a) Annually, on or before January 15 of every even year, the State Court Administrator shall submit a report to the House Committees on General and Housing and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations identifying for each of the two prior calendar years:

(1) the total number of individuals employed by the Judiciary Department on a temporary basis who have worked in excess of 1,280 hours in the prior calendar year, excluding employees identified in 3 V.S.A. § 1011(7), (8)(A)–(D), (8)(F) and (G), and (8)(I)–(K);

(2) the total number of temporary positions in which one or more individuals have been employed for a combined total of more than 1,280 hours, excluding positions filled by employees identified in 3 V.S.A. § 1011(7), (8)(A)–(D), (8)(F) and (G), and (8)(I)–(K);

(3) the total number of hours worked by each temporary employee identified pursuant to subdivision (1) of this section; and

(4) the total number of years during which each temporary employee identified pursuant to subdivision (1) of this section has worked for the Judiciary Department.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the State Court Administrator need not submit the report if there were no temporary employees hired in the prior two calendar years.

Sec. 29. REPEAL

2014 Acts and Resolves No. 180, Sec. 2(c) (Vermont Criminal Justice Council report concerning use of electronic control devices) is repealed.

Sec. 30. 20 V.S.A. § 2367 is amended to read:

§ 2367. STATEWIDE POLICY; ELECTRONIC CONTROL DEVICES;
REPORTING

* * *

(f)(1) Every State, county, municipal, or other law enforcement agency and every constable who is not employed by a law enforcement agency shall report all incidents involving the use of an electronic control device to the Criminal Justice Council in a form to be determined by the Council.

(2) Annually, on or before November 15, the Criminal Justice Council shall report to the House Committees on Government Operations and Military Affairs and on Judiciary and to the Senate Committees on Government Operations and on Judiciary all incidents from the prior 12 months involving the use of an electronic control device, a review of compliance with standards, the adequacy of training and certification requirements, and the adequacy of funding for mental health collaboration.

* * *

Sec. 31. 20 V.S.A § 4662 is amended to read:

§ 4662. CYBERSECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

* * *

(g) Reports. On or before ~~January~~ February 15 each year, the Council shall ~~submit a written~~ report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, on Energy and Digital Infrastructure, on Government Operations and Military Affairs, and on Ways and Means and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, on Finance, and on Government Operations with a status update on the work of the Council and any recommendations for legislative action. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the report to be made under this subsection.

* * *

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 32. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

Pending the question, Shall the House concur in the Senate proposal of amendment?, **Rep. Marcotte of Coventry** moved to concur in the Senate proposal of amendment with a further proposal of amendment thereto as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 32, effective date, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a reader assistance heading and a new section Sec. 32 to read as follows:

* * * Vermont Sister State Program * * *

Sec. 32. 3 V.S.A. § 2479 is added to read:

§ 2479. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

(a) Creation and purpose.

(1) The Vermont Sister State Program is created within the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The Agency shall provide support to the Program and to the Sister State Program Committee as required.

(2) The purpose of the Program is to strengthen Vermont's international engagement and to foster mutually beneficial relationships with national and subnational governments abroad, with a goal of promoting cultural exchange, economic development, and educational cooperation.

(b) Program oversight.

(1) The Sister State Program Committee, composed of the following members, shall oversee the Program:

(A) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or designee;

(B) a member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(C) a member of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on Committees;

(D) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Council on World Affairs or designee;

(E) the Vermont Adjutant General or designee;

(F) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Arts Council or designee; and

(G) three members, as follows:

(i) one member with expertise in cultural exchange or in Peace Corps operations, appointed by the Governor;

(ii) one member representing a private institution of higher education, appointed by the Committee on Committees; and

(iii) one member representing a public institution of higher education, appointed by the Speaker.

(2) Members of the Committee shall serve two-year terms, provided that members appointed pursuant to subdivision (1)(G) of this subsection shall serve initial terms of three years each to establish staggered terms. Members may be reappointed.

(3) The Committee shall elect a chair and vice chair from among its members that shall each serve a two-year term.

(4) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(c) Meetings.

(1) All meetings shall be called by the Chair, but in the event that the Committee does not have a chair, a meeting may be called by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or designee.

(2) The Committee shall meet:

(A) at least once quarterly, for the purpose of:

(i) evaluating current Program agreements;

(ii) proposing new Program agreements;

(iii) preparing its annual report; or

(iv) discussing any other matter that the Committee deems relevant to its work; and

(B) to review and score an eligible Program application not later than 30 days after the Committee receives the application from the Agency, pursuant to subdivision (d)(3) of this section.

(d) Program application, review, and approval procedures.

(1) Development of application process. The Agency, in consultation with the Committee, shall develop a process by which an entity can apply and be considered for admission as a partner to the Program. This process shall include the development of:

(A) an official application to be in the Program;

(B) a confidential internal review procedure to be used by the Agency to review Program applicants for sensitive political, legal, ethical, and strategic factors;

(C) minimum eligibility requirements to be considered for the Program;

(D) a fixed-scoring system, including a rubric, to be uniformly applied by the Committee to evaluate all eligible applications;

(E) a memorandum of understanding template to be used and signed by the State and an approved Program partner that shall include a termination date; and

(F) any other necessary Program parameters, including the length of time for partner agreements to be in effect.

(2) Agency initial verification.

(A) When a Program application has been received by the Agency pursuant to this section, the Agency shall, before the Committee may meet to review the application:

(i) verify that the application meets the Program's minimum eligibility requirements; and

(ii) conduct a confidential internal review of the applicant.

(B) Not later than 10 days after completion of the Agency's initial verification and review of an application pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (2), the Agency shall send the Committee a copy of the application along with a summary of the Agency's analysis.

(C) The confidential internal review process conducted in subdivision (A)(ii) of this subdivision (2), along with any and all documents reviewed during that process, shall be exempt from public inspection and copying.

(3) Committee review and recommendation.

(A) The Committee, upon receiving an application that has received preliminary approval from the Agency, shall meet to review the application pursuant to subdivision (c)(2)(B) of this section not later than 30 days after receipt of the application from the Agency.

(B) If the Committee recommends that an application reviewed pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3) be approved, the Committee shall submit its recommendation to the Governor along with a copy of the application not later than 30 days after completing its review of the application. The Committee shall not send to the Governor an application that the Committee does not recommend be approved.

(4) Governor's review.

(A) The Governor shall have the sole authority to issue final approval or disapproval of a Sister State Program application that the Committee recommended be approved. The Governor shall send written notice of the Governor's decision to the Agency not later than 10 days after the Governor's decision.

(B) If the Governor disapproves a Program application, the Governor's notice in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (4) shall include a written explanation of why the Governor did not follow the recommendation of the Committee.

(C) Upon the Agency's receipt of the Governor's decision pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (4), the Agency shall notify the applicant of the Governor's decision not later than 30 days after the Agency receives notice of the Governor's decision.

(D) If the application is approved by the Governor, the Agency shall finalize a memorandum of understanding between the State and the Sister State Program applicant.

(5) Termination.

(A) The Committee may, at one of its meetings, propose to the Governor upon a majority vote that an active Sister State Program partnership be terminated.

(B) The Governor shall have the sole authority to terminate an active Sister State Program partnership.

(e) Reporting. The Committee shall submit an annual report not later than January 15 of each year to the Governor and to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs that includes the following:

(1) an executive summary of key development and outcomes of the Program;

(2) a description of Committee activities, including a summary of attendance and decisions at its meetings;

(3) updates on the Program, including an evaluation of sister state applications, new partners, significant developments, metrics of success, and challenges;

(4) a description of stakeholder engagement with the Program;

(5) a financial overview, including a summary of funding sources and expenditures; and

(6) an outlook for the Program, which shall include strategic objectives, potential new agreements, and growth opportunities for the next year.

(f) Compensation and reimbursement.

(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in the member's capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than eight meetings per year. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

(2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than eight meetings per year. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Second: By inserting a reader assistance heading and adding a new section to be Sec. 33 to read as follows:

* * * Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission * * *

Sec. 33. 9 V.S.A. chapter 111B is amended to read:

CHAPTER 111B. TRADE COMMISSIONS

§ 4129. VERMONT-IRELAND TRADE COMMISSION

(a) The Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission is established within the State Treasurer's office to advance bilateral trade and investment between Vermont and Ireland. The Commission shall consist of ~~seven~~ nine members as follows:

- (1) two members, appointed by the Governor;
 - (2) two members, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
 - (3) two members, appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees;
- and
- (4) the State Treasurer or designee;
 - (5) the Commissioner of Economic Development or designee; and
 - (6) the President of the University of Vermont or designee.

* * *

(c) The members of the Commission, ~~except for the State Treasurer or designee,~~ appointed pursuant to subdivisions (a)(1)–(3) of this section:

(1) shall be appointed for terms of four years each and shall continue to serve until their successors are appointed, except that in order to achieve staggered terms, the two members appointed by the Governor shall serve initial terms of two years each and the two members appointed by the Speaker of the House shall serve initial terms of three years each;

~~(2) Members may be reappointed upon the expiration of the member's term;~~

~~(3) A member serves serve at the pleasure of the member's appointing authority; and~~

~~(4) Not shall consist of not more than two members serving on the Commission may be members of the General Assembly.~~

* * *

(f) The Commission, in coordination with the State Treasurer's office, shall submit a written report with its findings, results, and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly within one year ~~of following~~ its initial organizational meeting and on or before December 1 of each succeeding year for the activities of the current calendar year. The report shall also include a:

(1) disclosure listing any in-kind contributions received by specific members of the Commission through their work in the Commission in the current calendar year; and

(2) detailed accounting from the State Treasurer's office of the:

(A) administrative expenses that have been paid with funds raised by the Commission, pursuant to subsection (g) of this section; and

(B) funds raised and donations, grants, and bequests received through the Commission including the name, country of residence, and amount donated of each contributor.

~~(g)(1) The Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission is authorized to raise funds, through direct solicitation or other fundraising events, alone or with other groups, and accept donations, grants, and bequests from individuals, corporations, foundations, governmental agencies, and public and private organizations and institutions, to defray the Commission's administrative expenses and to carry out its purposes as set forth in this chapter.~~

~~(2) The funds, donations, grants, or bequests received pursuant to this chapter subdivision (1) of this subsection shall be deposited in a bank account and allocated annually by the State Treasurer's office to defray the Commission's administrative expenses and carry out its purposes. Any monies so withdrawn shall not be used for any purpose other than the payment of administrative expenses under incurred pursuant to this chapter section and shall be itemized and tracked for reporting purposes by the State Treasurer's office. Interest earned shall remain in the bank account. The State Treasurer shall include the balance of the account in the annual reporting required pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.~~

(3) For purposes of this section, “administrative expenses” does not include any:

(A) expenses related to:

(i) campaign or election activity; or

(ii) food or beverages provided at official Commission meetings;

or

(B) other expense that is not specific to the administrative functions of the Commission.

(h) Members of the Commission shall not receive any compensation or be entitled to reimbursement of expenses by the State of Vermont or from the fund managed by the State Treasurer pursuant to subsection (g) of this section for their service on the Commission.

Third: By adding a new section to be Sec. 34 to read as follows:

Sec. 34. REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF THE VERMONT-IRELAND

TRADE COMMISSION

On or before December 1, 2029, the Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and to the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs with the following information:

(1) a summary of the accomplishments of the Commission since its inception;

(2) a detailed analysis as to how the Commission has served its legislative purposes pursuant to 9 V.S.A. § 4129(b); and

(3) an accounting on funds raised and details on gifts received pursuant to 9 V.S.A. § 4129(g) since the Commission’s inception.

Fourth: By inserting a reader assistance heading and adding a new section to be Sec. 35 to read as follows:

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 35. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) Secs. 1–31 shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

(b) This section and Secs. 32–34 shall take effect on passage.

Which was agreed to.

On motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and House action on the bill was ordered messaged to the Senate forthwith.

**Senate Proposal of Amendment to House Proposal of Amendment
Concurred in**

S. 230

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

An act relating to fair employment practices

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

First: By striking out Sec. 3b, 21 V.S.A. § 495q, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 3b to read as follows:

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

§ 495q. AGREEMENTS WITH HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

(a) 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:

(1) 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;

(2) 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;

(3) 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;

(4) is inconsistent with Vermont law; or

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

(b) The notice provided in subdivision (a)(2) of this section may include the following information:

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

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

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

(c) The provisions in subsection (a) of this section 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.

(d) "Health care provider" means a person licensed, certified, or authorized by law to provide professional health care service in this State to an individual during that individual's medical care, treatment, or confinement.

(e) 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 and enforcement provisions of section 495b of this subchapter shall apply to this section.

(f) This section shall apply to contracts and agreements entered into on or after July 1, 2026.

Second: By adding a new section to be Sec. 3c to read as follows:

Sec. 3c. SOLICITATION AT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

The Commissioner of Corrections or designee shall meet with representatives of the Vermont State Employees' Association to develop a proposal governing permissible and impermissible solicitation in parking lots at the Department of Corrections' facilities for consideration for adoption by the Secretary of Administration on or before January 1, 2027. The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall coordinate the meetings and provide assistance as appropriate.

Pending the question, Shall the House concur in the Senate proposal to the House proposal of amendment?, **Rep. McCoy of Poultney** demanded the Yeas and Nays, which demand was sustained by the Constitutional number. The Clerk proceeded to call the roll and the question, Shall the House concur in the Senate proposal to the House proposal of amendment?, was decided in the affirmative. Yeas, 85. Nays, 48.

Those who voted in the affirmative are:

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Arsenault of Williston | Emmons of Springfield | Minier of South Burlington |
| Austin of Colchester | Garofano of Essex | Morris of Springfield |
| Bartholomew of Hartland | Goldman of Rockingham | Morrow of Weston |
| Berbeco of Winooski | Goodnow of Brattleboro | Mrowicki of Putney |
| Birong of Vergennes | Graning of Jericho | Nigro of Bennington |
| Bishop of Colchester | Harple of Glover | Nugent of South Burlington |
| Black of Essex | Headrick of Burlington | O'Brien of Tunbridge |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bluemle of Burlington | Holcombe of Norwich | Ode of Burlington |
| Bos-Lun of Westminster | Hooper of Randolph | Olson of Starksboro |
| Boyden of Cambridge | Houghton of Essex Junction | Pezzo of Colchester |
| Brady of Williston | Howard of Rutland City | Pouech of Hinesburg |
| Brown of Richmond | Hoyt of Hartford | Priestley of Bradford |
| Burke of Brattleboro | Hunter of Manchester | Satcowitz of Randolph |
| Burkhardt of South Burlington | James of Manchester | Scheu of Middlebury |
| Burrows of West Windsor | Kimbell of Woodstock | Scully of Burlington |
| Campbell of St. Johnsbury | Kleppner of Burlington | Sheldon of Middlebury |
| Carris Duncan of Whitingham | Kornheiser of Brattleboro | Sibilia of Dover |
| Casey of Montpelier | Krasnow of South Burlington | Squirrell of Underhill |
| Charlton of Chester * | LaLonde of South Burlington | Stevens of Waterbury |
| Cole of Hartford | LaMont of Morristown | Stone of Burlington |
| Conlon of Cornwall | Lipsky of Stowe | Sweeney of Shelburne |
| Cooper of Pownal | Logan of Burlington | Tomlinson of Winooski |
| Corcoran of Bennington | Long of Newfane | Torre of Moretown |
| Critchlow of Colchester | Lueders of Lincoln | Waszazak of Barre City |
| Dolan of Essex Junction | Masland of Thetford | Waters Evans of Charlotte |
| Duke of Burlington | McCann of Montpelier | White of Waitsfield |
| Durfee of Shaftsbury | McGill of Bridport | White of Bethel |
| Eastes of Guilford | Mihaly of Calais | Wood of Waterbury |
| | | Yacovone of Morristown |

Those who voted in the negative are:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Bailey of Hyde Park | Gregoire of Fairfield | North of Ferrisburgh |
| Bartley of Fairfax * | Hango of Berkshire | Oliver of Sheldon |
| Bosch of Clarendon | Harvey of Castleton | Page of Newport City |
| Boutin of Barre City | Higley of Lowell | Parsons of Newbury |
| Branagan of Georgia | Howland of Rutland Town | Pinsonault of Dorset |
| Burt of Cabot | Kascenska of Burke | Powers of Waterford |
| Canfield of Fair Haven | Keyser of Rutland City | Pritchard of Pawlet |
| Casey of Hubbardton | Labor of Morgan | Quimby of Lyndon |
| Coffin of Cavendish | Laroche of Franklin | Soucy of Barre Town |
| Demar of Enosburgh | Long of Milton | Southworth of Walden |
| Dickinson of St. Albans Town | Luneau of St. Albans City | Steady of Milton |
| Dobrovich of Williamstown | Malay of Pittsford | Tagliavia of Corinth |
| Dolgin of St. Johnsbury | Marcotte of Coventry | Taylor of Mendon |
| Feltus of Lyndon | McCoy of Poultney | Wells of Brownington |
| Galfetti of Barre Town | Micklus of Milton | Winter of Ludlow |
| Goslant of Northfield | Morrissey of Bennington | |
| | Nelson of Derby | |

Those members absent with leave of the House and not voting are:

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Brigham of St. Albans Town | Donahue of Northfield | Nielsen of Brandon |
| Burditt of West Rutland | Greer of Bennington | Noyes of Wolcott |
| Chapin of East Montpelier | Lalley of Shelburne | Rachelson of Burlington |
| Christie of Hartford | Maguire of Rutland City | Walker of Swanton |

Cina of Burlington
Dodge of Essex

Morgan, L. of Milton
Morgan, M. of Milton

Rep. Bartley of Fairfax provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

I voted no because the Senate proposal of amendment allows for unfair labor practices on Department of Corrections property. This is not a precedent we want to set.”

Rep. Charton of Chester provided the following vote explanation:

“Madam Speaker:

Section three of this bill is inappropriate. The balance of this bill offers a glimmer of possibility for rural health care. For that reason alone, I vote yes.”

Recess

At ten o'clock and forty-three minutes in the forenoon, the Speaker declared a recess until the fall of the gavel.

Message from the Senate No. 63

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 House proposal of amendment to Senate proposal of amendment to House bill entitled:

H. 639. An act relating to genetic data privacy.

And has refused to concur therein and asks for a Committee of Conference upon the disagreeing votes of the two Houses;

The President announced the appointment as members of such Committee on the part of the Senate:

Senator Clarkson
Senator Brock
Senator Chittenden

Called to Order

At one o'clock and twenty-one minutes in the afternoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

Committee of Conference Appointed**H. 639**

Pursuant to the request of the Senate for a Committee of Conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on House bill, entitled

An act relating to genetic data privacy

The Speaker appointed as members of the Committee of Conference on the part of the House:

Rep. Graning of Jericho

Rep. Marcotte of Coventry

Rep. White of Bethel

**Senate Proposal of Amendment Not Concurred in; Committee of
Conference Requested and Appointed; Rules Suspended,
Messaged to the Senate Forthwith**

H. 740

The Senate proposed to the House to amend House bill, entitled

An act relating to the greenhouse gas inventory and registry

The Senate proposed to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1 10 V.S.A. § 582 is amended to read:

§ 582. GREENHOUSE GAS INVENTORIES; REGISTRY

* * *

(e) Rules.

(1) The Secretary may adopt rules to implement the provisions of this section and shall review existing and proposed international, federal, and State greenhouse gas emission reporting programs and make reasonable efforts to promote consistency among the programs established pursuant to this section and other programs, and to streamline reporting requirements on greenhouse gas emission sources. Except as provided in subsection (g) of this section, nothing in this section shall limit a State agency from adopting any rule within its authority.

(2) The Secretary has authority to adopt rules that create a comprehensive greenhouse gas emission reporting program that covers all sources of emissions, including fuel suppliers. Suppliers of transportation and heating fuels covered by the rules shall comply with requests from the Secretary for information. The Secretary shall adopt a rule that at a minimum includes the types and volume of fossil fuels sold by sector for the transportation, residential, commercial, and industrial sectors and by zip code, municipality, or the smallest geographic level practicable that also protects the individual identities of consumers.

* * *

Sec. 2. RULEMAKING

On or before July 1, 2027, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall adopt final rules for greenhouse gas emission reporting as required under 10 V.S.A. § 582(e)(2).

Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

In addition to other funds appropriated to the Agency of Natural Resources, in fiscal year 2027, the sum of \$300,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Natural Resources to be used to draft the greenhouse gas emission reporting rules and to develop a greenhouse gas emission source database.

Sec. 4. REPEAL

30 V.S.A. chapter 94 (Clean Heat Standard) is repealed.

Sec. 5. 32 V.S.A. § 3102 is amended to read:

§ 3102. CONFIDENTIALITY OF TAX RECORDS

* * *

(e) The Commissioner may, in the Commissioner's discretion and subject to such conditions and requirements as the Commissioner may provide, including any confidentiality requirements of the Internal Revenue Service, disclose a return or return information:

* * *

~~(23) To the Public Utility Commission and the Department of Public Service, provided the disclosure relates to the fuel tax under 33 V.S.A. chapter 25 and is used for the purposes of auditing compliance with the Clean Heat Standard under 30 V.S.A. chapter 94. The Commissioner shall, at a minimum, provide the names of any new businesses selling heating fuel in any given year~~

~~and the names of any businesses that are no longer selling heating fuel.~~
[Repealed.]

* * *

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

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

Rep. James of Manchester
Rep. Campbell of St. Johnsbury
Rep. Torre of Moretown

On motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and House action on the bill was ordered messaged to the Senate forthwith.

Rules Suspended, Immediate Consideration; Report of Committee of Conference Adopted; Rules Suspended, Messaged to the Senate Forthwith

S. 223

Appearing on the Notice Calendar, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to water quality of the waters of Vermont

Was taken up for immediate consideration.

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:

S.223. An act relating to water quality of the waters of Vermont.

Respectfully reports that it has met and considered the same and recommends that the Senate accede to the House proposal of amendment and that the bill be further amended in Sec. 1, Water Quality, Lake Classification, and Antidegradation Study Group; report, in subsection (b), by striking out subdivisions (1) and (2) in their entireties and inserting in lieu thereof new subdivisions (1) and (2) to read as follows:

(1) three current members of the House of Representatives, not all from the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(2) three current members of the Senate, not all from the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

SEN. ANNE E. WATSON

SEN. SETH BONGARTZ

SEN. TERRY K. WILLIAMS

Committee on the part of the Senate

REP. AMY D. SHELDON

REP. LARRY LABOR

REP. LAWRENCE SATCOWITZ

Committee on the part of the House

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

On motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and House action on the bill was ordered messaged to the Senate forthwith.

Recess

At one o'clock and thirty-seven minutes in the afternoon, the Speaker declared a recess until the fall of the gavel.

Message from the Senate No. 64

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 House proposal of amendment to Senate proposal of amendment to House bills of the following title:

H. 941. An act relating to municipal regulation of agriculture.

And has concurred therein with a proposal of amendment in the passage of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

The Senate has considered House proposal of amendment to Senate proposal of amendment to House bill of the following title:

H. 648. An act relating to banking, insurance, and securities.

And has concurred therein.

The Senate has considered bills originating in the House of the following titles:

H. 606. An act relating to firearms procedures.

H. 841. An act relating to miscellaneous animal welfare procedures.

H. 931. An act relating to miscellaneous changes in education law.

H. 932. An act relating to the regulation of forestry under Act 250.

H. 937. An act relating to miscellaneous judiciary procedures.

H. 938. An act relating to establishing the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum.

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

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

H. 550. An act relating to gender equity within Vermont's correctional facilities.

And has passed the same in concurrence.

Called to Order

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

Rules Suspended, Immediate Consideration; Senate Proposal of Amendment Concurred in

H. 841

Pending entry on the Notice Calendar, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and House bill, entitled

An act relating to miscellaneous animal welfare procedures

Was taken up for immediate consideration.

The Senate proposed to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. chapter 190 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 190. DIVISION OF ANIMAL WELFARE

§ 3201. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Animal” has the same meaning as in 13 V.S.A. § 351, provided that the animals or activities regulated under this chapter shall not apply to:

(A) activities regulated by the Department of Fish and Wildlife pursuant to 10 V.S.A. Part 4;

(B) scientific research governed by accepted procedural standards subject to review by an institutional animal care and use committee;

(C) livestock and poultry husbandry practices for the raising, management, and use of domestic animals;

(D) veterinary medical or surgical procedures; and

(E) the killing of an animal as authorized pursuant to sections 3809 and 3545 of this title.

(2) “Director” means the Director of Animal Welfare and includes the Director’s designee.

(3) “Division” means the Division of Animal Welfare.

(4) “Domestic animal” has the same meaning as in 6 V.S.A. § 1151(2).

§ 3202. ESTABLISHMENT OF DIVISION OF ANIMAL WELFARE;
POWERS AND DUTIES

(a)(1) The Division of Animal Welfare is established within the Department of Public Safety. The Commissioner of Public Safety shall appoint a Director of Animal Welfare who shall be in immediate charge of the Division. The Director shall be qualified by education and professional experience to perform the duties of the position. The Director shall have at least the following minimum qualifications:

(A) experience in interpreting or knowledge of animal welfare laws and rules;

(B) knowledge of animal welfare stakeholders in the State and regionally; and

(C) knowledge of the causes and characteristics of animal welfare and animal cruelty issues.

(2) The Director position shall be a classified service position in the Department of Public Safety.

(b)(1) The Director shall develop a comprehensive plan for the development, implementation, and enforcement of the animal welfare laws of the State. In developing the comprehensive plan, the Director shall first review the 2023 Report on Unification of Animal Welfare and Related Public Safety Function and similar reports and proposed legislation. The plan shall include:

(A) how the Director shall oversee investigation and response to animal cruelty complaints in the State in order to provide the best services to Vermont's animals statewide;

(B) how the Director shall coordinate administration and enforcement of animal welfare laws in the State in a collaborative manner with those law enforcement officers and municipalities that retain authority to enforce animal cruelty requirements in the State;

(C) how the State should address the extent and scope of any deficiencies in Vermont's system of investigating and responding to animal cruelty complaints;

(D) how the State should ensure that investigations of animal cruelty complaints are conducted according to systematic and documented written standard operating procedures and checklists;

(E) a proposal to house and care for animals seized in response to complaints of animal cruelty, including how to pay for the care of seized animals;

(F) a proposal for funding animal welfare administration and enforcement in the State, including potential sources of public and private funding; and

(G) recommended amendments to animal welfare statutes or rules, including standards of care for animals housed or imported by animal shelters or rescue organizations.

(2) The Director of Animal Welfare shall submit the comprehensive plan required by this subsection and any revisions thereto to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations not later than eight months after the date of hiring of the Director.

(c) The Director of Animal Welfare shall consult with other State agencies that respond to animal welfare complaints or with animal welfare responsibilities to estimate the number and type of animal welfare complaints

received by State agencies and to quantify the amount of time State agency staff expend in fulfilling animal welfare responsibilities, including the costs to agencies of fulfilling the responsibilities.

(d) The Director of Animal Welfare shall be the sole employee of the Division of Animal Welfare until the comprehensive plan required under subdivision (b)(2) of this section is completed and the General Assembly enacts legislation, as needed, to implement the comprehensive plan.

(e) The Division of Animal Welfare may adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to implement the provisions of this chapter.

(f)(1) The Director of Animal Welfare shall require that animal shelters, rescue organizations, and pet dealers, and any person importing one or more domestic pets into the State of Vermont for adoption, sale, other transfer, or breeding shall register with the Division of Animal Welfare. The registration required by this subsection shall include information on animal intake, production, inventory, and disposition. No fee shall be charged for the registration.

(2) If a person fails to register as required by subdivision (1) of this subsection the Director shall:

(A) for a first violation, issue the person a warning; and

(B) for a second or subsequent violation, issue a fine and a cease and desist order to the same extent that the Secretary and municipal legislative bodies have authority to issue such orders under chapter 193 of this title.

(3) This subsection shall not apply to an individual importing a domestic pet for personal purposes.

§ 3203. ANIMAL WELFARE FUND

(a) The Animal Welfare Fund is established within the Department of Public Safety to fund the expenses incurred by the Division of Animal Welfare in implementing the requirements of this chapter. The Director of Animal Welfare shall administer the Fund.

(b) The Fund shall consist of:

(1) 67 percent of the revenue collected from the surcharge assessed under subsection 3581(f) of this title; ~~and~~

(2) ~~appropriations~~ transfers made by the General Assembly; and

(3) any donations, grants, or gifts made to the Fund.

(c) All balances in the Fund at the end of the fiscal year shall be carried forward. Interest earned by the Fund shall remain in the Fund.

Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 3552 is added to read:

§ 3552. SEXUAL STERILIZATION OF STRAY CATS WITH NO KNOWN OWNER

An animal shelter or rescue organization that, pursuant to a contract with a municipal legislative body, impounds a stray cat with no known owner may have the cat sexually sterilized not sooner than one day after the impound.

Sec. 3. 20 V.S.A. § 3581 is amended to read:

§ 3581. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

(a) A person who is the owner of a dog or wolf-hybrid more than six months old shall annually on or before April 1 cause it to be registered, numbered, described, and licensed on a form approved by the Secretary for one year from that day in the office of the clerk of the municipality in which the dog or wolf-hybrid is kept. A person who owns a working farm dog and who intends to use that dog on a farm pursuant to the exemptions in section 3549 of this title shall cause the working farm dog to be registered as a working farm dog and shall, in addition to all other fees required by this section, pay \$5.00 for a working farm dog license. The owner of a dog or wolf-hybrid shall cause it to wear a collar and attach a license tag issued by the municipal clerk to the collar. Dog or wolf-hybrid owners shall pay for the license \$4.00 for each neutered dog or wolf-hybrid, and \$8.00 for each unneutered dog or wolf-hybrid. If the license fee for any dog or wolf-hybrid is not paid on or before April 1, its owner or keeper may thereafter procure a license for that license year by paying a fee of 50 percent in excess of that otherwise required.

(b) Before a person shall be entitled to obtain a license for a neutered dog or wolf-hybrid, ~~he or she~~ the person shall exhibit to the clerk a certificate signed by a duly licensed veterinarian showing that the dog or wolf-hybrid has been sexually sterilized.

* * *

(d)(1) Before obtaining a license for a dog or wolf-hybrid ~~six months of age or older~~, a person shall deliver to the municipal clerk a certificate or a certified copy thereof issued by a duly licensed veterinarian, stating that the dog or wolf-hybrid has received a current preexposure rabies vaccination with a vaccine approved by the Secretary, and the person shall certify that the dog or wolf-hybrid described in the certificate or copy is the dog or wolf-hybrid to be licensed. The municipal clerk shall keep the certificates or copies thereof on file. The Secretary shall prescribe the size and format of rabies certificates. The owner of any such dog or wolf-hybrid shall maintain a copy of the rabies vaccination form and provide it to State or municipal officials upon request.

(2) Before obtaining a license for a wolf-hybrid, a person shall deliver to the municipal clerk a certificate or a certified copy thereof, issued by a duly licensed veterinarian, stating that the wolf-hybrid has been sexually sterilized.

* * *

Sec. 4. 20 V.S.A. § 3583 is amended to read:

§ 3583. ~~DOMESTIC PETS AND WOLF-HYBRIDS KEPT FOR BREEDING PURPOSES~~

~~(a) The owner or keeper of domestic pets and wolf hybrids kept for breeding purposes may take out annually, on or before April 1, a special license for the domestic pets or wolf hybrids, provided:~~

~~(1) He or she keeps the domestic pets or wolf hybrids within a proper enclosure. A proper enclosure is a locked fence or structure of sufficient height and sufficient depth into the ground to prevent the entry of young children and to prevent the animal from escaping. A proper enclosure also provides humane shelter for the animal.~~

~~(2) The domestic pets or wolf hybrids at all times have a current vaccination against rabies.~~

~~(3) When the number of domestic pets or wolf hybrids so kept does not exceed ten, the fee shall be \$30.00 and for each additional domestic pet or wolf hybrid so kept, an annual fee of \$3.00.~~

~~(b) Domestic pets and wolf hybrids covered by the special license pursuant to this section shall be exempt from other license fees, and all licenses under this section are exempt from the surcharge enacted under subsection (c) of section 3581 of this title.~~

~~(c) If the license fee is not paid by April 1, the owner or keeper may thereafter procure a license for that license year by paying a fee of 50 percent in excess of that otherwise required. These license fees are in addition to any fees required for the operation of a kennel under subchapter 3 of this chapter. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. 5. 20 V.S.A. § 3682 is amended to read:

§ 3682. INSPECTION OF PREMISES

(a) The pet dealer's premises may be inspected upon the issuance of the pet dealer permit or at any time the pet dealer permit is in effect. Inspections may be conducted by a municipal animal control officer, a law enforcement officer as that term is defined in 23 V.S.A. § 4(11), or a representative of the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. The inspector may, at his or her the inspector's discretion and with the approval of the municipality, be

accompanied by a veterinarian or an officer or agent of a humane society incorporated in Vermont. This section shall not create an obligation on the part of any municipal legislative body to conduct inspections.

* * *

Sec. 6. 20 V.S.A. § 3814 is amended to read:

§ 3814. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds:

(1) The supply of dogs, cats, and wolf-hybrids in Vermont is a major concern.

(2) There are insufficient resources in this State to care for or provide homes for these animals.

(3) Many of these animals are ultimately euthanized or become victims of accidents, starvation, or disease.

(4) Pet owners who have limited economic resources have great difficulty affording the cost of professional ~~spaying and neutering~~ sexual sterilization services.

Sec. 7. 20 V.S.A. § 3815 is amended to read:

§ 3815. ~~DOG, CAT, AND WOLF-HYBRID SPAYING AND NEUTERING~~
SEXUAL STERILIZATION PROGRAM

(a) The Agency of Human Services shall administer a dog, cat, and wolf-hybrid ~~spaying and neutering~~ sexual sterilization program providing reduced-cost ~~spaying and neutering~~ sexual sterilization services and presurgical immunization for dogs, cats, and wolf-hybrids owned or cared for by individuals with low income. The Agency shall ~~shall~~ may implement the program through an agreement with a qualified organization consistent with the applicable administrative rules.

(b) The program shall reimburse veterinarians who voluntarily consent to ~~spay or neuter~~ sexually sterilize dogs, cats, and wolf-hybrids under the auspices of the program. The reimbursement shall be less any co-payment by the owner of a dog, cat, or wolf-hybrid for the cost of each ~~spaying or neutering~~ sexual sterilization procedure.

* * *

Sec. 8. 20 V.S.A. § 3816 is amended to read:

§ 3816. ~~ANIMAL SPAYING AND NEUTERING~~ SEXUAL
STERILIZATION FUND; CREATION

(a) There is created, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5, in the Agency of Human Services the Dog, Cat, and Wolf-Hybrid ~~Spaying and Neutering~~ Sexual Sterilization Special Fund to finance the costs of the dog, cat, and wolf-hybrid ~~spaying and neutering~~ sexual sterilization program established in section 3815 of this title.

(b) Revenue for the Fund shall be derived from:

(1) the surcharge payment paid to a municipality pursuant to subdivision 3581(c)(1) of this title;

(2) gifts from private donors; and

(3) any appropriation that the General Assembly makes to the Fund.

(c) Interest earned on the Fund shall be retained in the Fund.

(d) The Agency of Human Services shall use the revenue in the Fund created in subsection (a) of this section for administering the dog, cat, and wolf-hybrid ~~spaying and neutering~~ sexual sterilization program.

Sec. 9. 20 V.S.A. § 3903 is amended to read:

§ 3903. ANIMAL SHELTERS AND RESCUE ORGANIZATIONS

(a) [Repealed.]

(b) Animal intake. An animal shelter or rescue organization as defined by section 3901 of this title shall ~~make every effort to~~ collect the following information, if available, about an animal it accepts: the name and address of the person transferring the animal and, if known, the name of the animal; its vaccination history; and other information concerning the background, temperament, and health of the animal.

* * *

Sec. 10. 20 V.S.A. § 3907 is amended to read:

§ 3907. DENIAL OR REVOCATION OF REGISTRATION OR LICENSE

Issuance of a certificate of registration may be denied to any animal shelter, rescue organization, pet dealer, or fair, or a license may be denied to any public auction or pet shop or any certificate or license previously granted under this chapter may be revoked by the Secretary if, after public hearing, it is determined that the housing facilities or primary enclosures are inadequate for the purposes of this chapter or if the feeding, watering, sanitizing, and housing practices of the animal shelter, rescue organization, fair, public auction, or pet shop, as the case may be, are not consistent with this chapter or with rules adopted under this chapter.

Sec. 11. 20 V.S.A. § 3911 is amended to read:

§ 3911. PENALTIES

(a) Any person licensed or registered under this chapter who fails to provide animals under the person's care or custody with adequate food or adequate water, as defined in section 3901 of this title, or who fails to house animals in the person's care or custody in a manner that is adequate for their welfare, shall be fined not more than \$500.00.

(b) Any person who operates a fair or public auction or who transacts business as a pet shop, animal shelter, pet dealer, or rescue organization without being duly licensed or without possessing a proper certificate of registration, as the case may be, as required under this chapter, or who violates any provision of this chapter or of any rule lawfully adopted under its authority for which no other penalty is provided shall be fined not more than \$300.00 or imprisoned for not more than six months, or both.

(c) The Secretary may assess administrative penalties under 6 V.S.A. §§ 15–17, not to exceed \$1,000.00, for violations of this chapter.

Sec. 12. 20 V.S.A. § 3915 is amended to read:

§ 3915. HEALTH CERTIFICATE FOR TRANSPORT INTO STATE

(a) A dog, cat, ferret, or wolf-hybrid imported into the State for sale, resale, exchange, or donation shall be accompanied by an official health certificate or similar certificate of inspection for the dog, cat, ferret, or wolf-hybrid issued by a veterinarian licensed in the state or country of origin. The certificate shall certify that:

(1) the dog, cat, ferret, or wolf-hybrid has been inspected and is free of visible signs of infections or contagious or communicable disease; ~~and~~

(2) if the dog, cat, ferret, or wolf-hybrid is more than three months of age, the dog, cat, ferret, or wolf-hybrid has a current rabies vaccination or is a specific breed for which a rabies vaccination is not age-appropriate; ~~and~~

(3) if the wolf-hybrid is more than four months of age, the wolf-hybrid has been sexually sterilized.

(b) The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets may adopt rules regarding the issuance and contents of any certificate required under subsection (a) of this section.

Sec. 13. 20 V.S.A. § 3916 is added to read:

§ 3916. INSURANCE

Pet dealers, animal shelters, rescue organizations, and keepers of animals for breeding purposes shall, as a condition of their licenses or certificates of registration, be required to obtain and maintain a commercially reasonable level of general liability insurance.

Sec. 14. REPORT

On or before December 15, 2026, the Director of Animal Welfare shall report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations on the next steps necessary for the creation of a comprehensive animal welfare program in Vermont, including specifically a proposal for the development of an oversight structure for dog and cat breeders and sellers, and people owning large numbers of these animals. The Director shall consult with stakeholders and registrants for purposes of preparing the report required by this section.

Sec. 15. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

Which proposal of amendment was considered and concurred in.

**Rules Suspended, Immediate Consideration; Senate Proposal of
Amendment Concurred in**

H. 938

Pending entry on the Notice Calendar, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and House bill, entitled

An act relating to establishing the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum

Was taken up for immediate consideration.

The Senate proposed to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Findings, Legislative Intent, and Purpose * * *

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) although an imperfect tool for measuring the true number of unhoused Vermonters, the Vermont Homeless Management Information System as of December 2025 indicated that there were 4,022 individuals who

were homeless in the State, 863 of whom were children under 18 years of age; and

(2) the 2024 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment notes that of the 36,000 primary homes needed in Vermont between 2025 and 2029, the number needed to address homelessness is 3,295.

Sec. 2. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly that:

(1) unsheltered homelessness be eliminated and that homelessness in Vermont be rare, brief, and nonrecurring;

(2) Vermont reduce reliance on the inefficient use of hotel and motel rooms for emergency housing;

(3) utilization of an emergency housing benefit to access hotels and motels through the General Assistance program end and be replaced by a continuum of services; and

(4) a continuum of supports and services be available and administered flexibly in a manner that:

(A) provides a stable pathway to permanent housing;

(B) meets the specific needs of households experiencing homelessness; and

(C) supports community partners.

Sec. 3. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this act to:

(1) establish a continuum of supports and services for households who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of experiencing homelessness;

(2) ensure that tailored, temporary emergency housing assistance is available to Vermonters in a manner that encourages efficient and accountable use of taxpayer funds;

(3) support self-sufficiency and reduce returns to homelessness by developing personalized housing plans with required participation by households;

(4) establish clear eligibility criteria and require active household participation;

(5) expand the use of alternative emergency housing models in partnership with municipalities, nonprofit community-based providers, and private landlords;

(6) integrate supportive services to assist households to achieve permanent housing stability;

(7) establish transparent accountability measures, reporting requirements, and oversight mechanisms;

(8) increase Program efficiency and promote maximum flexibility in administering services and supports in the continuum;

(9) empower local communities to administer emergency housing services with maximum flexibility; and

(10) create a diversified system of emergency housing options, including shelters, specialized shelters, shared housing arrangements, host-home models, master-lease units, and rapid rehousing placements, that provide cost-effective, sustainable, and supportive outcomes to households.

* * * Creation of the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum * * *

Sec. 4. 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 is added to read:

CHAPTER 22. VERMONT HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE CONTINUUM

§ 2201. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

(1) “Alternative housing options” means housing options including shelters, specialized shelters, transitional housing, recovery residences, shared housing arrangements, host-home models, master-lease units, and rapid rehousing placements.

(2) “Applicant” means a household that applies for emergency housing assistance.

(3) “At risk of homelessness” means precariously housed without sufficient income, resources, or support to prevent homelessness.

(4) “Case management services” means individualized supportive services.

(5) “Coordinated entry” means a process that standardizes the way households at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness access and are assessed for and referred to the housing and services that a household needs for housing stability.

(6) “Department” means the Department for Children and Families.

(7) “Disability” means a physical, sensory, cognitive, developmental, or mental health condition or substance use disorder that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or that requires ongoing support, accommodation, or treatment to maintain an individual’s health, safety, or independence. The term includes chronic or episodic conditions that significantly impact daily functioning, regardless of whether the individual is receiving, or is eligible to receive, federal disability benefits.

(8) “Diversion” means a strategy aimed at preventing homelessness by helping households find immediate alternative housing options instead of entering shelters. Diversion focuses on addressing the needs of those who have recently lost their housing.

(9) “Eligible household” means a household that is homeless and is physically present and intends to reside in Vermont as evidenced by active participation in a housing, employment, or other Agency of Human Services–recognized plan.

(10) “Emergency cold-weather shelter” means publicly funded shelter beds made available to households during periods when the National Weather Service is forecasting temperatures at or below 10 degrees Fahrenheit including windchill for the majority of the State.

(11) “Emergency housing” means temporary shelter, lodging, or other housing support, or related services provided to eligible households to protect the health, safety, and welfare of an eligible household when no safe housing option is immediately available.

(12) “Highly structured shelter” means a shelter that provides programming that emphasizes case management, housing stability, employment, education, or treatment services, as well as other services as appropriate, in a manner that accommodates an eligible household’s disability, if any.

(13) “Homeless” means:

(A) lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;

(B) facing imminent loss of a primary nighttime residence;

(C) fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against a household or household member that either takes place in the primary nighttime residence or causes the household or household member to be afraid to return to the primary nighttime residence;

(D) residing in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, abandoned buildings, or streets; or

(E) otherwise defined as homeless under federal law.

(14) “Household” means an individual or group of individuals, with or without children, including individuals who reside together as one economic unit, who are married, parties to a civil union, or unmarried.

(15) “Low-barrier shelter” means a shelter that minimizes barriers to entry by reducing the rules and programmatic requirements found in highly structured shelters, while still providing case management and other housing support services in a manner that accommodates an eligible household’s disability, if any.

(16) “Minor child” means an individual under 18 years of age.

(17) “Office” means the Office of Economic Opportunity.

(18) “Permanent supportive housing” means long-term housing with wraparound services for individuals with complex health and social needs.

(19) “Prevention” means services intended to prevent a household from becoming homeless, including housing relocation or stabilization services or short-term rental assistance, including rental arrearage.

(20) “Program” means the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum.

(21) “Rapid rehousing” means short- to medium-term rental assistance and supportive services aimed at assisting a household to quickly exit homelessness.

(22) “Shelter” means a facility that meets the Department’s shelter standards.

(23) “Specialized shelter” means a facility that meets the Department’s shelter standards and applicable standards for the delivery of additional services, including health care, mental health services, or services related to substance use disorder.

(24) “Supportive services” means individualized supports that assist a household in obtaining and maintaining housing, including:

(A) intake assessments and services for diversion from homelessness;

(B) household needs assessments;

(C) case management;

(D) individualized household plans to address identified needs;

(E) housing navigation services;

(F) assistance obtaining and retaining housing, including financial assistance;

(G) landlord-tenant outreach, education, and conflict resolution;

(H) navigation to other services and supports as identified in the household's housing plan, including economic benefits, peer-supported services, job training and employment services, services related to disability and independent living advocacy, and referral to health care assistance, including treatment for mental health conditions and substance use disorder;

(I) progress monitoring of interventions; and

(J) services to ensure continuity after a permanent placement.

(25) "Unsheltered homelessness" means sleeping in a location not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, including cars, parks, abandoned buildings, or streets.

§ 2202. ESTABLISHMENT; VERMONT HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE CONTINUUM

(a) The Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum is established to create an array of services that prevent and address homelessness in Vermont. The Program shall be administered by the Department's Office of Economic Opportunity.

(b) The Office shall maintain a continuum of services that is flexible, housing focused, and designed to prevent homelessness whenever possible. The continuum shall prioritize early intervention, rapid resolution of housing crises, and equitable access to emergency and permanent housing.

(c) The Program shall:

(1) provide temporary emergency housing to eligible households experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness;

(2) reduce reliance on hotels and motels for emergency housing assistance;

(3) expand the use of alternative housing options in partnership with community organizations, municipalities, and private landlords;

(4) integrate case management and individualized housing plans into all emergency housing placements; and

(5) ensure accountability, transparency, and cost efficiency in the use of public funds.

(d) All funding opportunities available under the Program shall be open to any entity or community partner, including those that did not previously receive funding.

§ 2203. PROGRAM COMPONENTS

(a) The continuum of services shall consist of the following:

- (1) level 1: prevention and diversion services;
- (2) level 2: shelter services:
 - (A) level 2A: highly structured shelter services; and
 - (B) level 2B: low-barrier shelter services;
- (3) level 3: specialized shelter services;
- (4) level 4: hotels and motels;
- (5) permanent supportive housing services; and
- (6) other emergency housing services.

(b) The Office shall address each of the services in subsection (a) of this section by separate line items in its budget. The Department shall be responsible for any transfers to other Agency of Human Services departments necessary to implement the services listed in subsection (a) of this section. The Department and other departments within the Agency of Human Services shall maximize federal receipts, as applicable, for services listed in subsection (a) of this section.

(c) Upon assessing a household's needs, the Office or community partners shall offer to place the household in the appropriate level of care to address the household's specific needs if capacity, staffing, and geographic accessibility are available.

§ 2204. PREVENTION AND DIVERSION SERVICES

Level 1: prevention and diversion services.

(1) Prevention and diversion services shall function as the primary entry point to the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum for all households, although connection may be made at any level. The Office shall ensure that prevention and diversion services are provided through an agreement with one or more community partners in each region of the State in a manner that accommodates an eligible household's disability, if any. All households, upon request for assistance, shall receive a brief, standardized initial prevention and diversion assessment to identify safe alternatives to homelessness and resolve immediate housing barriers.

(2) Prevention includes activities to avert entry into homelessness. Diversion includes problem-solving interventions and supports that safely resolve a housing crisis without the use of shelter or hotel or motel placements.

(3) Funds administered for prevention and diversion services shall have maximum flexibility.

§ 2205. SHELTER SERVICES

(a) Level 2A: highly structured shelter services.

(1) To the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose, the Office shall determine the need for highly structured shelter services and develop sufficient highly structured shelter beds to address that need. The Department through the Office shall enter into agreements for a period of not less than two years at a time with community partners for the provision of highly structured shelter services.

(2) Highly structured shelters shall offer programming that emphasizes case management, housing stability, employment, education, or treatment services, as well as other services as appropriate, in a manner that accommodates an eligible household's disability, if any. Eligible households receiving highly structured shelter services shall participate in case management and other services to the extent of their ability.

(3) The Office shall ensure that highly structured shelter services meet the Department of Public Safety, Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code (CVR 28-070-001).

(4) If an eligible household's needs cannot be met with the level 1 prevention and diversion services in section 2204 of this chapter, highly structured shelter services are the preferred initial placement if capacity, staffing, and geographic accessibility are available.

(b) Level 2B: low-barrier shelter services.

(1) To the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose, the Office shall determine the need for low-barrier shelter services and develop sufficient low-barrier shelters to address that need. The Department through the Office shall enter into agreements for a period of not less than two years at a time with community partners for the provision of low-barrier shelter services.

(2) Low-barrier shelters shall minimize barriers to entry by reducing the rules and programmatic requirements found in highly structured shelters, while still providing case management and other housing support services in a manner that accommodates an eligible household's disability, if any. Stays in low-barrier shelters shall be time limited, and eligible households shall be

transitioned to highly structured shelter services or permanent housing as soon as feasible.

(3) The Office shall ensure that low-barrier shelter services meet the Department of Public Safety, Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code (CVR 28-070-001).

(4) If an eligible household's needs cannot be met with the level 1 prevention and diversion services in section 2204 of this chapter or the highly structured shelter services in subsection (a) of this section, low-barrier shelter services may be utilized if capacity, staffing, and geographic accessibility are available.

§ 2206. SPECIALIZED SHELTER SERVICES

Level 3: specialized shelter services.

(1) To the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose:

(A) the relevant Agency of Human Services departments shall determine the need for and, to the extent funds permit, develop specialized shelter services that comply with the Department of Public Safety, Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code (CVR 28-070-001), as well as any other applicable standards relevant to the specialty population; and

(B) the relevant Agency of Human Services departments shall enter into agreements for a period of not less than two years at a time with community partners for the provision of specialized shelter services.

(2) Specialized service shelters shall offer services delivered in a highly structured shelter as well as additional specialty services, such as services for substance use disorder and mental and physical health conditions. Eligible households receiving specialized shelter services shall participate in case management and other services to the extent of their ability.

(3) If an eligible household's needs cannot be met with the level 1 prevention and diversion services in section 2204 of this chapter or the level 2 shelter services in section 2205 of this chapter, a specialized service shelter may be utilized if capacity, staffing, and geographic accessibility are available and the eligible household requires specialized services.

§ 2207. HOTELS AND MOTELS

Level 4: hotels and motels.

(1) It is the intent of the General Assembly to decrease reliance on hotel and motel rooms. However, until sufficient permanent affordable housing or shelter services are available, the use of hotel and motel services shall be permitted.

(2) If a hotel or motel is utilized pursuant to this section, the Department shall:

(A) enter into an agreement with one or more community partners to provide relevant supportive services to eligible households;

(B) permit a population-specific placement to the extent certain populations are not isolated from the wider community served through the Program;

(C) propose hotel and motel rates as part of its budget presentation for the General Assembly's consideration;

(D) use only hotel and motel rates established by the General Assembly;

(E) enter into agreements for the use of blocks of hotel and motel rooms and negotiate conditions of use for those blocks, including access to providers of case management and other supportive services, with space to provide services as negotiated; and

(F) ensure that services are not provided pursuant to this section on a night-by-night basis.

(3) If a hotel or motel is utilized pursuant to this section, the eligible household shall participate in case management services, planning for housing stability, and other services to the extent of the eligible household's ability.

(4) A hotel or motel used pursuant to this chapter shall comply with Program rules and the following rules:

(A) Department of Health, Licensed Lodging Establishment Rule (CVR 13-140-023); and

(B) Department of Public Safety, Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code (CVR 28-070-001).

(5)(A) To the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose:

(i) between April 1 and November 30 of each year, the utilization of hotel and motel rooms pursuant to this section shall be capped at 700 rooms per night; and

(ii) between December 1 and March 31 of each year, the utilization of hotel and motel rooms pursuant to this section shall be capped at 1,000 rooms per night.

(B) Hotel and motel rooms utilized by individuals served under section 602 of this title shall not be included in the room caps provided in this subdivision (5).

(6) If an eligible household's needs cannot be met by levels 1–3 of the Program as described in sections 2204–2206 of this chapter, the Office may utilize hotels and motels if capacity, staffing, and geographic accessibility are available.

§ 2208. PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES

The Agency of Human Services' departments or their community partners shall offer to provide permanent supportive housing services to an eligible household participating in the Program. Permanent supportive housing services provided pursuant to this section shall combine long-term, community-based rental assistance with voluntary, flexible supportive services, such as family supportive housing and other supportive housing services funded in whole or in part by Medicaid, if the household and services are eligible for Medicaid. An eligible household receiving permanent supportive housing services shall participate in case management, planning for housing stability, and other services to the extent of the eligible household's ability. Permanent supportive housing services may be utilized by an eligible household for as long as the eligible household's plan indicates it is necessary.

§ 2209. OTHER EMERGENCY HOUSING SERVICES

(a) Municipal supports. The Department through the Office shall provide grants to municipalities in areas of the State with a high volume of unsheltered homelessness, including municipalities underserved by traditional funding sources. An eligible municipality may submit to the Office a grant application containing the estimated cost of the municipality's proposal and other identified funding sources. The use of grant funding awarded pursuant to this subsection is at the discretion of the municipality and shall include the provision of basic life-sustaining shelter when the National Weather Service declares a cold weather advisory. Shelter provided pursuant to this subsection shall be time limited, shall not require a coordinated entry assessment or case management, and shall have minimal data reporting requirements.

(b) Emergency cold-weather shelters. Emergency cold-weather shelters shall be managed through an agreement between the Office and one or more community partners to provide overnight, low-barrier shelter when weather conditions warrant. The Office and community partners shall ensure equitable access to emergency cold-weather shelters for communities with a high number of households experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Shelter provided pursuant to this subsection shall be time limited, shall not require a coordinated entry assessment or case management, and shall have minimal data reporting requirements.

(c) Alternative Agency of Human Services housing solutions. The Agency of Human Services, through its various departments, provides households with other time-limited or permanent housing. Such services include recovery housing, various residential supports for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, home care services for older Vermonters and individuals with physical disabilities, transitional housing for individuals exiting correctional custody, and residential options for individuals with mental health challenges. Emergency housing provided through the Program is not intended to take the place of any other Agency of Human Services time-limited or permanent housing.

§ 2210. HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES

(a) Within the funds appropriated for this purpose, a household shall qualify for services under the Program if the household:

(1) is physically present and intends to reside in Vermont as evidenced by active participation in a housing, employment, or other Agency of Human Services-recognized plan;

(2) agrees to a coordinated entry assessment that prioritizes the household for permanent housing, unless explicitly exempt under this chapter;

(3) agrees to engage with a case manager to develop a housing plan, unless explicitly exempt from case management requirements under this chapter or by federal law; and

(4) abides by Program rules and refrains from misconduct.

(b)(1) The Office or a community partner shall provide clear written notice to all applicants regarding penalties for fraud at the time of application.

(2) The Office or a community partner shall not impose a penalty upon a household for a good faith, immaterial error that was corrected upon notice within a reasonable period of time.

(3) A household that knowingly provides false, misleading, or incomplete information regarding residency, disability status, household composition, or other eligibility criteria shall be subject to termination of services within 30 days after receiving written notice from the Department or a community partner.

(4) Pending the outcome of a relevant Human Services Board hearing, the Office may refer cases of suspected fraud to the Office of the Attorney General or a State's Attorney for investigation and prosecution under applicable State law.

(c) A household may be terminated from the Program for repeatedly refusing suitable placements following documented suitability assessments and reasonable accommodations.

(d) A member or members of an eligible household may be subject to immediate termination of services as necessary for the safety of others if the member or members are engaged in:

(1) criminal activity; or

(2) misconduct that is not related to a disability or to victimization related to abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

(e) As used in this section, “misconduct” means documented behaviors that materially endanger the safety of others, involve the intentional destruction of property, or constitute illegal activity.

§ 2211. PRIORITIZATION

(a) The Office, either directly or through community partners, shall prioritize services within the funds appropriated for this purpose to eligible households who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and have a member who:

(1) is 65 years of age or older;

(2) has a disability;

(3) is a minor child;

(4) is pregnant;

(5) is experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions;
or

(6) is under court-ordered eviction or constructive eviction due to circumstances over which the household has no control.

(b)(1) Proof of an eligible household’s disability shall be verified by:

(A) a health care provider licensed or certified and practicing in Vermont;

(B) a determination or certification from a State- or federally recognized agency or program that provides services to individuals with disabilities; or

(C) self-attestation by the eligible household, subject to verification by the State or community partner within 30 days when other documentation is not reasonably available at the time of application.

(2) The presence of an eligible household member's disability shall be verified by the Office or a community partner during the household's initial application process and shall be redetermined annually if the household is still receiving services. An eligible household with a member who has a lifelong disability, such as an intellectual or developmental disability, shall not be required to have the disability redetermined.

(c) The Office and community partners shall comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12101–12213, and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794, for the purposes of providing reasonable modifications, effective communication, and accessible placements. Program rules and case management requirements shall be reasonably modified, including with the use of plain language, as necessary to avoid discrimination against eligible households with a member who has a disability.

§ 2212. TIME LIMITS FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

(a) Time limits for Program participation shall be governed by the level of service provided as follows:

(1) Level 1: Any temporary housing that is not provided in the form of temporary rental assistance through the Program's prevention and diversion services shall not exceed 30 days per rolling 12-month period.

(2) Level 2: The Office, in collaboration with shelter providers, shall establish the maximum length of stay in highly structured shelters and low-barrier shelters in rule or shelter standards.

(3) Level 3: The Department, in collaboration with other relevant Agency of Human Services departments, shall establish the maximum length of stay in specialized shelters in rule or shelter standards.

(4) Level 4: Hotels and motels:

(A) Between April 1 and November 30 of each year, eligible households may receive housing at hotels and motels with supportive services for not more than 70 days per rolling 12-month period as calculated from the date of the eligible household's application through the same day of the month 12 months later.

(B) Between December 1 and March 31 of each year, eligible households may receive continuous services in cold-weather-use hotels and motels, which shall not be applied toward the time limit established in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (4).

(b) The Department may grant extensions to the time limits established in subsection (a) of this section pursuant to criteria adopted in rule, including for:

(1) an eligible household actively awaiting a placement in housing, treatment, or other services;

(2) medical necessity;

(3) lack of reasonable alternative accessible placements for a member of the eligible household with a disability; and

(4) imminent risk to the health or safety of one or more of the eligible household's members.

§ 2213. CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Each eligible household shall be assigned a case manager, except where specifically exempted for certain services, which may be from any Agency of Human Services department or a community partner. Case management services provided pursuant to this chapter shall be informed by the acuity level of the eligible household and include individualized supports that connect an eligible household to public assistance, health care, employment, permanent housing, and other services. A household may request, but is not guaranteed, a specific case manager or change in case manager.

§ 2214. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Office and community partners shall provide advice and consultation to the Department of Housing and Community Development in its completion of a needs assessment that identifies gaps in services for households that are homeless in the State and includes recommendations to ensure the provision of equitable services throughout the State.

§ 2215. NOTICE; APPEALS; RIGHT TO FAIR HEARING

(a) The Office or a community partner shall provide written notice to any applicant or household whose participation in the Program is denied, reduced, suspended, or terminated. Notice shall include:

(1) the specific factual and legal basis for the Office or community partner's decision;

(2) the effective date of the action, which in the case of termination, reduction, or suspension of services shall provide timely written notice by email or U.S. mail;

(3) a statement of the right to request a fair hearing pursuant to this section; and

(4) clear instructions, in plain language, on the process and deadlines for filing an appeal.

(b) An applicant for or a recipient of assistance pursuant to this chapter may file a request for a fair hearing with the Human Services Board pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 3091 when:

(1) an application for assistance under the Program is denied in whole or part;

(2) a household's benefits are terminated, reduced, or suspended; or

(3) the household believes that benefits have not been provided in accordance with applicable rules or policies.

(c) An applicant or household shall file a request for a fair hearing with the Human Services Board within 60 days after the date of the written notice pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

(d) If a household files a request for a fair hearing within 14 days after receiving notice pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the Office or community partner providing notice shall continue to provide services under the Program without interruption until a decision is issued by the Human Services Board, unless:

(1) the household voluntarily waives continued services; or

(2) a household or household member's continued receipt of services poses a risk of safety to others.

(e) Fair hearings held pursuant to this section shall be conducted in accordance with 3 V.S.A. §§ 3090–3091.

§ 2216. RULEMAKING

The Department shall adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 for the implementation of the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum, addressing at a minimum:

(1) requirements for community providers participating in the Program;

(2) standards for highly structured, low-barrier, and specialized shelters;

(3) documentation requirements for household eligibility, including disability;

(4) required elements for supportive services, including case management;

(5) the creation of a brief, standardized initial assessment form that may be completed by hand, electronically, or by telephone;

(6) a process for issuing timely, written approval or denial notifications to applicants;

(7) a process for issuing advance notice to households when the household is being terminated from the Program;

(8) applicant and household appeal procedures;

(9) time limits for Program participation, including procedures for extensions;

(10) a process for reinstatement of services after a household's termination from the Program;

(11) expectations for the Office's oversight and quality monitoring, including performance measurements applicable to all community partners and grantees; and

(12) other subjects as deemed necessary.

§ 2217. REPORTING

(a) Annually, as part of the Department's budget presentation, the Department shall provide a status report addressing each level of the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum. Minimally, the status report shall address:

(1) the number of households served within each level of the Program;

(2) the average length of participation for households within each level of the Program and the rate at which households successfully transition to permanent housing;

(3) the number of households diverted from entering shelters or hotel and motel placements through prevention and diversion services;

(4) the utilization of hotels and motels, including:

(A) the average nightly number of rooms used;

(B) the average and median length of stay;

(C) the extent to which hotel and motel usage has decreased relative to the prior fiscal year; and

(D) the number of eligible households denied a hotel or motel room due to authorized rooms being fully occupied;

(5) housing stability outcomes, including rates of return to homelessness within six and 12 months following exit from the Program;

(6) an assessment of regional capacity and access to services, including identification of geographic areas with unmet needs or disproportionate utilization of emergency housing resources;

(7) total expenditures by Program level and funding source, including State, federal, and other funds, and an analysis of cost efficiency across housing models; and

(8) any operational barriers to implementation of the Program, along with recommendations for administrative or legislative action.

(b) Annually, as part of the Department's budget presentation, the Department shall set goals for increased housing capacity, including permanent supportive housing, permanent affordable housing, and shelter beds. The Department shall provide data pertaining to the increased shelter capacity and the extent to which shelter capacity meets the needs of eligible households experiencing homelessness each year.

(c) On or before the last day of each month, the Office, or other relevant agency or department, shall post on its website a substantially similar report to that due pursuant to 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 81, Sec. 6(b), including the Office's monthly expenditure on the Program by level.

* * * Continuums of Care; Required Merger * * *

Sec. 5. MERGER OF CONTINUUMS OF CARE

(a) In order to promote the effective use of resources and continuity of care, the Department for Children and Families' Office of Economic Opportunity shall work in collaboration with the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, the Balance of State Continuum of Care, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to establish a single continuum of care in the State on or before October 1, 2028.

(b) On or before January 15, 2028, the Office shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare summarizing efforts to establish a single continuum of care pursuant to this section.

* * * Effective October 1, 2028, Requirements of Grantees * * *

Sec. 6. 33 V.S.A. § 2218 is added to read:

§ 2218. GRANT REQUIREMENTS

Any grant or other agreement executed by the Agency of Human Services or its departments shall require a community partner, as appropriate, to:

(1) participate in the local housing coalition or other group established to assist eligible households who are homeless;

(2) utilize the coordinated entry assessment for eligible households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness;

(3) utilize the appropriate planning process and options for an eligible household transitioning into permanent housing, including for eligible households with an individual who has an intellectual or developmental disability, older Vermonters, or individuals transitioning from a correctional facility or hospital; and

(4) measure performance outcomes, including diversion success, time to housing, and housing retention.

* * * Fiscal Year 2027 Time Limits for Use of Hotels and Motels * * *

Sec. 6a. FISCAL YEAR 2027 TIME LIMITS; HOTELS AND MOTELS

In fiscal year 2027, an eligible household utilizing General Assistance emergency housing in a hotel or motel during the previous fiscal year shall not be subject to a reset of the 70-day limit established in 33 V.S.A. § 2212(a)(4)(A) until the 12-month anniversary of the eligible household's fiscal year 2026 application.

* * * Transition and Rulemaking; Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum * * *

Sec. 7. TRANSITION TO THE VERMONT HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE CONTINUUM

Recognizing that the Department and community partners do not have the capacity to fully implement the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 on July 1, 2026, the Department through the Office and community partners shall implement the Program to the fullest extent of their ability in fiscal year 2027 while developing the capacity to fully implement the Program in fiscal year 2028.

Sec. 8. INTERIM EMERGENCY RULEMAKING; DEADLINE FOR ADOPTION OF PERMANENT RULES

(a)(1) Pending the adoption of permanent rules on the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum, the Commissioner for Children and Families shall adopt and maintain emergency rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 844, which shall be deemed to meet the standard for emergency rulemaking pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 844(a). Emergency rules required by this subsection shall take effect on September 1, 2026, and shall, at a minimum, address the required topics listed in 33 V.S.A. § 2216.

(2) Between July 1, 2026, and August 31, 2026, the Commissioner for Children and Families shall administer the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum by applying the General Assistance Emergency Housing rules approved by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules on March 13, 2025, for the administration of this act.

(b)(1) Unless extended by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 843(c), the Department shall, on or before October 1, 2027, adopt permanent rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 on the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum as required by 33 V.S.A. § 2216.

(2) Prior to filing the permanent rule with the Secretary of State pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 838, the Department shall:

(A) work in collaboration with stakeholders to develop the rule, including holding at least five regional stakeholder hearings throughout the State; and

(B) on or before April 1, 2027, submit a draft of the rules to the House Committee on Human Services and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare for review and consideration of Committee comments.

Sec. 9. IMPLEMENTATION STATUS REPORT; VERMONT HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE CONTINUUM

On or before February 15, 2027, the Department for Children and Families' Office of Economic Opportunity shall present a progress report to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare on the Office's implementation of the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum established pursuant to 33 V.S.A. chapter 22. The Office's presentation shall include an initial draft of the Department's permanent rules for the implementation of the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum and any recommendations for legislative action.

* * * Supportive and Shelter Services for Households Experiencing Domestic or Sexual Violence * * *

Sec. 10. 33 V.S.A. chapter 6 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 6. PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

* * *

§ 602. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES AND SHELTER FOR HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Department shall select and enter into an agreement with a statewide organization to provide or cause to be provided supportive services and shelter

to those households that are experiencing or that have experienced domestic or sexual violence. If the statewide organization cannot fulfill its responsibilities under this section, the Department shall work with another entity to ensure that there is not a gap in services.

* * * Vermont Rental Assistance Bridge Program * * *

Sec. 11. VERMONT RENTAL ASSISTANCE BRIDGE PROGRAM

(a) The Vermont Rental Assistance Bridge Program is established within the Vermont State Housing Authority for the purpose of linking households who require rental assistance to permanent housing when the household does not otherwise have access to relevant U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development rental assistance.

(b)(1) The Agency shall collaborate with the Vermont State Housing Authority to develop a framework for establishing a unified housing voucher program that consolidates the voucher assistance currently provided through the Agency's departments. In developing this framework, the Agency and the Vermont State Housing Authority shall:

(A) analyze the fiscal implications of consolidating existing voucher programs into a unified program, including projected costs, potential efficiencies, and impacts on funding sources;

(B) assess the projected impact on the total number of individuals served and on distinct populations, including:

(i) individuals exiting homelessness;

(ii) individuals facing eviction;

(iii) individuals with mental health challenges;

(iv) individuals with disabilities; and

(v) any other population served by the department-administered voucher programs;

(C) identify administrative, operational, and statutory changes required to implement a unified program; and

(D) propose options and recommendations for the structure, governance, and implementation of the unified program.

(2) The Agency and the Vermont State Housing Authority shall report their findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare on or before January 15, 2027.

(c) The Vermont State Housing Authority and relevant departments of the Agency of Human Services shall jointly work to:

(1) incorporate existing rental assistance that is funded by the Agency and its departments and designated for Vermonters exiting homelessness into the Program established in this section; and

(2) establish eligibility criteria, any prioritization that may be necessary for this use of funds appropriated for this Program, and the appropriate length of assistance under this section.

(d) The Program shall not provide the full amount of a household's rental payment and shall not be a permanent voucher. Program priority shall be given to current recipients of the HOME Program, established pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 321(b)(2), who have not yet reached 24 months of rental assistance. Program payments shall be made directly from the Vermont State Housing Authority to a household's landlord.

(e) The Program shall be accessible to eligible households served by each of the Agency's departments, with priority given to those exiting homelessness and not to the exclusion of other eligible populations.

* * * Payment Rate Structure and Fiscal Year 2027 Expenditures * * *

Sec. 12. PAYMENT RATE STRUCTURE; SHELTER SERVICES

The Department for Children and Families, in collaboration with the Agency of Human Services and relevant community partners, shall propose a payment rate structure, including periodic rate reviews, for all shelter services required by this act. The structure shall include a base rate and potential for supplemental payment to the base if necessary and appropriate.

(1) On or before April 1, 2027, the Department shall submit an interim report to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare regarding the implementation of the payment rate structure and the Department's proposed timeline for implementation.

(2) On or before November 1, 2027, the Department shall submit a final report to the Joint Fiscal Committee regarding the implementation of the payment rate structure and the Department's proposed timeline for implementation.

Sec. 13. FISCAL YEAR 2027 CAPPED ROOM RATES

In fiscal year 2027, the Department for Children and Families or community partners shall pay a hotel or motel establishment providing emergency housing not more than the hotel's lowest advertised room rate and

not more than \$80.00 a day per room to shelter a household participating in the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum. The Department for Children and Families or community partners may shelter a household in more than one hotel or motel room depending on the household's size and composition.

Sec. 14. EXPENDITURES; VERMONT HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE CONTINUUM

(a) This act provides for the fiscal year 2027 expenditure of \$82,634,153.00 for the provision of services, implementation of the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum, shelter development and operation, rental assistance, and supportive services, including case management, as follows:

(1) \$39,284,606.00 for the Housing Opportunity Grant Program operations, of which \$38,251,696.00 is base funding from the General Fund, \$830,422.00 is federal funding, and \$202,488.00 is from the Global Commitment Fund;

(2) \$4,400,000.00 for the shelter development, of which \$1,400,000.00 is base funding from the General Fund and \$3,000,000.00 is one-time funding from the General Fund;

(3) \$23,370,000.00 for emergency housing in hotels and motels, of which \$9,251,120.00 is base funding from the General Fund and \$14,118,880.00 is one-time funding from the General Fund;

(4) \$2,400,000.00 for case management, of which \$2,400,000.00 is base funding from the General Fund;

(5) \$4,200,000.00 for permanent supportive housing and family supportive housing, of which \$778,987.00 is base funding from the General Fund and \$3,421,013.00 is from the Global Commitment Fund;

(6) \$3,000,000.00 for rental assistance, of which \$3,000,000.00 is base funding from the General Fund;

(7) \$500,000.00 for grants to municipalities pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 2209(a), of which \$500,000.00 is one-time funding from the General Fund;

(8) \$1,500,000.00 for emergency cold-weather shelters, of which \$1,500,000.00 is one-time funding from the General Fund;

(9) \$314,618.00 for other expenses, of which \$314,618.00 is from federal funding;

(10) \$3,164,929.00 for staffing, grants, and contracts, of which \$1,100,000.00 is base funding from the General Fund and \$2,064,929.00 is one-time funding from the General Fund; and

(11) \$500,000.00 for the Community Resource Center, of which \$500,000.00 is base funding from the General Fund.

(b) Any funds that remain unspent at the end of fiscal year 2027 shall be carried forward for the same purpose for which they were originally appropriated.

(c) Any funds appropriated for General Assistance emergency housing or the Housing Opportunity Grant Program that remain unspent at the end of fiscal year 2026 shall be carried forward for investment in the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum in fiscal year 2027.

(d) On or before October 1, 2026; January 1, 2027; and April 1, 2027, the Office shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare describing how the funds referenced in subsection (a) of this section have been utilized to date, including whether expended funds were one-time or base General Fund, federal funds, or Global Commitment funds.

* * * Removing General Assistance Annual Report * * *

Sec. 15. 33 V.S.A. § 2115 is amended to read:

§ 2115. GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM REPORT

~~On or before September 1 of each year, the Commissioner for Children and Families shall submit a written report to the Joint Fiscal Committee; the House Committees on Appropriations, on General, Housing, and Military Affairs, and on Human Services; and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare. The report shall contain the following:~~

~~(1) an evaluation of the General Assistance program during the previous fiscal year;~~

~~(2) any recommendations for changes to the program;~~

~~(3) a plan for continued implementation of the program;~~

~~(4) statewide statistics using deidentified data related to the use of emergency housing vouchers during the preceding State fiscal year, including demographic information, client data, shelter and motel usage rates, clients' primary stated cause of homelessness, and average lengths of stay in emergency housing by demographic group and by type of housing; and~~

~~(5) other information the Commissioner deems appropriate. [Repealed.]~~

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 16. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and Sec. 8 (deadline for adoption of permanent rules; interim emergency rulemaking) shall take effect on passage.

(b) Sec. 6 (grant requirements) shall take effect on October 1, 2028.

(c) All remaining sections shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

Which proposal of amendment was considered and concurred in.

Rules Suspended, Immediate Consideration; Favorable Report; Second Reading; Third Reading Ordered; Rules Suspended, All Remaining Stages of Passage; Third Reading, Bill Passed; Rules Suspended, Messaged to the Senate Forthwith

H. 957

On motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and House bill, entitled

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

Appearing on the Notice Calendar, was taken up for immediate consideration.

Rep. Coffin of Cavendish, for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, to which had been referred the bill, 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.

On motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and the bill placed in all remaining stages of passage. The bill was read the third time and passed.

Thereupon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and the bill was ordered messaged to the Senate forthwith.

Rules Suspended, Immediate Consideration; Senate Proposal of Amendment to House Proposal of Amendment to Senate Proposal of Amendment Concurred in

H. 941

On motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the rules were suspended and House bill, entitled

An act relating to municipal regulation of agriculture

Pending entry on the Notice Calendar, was taken up for immediate consideration.

The Senate concurred in the House proposal of amendment to Senate proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment thereto by striking out Sec. 5, municipal regulation of farming study; report, in its entirety and by renumbering the remaining section to be numerically correct.

Which proposal of amendment was considered and concurred in.

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

S. 64

Senate bill, entitled

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

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.

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

S. 313

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to transforming Vermont's career technical education system

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

Adjournment

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