

# Journal of the Senate

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TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025

The Senate was called to order by the President.

## **Devotional Exercises**

A moment of silence was observed in lieu of devotions.

## **Pledge of Allegiance**

The President then led the members of the Senate in the pledge of allegiance.

## **Bill Referred to Committee on Finance**

### **H. 454.**

House bill of the following title, appearing on the Calendar for notice, and affecting the revenue of the state, under the rule was referred to the Committee on Finance:

An act relating to transforming Vermont's education governance, quality, and finance systems.

## **Joint Senate Resolution Adopted on the Part of the Senate**

### **J.R.S. 25.**

Joint Senate resolution of the following title was offered, read and adopted on the part of the Senate, and is as follows:

Offered by Senator Baruth,

**J.R.S. 25.** Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on May 9, 2025.

### ***Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:***

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, May 9, 2025, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, May 13, 2025.

## **Third Reading Ordered**

### **S.R. 14.**

Senator Ingalls, for the Committee on Agriculture, to which was referred Senate resolution entitled:

Senate resolution strongly urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to expedite the establishment and implementation of an avian influenza vaccine national reserve and distribution system for small- and medium-sized poultry farms.

Reported that the resolution ought to be adopted.

Thereupon, the resolution was read the second time by title only pursuant to Rule 43, and third reading of the resolution was ordered.

### **House Proposal of Amendment Concurred In**

#### **S. 36.**

House proposal of amendment to Senate bill entitled:

An act relating to the Medicaid payment model for residential substance use disorder treatment services.

Was taken up.

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

First: In Sec. 4, repeal, by striking out “public inebriates” and inserting in lieu thereof “persons who are incapacitated”

Second: By inserting a new Sec. 6 and a new section to be Sec. 7 to read as follows:

#### **Sec. 6. REPORTS; SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING FOR PERSONS WHO ARE INCAPACITATED**

(a)(1) The Departments of Health and of Mental Health’s existing plan to expand services and programming for persons who are incapacitated pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 4810 shall prioritize Chittenden County.

(2) On or before February 15, 2026, the Departments of Health and of Mental Health shall jointly provide a presentation to the House Committees on Health Care and on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare describing efforts to expand services and programming for persons who are incapacitated pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(b) On or before February 15, 2026, the Department of Corrections shall provide a presentation to the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions, on Health Care, and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Institutions and on Health and Welfare describing efforts to reinstate the practice of connecting persons who are in a correctional facility due to incapacitation pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 4810 with appropriate community-based substance use recovery providers.

## Sec. 7. REPORTS; HUMAN SERVICES BOARD PROCEEDINGS

(a) On or before December 15, 2025, the Agency of Human Services, in consultation with the Human Services Board, Office of the Attorney General, each of the Agency's departments with cases before the Human Services Board, community partners, and individuals with lived experience as appellants before the Board, shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Health Care and on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare providing the following information and recommendations regarding proceedings before the Board:

(1) a proposal that attorneys representing the Agency or departments participate in training that balances the attorney's ethical obligation to zealously represent the attorney's client with the respectful, trauma-informed treatment of appellants;

(2) an analysis of varying appeals processes specific to the Agency and each department with cases before the Board, including proposals and any legislative action necessary to improve consistency;

(3) a proposal to identify and collect currently unavailable data in a manner that ensures uniform data collection across the Agency and departments with cases before the Board, including data regarding cases resolved prior to reaching the stage of hearing officer or full Board involvement;

(4) recommendations for resolving potential appeals prior to reaching the Board; and

(5) any other recommendation requiring legislative action.

(b) On or before December 15, 2025, the Human Services Board, in collaboration with the Agency of Human Services, each of the Agency's departments with cases before the Board, the Office of the Attorney General, community partners, and individuals with lived experience as appellants before the Board, shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Health Care and on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare providing the following information and recommendations regarding proceedings before the Board:

(1) a proposal to improve understanding of Board processes and accessibility to appellants, including the use of media and graphics to explain what the Board is and how it operates;

(2) a proposal for the exchange of periodic feedback as part of a continual quality improvement process between the Board, Agency,

departments appearing before the Board, Office of the Attorney General, Vermont Legal Aid, and other relevant stakeholders;

(3) an analysis of how to enable an appellant to present a personal narrative without jeopardizing the appellant's case or disrupting the legal obligations of the Board and the attorneys representing the Agency or departments appearing before the Board; and

(4) recommendations to improve the reporting and analysis of data to the General Assembly, including information related to appeal requests resolved prior to reaching the stage of hearing officer or full Board involvement.

and by renumbering the remaining section to be numerically correct

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: "An act relating to the delivery and payment of certain services provided through the Agency of Human Services, services for persons who are incapacitated, and Human Services Board proceedings"

Thereupon, the question, Shall the Senate concur in the House proposal of amendment?, was decided in the affirmative.

**House Proposal of Amendment to Senate Proposal of Amendment  
Concurred In with Amendment**

**H. 398.**

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

An act relating to the Vermont Economic Development Authority.

Was taken up.

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

In Sec. 1, 10 V.S.A. chapter 12, in section 280gg, by adding a new subsection to be subsection (e) to read as follows:

(e) A business shall not be eligible for financial assistance from the Vermont Disaster Recovery Loan Fund established by this subchapter 15 if the business has received disaster recovery financial assistance from the State for the same disaster event.

Thereupon, pending the question, Shall the Senate concur in the House proposal of amendment to the Senate proposal of amendment?, Senators Chittenden, Beck, Brock, Cummings, Gulick, Hardy and Mattos move that the

Senate concur in the House proposal of amendment to the Senate Proposal of Amendment with further proposal of amendment as follows:

In Sec. 1, 10 V.S.A. chapter 12, in section 280gg, by striking out subsection (e) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (e) to read as follows:

(e) In determining whether to issue financial assistance from the Vermont Disaster Recovery Loan Fund established by this subchapter 15, the Authority shall consider whether a business has received disaster recovery financial assistance from the State for the same disaster event.

Thereupon, the question, Shall the Senate concur in the House proposal of amendment to the Senate proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment?, was decided in the affirmative.

**Bill Passed in Concurrence with Proposal of Amendment**

**H. 98.**

House bill of the following title was read the third time and passed in concurrence with proposal of amendment:

An act relating to confirmatory adoptions.

**Bill Passed in Concurrence with Proposals of Amendment; Rules Suspended; Bill Messaged**

**H. 494.**

House bill of the following title was read the third time and passed in concurrence with proposals of amendment:

An act relating to capital construction and State bonding.

Thereupon, on motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended and the bill was ordered messaged to the House forthwith.

**Third Reading Ordered**

**H. 491.**

Senator Beck, for the Committee on Finance, to which was referred House bill entitled:

An act relating to setting the homestead property tax yields and the nonhomestead property tax rate.

Reported that the bill ought to pass in concurrence.

Thereupon, the bill was read the second time by title only pursuant to Rule 43, and third reading of the bill was ordered.

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**Point of Privilege Journalized**

During announcements, on a point of personal privilege, Senator Ram Hinsdale addressed the Chair, and on motion of Senator Baruth, her remarks were entered into the Journal.

“Mr. President, colleagues,

“Today I rise to speak on a point of personal privilege with urgency and alarm for our communities, our young people, and our future.

“The Trump Administration is moving forward with proposals to slash or eliminate two lifelines that Vermonters depend on: FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and AmeriCorps, the national service program that brings young people and dedicated workers into our schools, clinics, town offices, non-profits, and disaster zones.

“These are not abstract federal programs. FEMA and AmeriCorps are woven into the very fabric of how we survive crises, rebuild after disaster, and strengthen our communities.

“Let me walk you through what this would mean — in dollars, in jobs, and in the spirit of service that makes Vermont who we are.

“First, FEMA. When the rains fall, when the rivers rise, when the storms come through and rip up our roads and flood out our downtowns — FEMA is there. Not because they appear with a checkbook (though we have certainly wished for that), but because Vermont has long been in partnership with the federal government to invest in disaster mitigation, recovery, and resilience.

“We’ve seen this firsthand — after Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, after the catastrophic floods of the last two summers, and after countless storms that may not have made national headlines but devastated local communities. FEMA dollars have rebuilt washed-out bridges in Washington County, reinforced floodplain protections in Brattleboro, and provided emergency aid to families and municipalities that would otherwise face financial ruin.

“Without FEMA, the full burden of those costs would fall on Vermont taxpayers — on small towns with limited budgets, on farmers trying to get crops back in the ground, and on homeowners who are already stretched thin. It reminds us who we are as Americans when we see the federal government and surrounding states send help when disaster strikes.

“And let’s be clear about what FEMA cuts mean in numbers. FEMA’s mitigation programs return \$6 for every \$1 invested. Eliminating FEMA’s support would not just leave Vermont exposed to disaster; it would cost us many times more in long-term recovery.

“Next, AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is sometimes called the ‘domestic Peace Corps’ — and here in Vermont, it’s the backbone of our civic infrastructure. We are a state of service through and through.

“Every year, nearly 300 AmeriCorps members serve in Vermont, working with nonprofits, schools, health centers, and state agencies. These are the young people tutoring students in after-school programs, building affordable housing, running substance use prevention programs, staffing recovery centers, and helping communities navigate after disasters.

“AmeriCorps members don’t just give their time — they build their futures. The program provides living stipends, education awards, job training, and a pipeline into Vermont’s workforce. And they stay: roughly 1 in 3 AmeriCorps alumni remain in the communities where they served.

“But what happens if the Trump Administration succeeds in eliminating AmeriCorps? It’s not just a number on a federal budget spreadsheet — it’s real people and real services disappearing from our towns.

“So why is the Trump Administration targeting these programs?

“Why cut FEMA, when disasters are growing more frequent and more severe? Why cut AmeriCorps when we face a workforce shortage and a frayed social safety net?

“The answer is ideology — a small-minded, anti-public investment agenda that refuses to recognize the power of shared responsibility and national service.

“But here’s the thing: Vermont knows better.

“We know that neighbors help neighbors. That we are stronger together. That no town, no farmer, no homeowner should face disaster alone. And that when young people step up to serve, we should support them — not pull the rug out from under them.

“Eliminating FEMA and AmeriCorps would be a direct attack on Vermont’s economy, Vermont’s resilience, and Vermont’s spirit. It would force local taxpayers to bear impossible costs and send a cruel message to young people who want to serve their communities.

“And for what? To say we have no collective role in disaster relief, no role in national service, and no role in helping communities recover and thrive?

“Colleagues, we must reject that vision.

“Vermont has always believed in Freedom and Unity — that we are strongest when we stand together, when we care for one another, and when we invest in the systems that keep our communities safe and whole.

“Today, I ask you to join me in sending a clear message: We will fight to protect FEMA. We will fight to protect AmeriCorps. We will defend Vermont’s right to resilience, to service, and to a government that works for the people.

“This is not just about policy. It’s about who we are — as Vermonters, as public servants, and as a nation.

“Thank you.”

### **Message from the House No. 55**

A message was received from the House of Representatives by Ms. Courtney Reckord, its Second Assistant Clerk, as follows:

Mr. President:

I am directed to inform the Senate that:

The House has considered Senate proposal of amendment to House bill entitled:

**H. 494.** An act relating to capital construction and State bonding.

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

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

Rep. Emmons of Springfield

Rep. Gregoire of Fairfield

Rep. Headrick of Burlington.

### **Message from the House No. 56**

A message was received from the House of Representatives by Ms. Courtney Reckord, its Second Assistant Clerk, as follows:

Mr. President:

I am directed to inform the Senate that:

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

**H. 96.** An act relating to increasing the monetary thresholds for certificates of need.

And has concurred therein.

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



**S. 27.** An act relating to medical debt relief and excluding medical debt from credit reports.

And has concurred therein.

The House has considered joint resolution originating in the Senate of the following title:

**J.R.S. 15.** Joint resolution supporting Vermont's transgender and non-binary community and declaring Vermont's commitment to fighting discrimination and treating all citizens with respect and dignity.

And has adopted the same in concurrence.

The Governor has informed the House that on May 5, 2025, he approved and signed bills originating in the House of the following titles:

**H. 17.** An act relating to approval of the adoption of the charter of the Town of Morristown.

**H. 21.** An act relating to service of writs of possession.

### **Adjournment**

On motion of Senator Baruth, the Senate adjourned until one o'clock in the afternoon on Tuesday, May 7, 2025.