

# **Journal of the Senate of the STATE OF VERMONT ADJOURNED SESSION, 2026**

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**TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026**

Pursuant to the provisions of the 2025 final adjournment joint resolution of the two Houses (J.R.S. 28), the Senate convened at the State House at Montpelier, on Tuesday, the sixth day of January, two thousand twenty-six.

At ten o'clock in the forenoon, Eastern Standard Time, the Senate was called to order by the President, Lieutenant Governor John S. Rodgers.

## **Devotional Exercises**

Devotional exercises were conducted by the Reverend Michael Knowles of Proctor.

## **Pledge of Allegiance**

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

## **Resignation of Senator**

The following communication was received by the Secretary from the Honorable Samuel A. Douglass, Senator from Orleans District, notifying the Senate of his resignation from the Senate, which letter is as follows:

“October 22, 2025

Senate Secretary John Bloomer  
115 State St.  
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Secretary Bloomer,

With this statement, I am seeking to explain more of the situation from earlier this week. As I stated in my initial statement, the comment attributed to me was an unflattering remark about a specific individual, absolutely not a generalization and had no reference to race or gender. This was the context I provided in my initial statement. I love my state, my people, and I am deeply sorry for the offense this caused and that our state was dragged into

this.

For those that hadn't seen, I spent the last three weeks touring Recovery Residences across the state, top to bottom, to highlight my substance abuse recovery bill. When this story broke, I was at a tour stop giving a speech about recovery and addicted Vermonters. About how we shouldn't judge people because we don't know their whole story, that so many people are marginalized in society, that the stigma that drug users face is based on ignorance, that trauma affects the outcome of your life, and that everyone deserves a second chance.

We just had a baby. Our first. We struggled with fertility for years and we were lucky. I was on paternity leave as of last week and I was just returning to legislative work when this story broke. So, we're still trying to put our house back together and catch up on sleep. Yet, I have received some of the most horrific hate one could imagine. Between calling my wife a "wh\*re" and others including phrases like, "we wiped you nazi trash out once and we will again you doublechin, no jawlined incel f\*ckface", "Your baby would be better off dead", "I hope your baby gets r\*ped", "This world is better off without you.", and "You're wife is a fat ugly pig and needs to be muzzled like a dog." Many of these were made by Vermonters. We've even heard about an online petition circling to have our baby taken away from us. We've received multiple threatening phone calls. We've seen an online forum specifically dedicated to getting us fired from our jobs. Just today we were sent nasty items in the mail. We no longer feel safe in this new Vermont.

Even though I represent a Conservative Republican district, I never wanted to alienate anyone no matter their party, much to the consternation of fellow Republicans. I vowed I would serve in a moderate fashion and ensure that everyone's voices were heard. In my first session, I had a landmark agriculture bill passed in my first year, which was the first bill that I ever introduced. I began the work to reform our welfare system to reward struggling families for working more and to ensure that they wouldn't lose all their benefits and fall off the cliff for trying to work more hours. And I pushed back against legislators who overly downplayed environmental issues.

But for all concerned, me, my wife, my family, I must resign (effective Monday at noon). I know that this decision will upset many, but in this political climate I must keep my family safe.

I will continue to do what I have done my entire life, the very reasons why I was elected; I will help others in my community, be active, foster communication, and look out for others. But regardless, the most important

part is the effect—that offense was taken and people were hurt, so I will mend bridges to the best of my ability. Since the story broke, I have reached out to the majority of my Jewish and BIPOC friends and colleagues to ensure that they can be honest and upfront with me, and I know that as a young person I have a duty to set a good example for others.

Since I ran for public office, I’ve been criticized as being too young or inexperienced, but to all young people I say, don’t give up your dreams and don’t let people tell you to wait your turn, because maybe we have something to teach them.

I do want to thank the outpouring of supportive messages and emails from constituents and people across the state, and from legislators on both sides of the aisle. Your support of my family will stay with me. I also want to thank those who wanted to hear my side of the story and spoke to me first.

Respectfully,

/s/ Samuel A. Douglass

State Senator

Orleans District”

### **Message from the Governor**

A message was received from His Excellency, the Governor, by Jaye Pershing Johnson, Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, as follows:

Mr. President:

I am directed by the Governor to deliver to the Senate a communication in writing.

### **Appointment Journalized**

The President laid before the Senate the following communication from His Excellency, the Honorable Philip B. Scott, Governor of the State of Vermont, relating to the appointment of a new Senator from the District of Orleans, which was ordered entered in the Journal, and is as follows:

“State of Vermont  
Executive Department  
Montpelier

December 5, 2025

The Honorable John Rodgers  
President  
Vermont State Senate  
State House  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5501

Dear Mr. President:

I have the honor to inform you that I have appointed

**JOHN MORLEY, III, of Orleans**

to serve in the General Assembly, representing Orleans Senate District.

Sincerely,

/s/ Philip B. Scott

Philip B. Scott  
Governor

PBS/kp

cc: Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Secretary of State  
The Honorable John Bloomer, Secretary of the Senate”

**Oath Administered to Senate Member**

The Secretary reported that the oath of office was duly sworn to by Senate-appointee John Morley, III of Orleans District on December 16, 2025.

**Resignation of Senator**

The following communication was received by the Secretary from the Honorable Larry W. Hart, Sr., Senator from Orange District, notifying the Senate of his resignation from the Senate, which letter is as follows:

“October 27, 2025

Senate Secretary John Bloomer  
115 State St.  
Montpelier, Vermont 05633

Dear Secretary Bloomer,

I write this to inform you of my resignation from the Vermont Senate effective November 14, 2025. It is with sadness that I resign. I do so after much soul searching and discussion with my wife, my family and my colleagues.

As you may know I experienced the loss of my daughter and grandchild to addiction prior to running for the Senate. My hope was that I could refocus my life honoring my daughter with becoming a Vermont Senator and help with substance use addiction legislation among many other goals I outlined in my Senate race. I found that it became too difficult for me to accomplish any major goals in my first session as a Senator. The time and commitment became too great for my health and emotional well-being. I feel I owe it to my constituents to step down.

I want to thank the thousands of Orange County voters who elected me to the Senate. It was one of the proudest days of my life to learn I had won. To all of you I will be forever grateful. I will continue to try to serve in other roles that hopefully will help with addiction and the terrible toll it takes on Vermonters.

Best Regards,

/s/ Larry W. Hart, Sr.

Larry W. Hart, Sr.  
State Senator  
Orange District

Cc: Governor Philip B. Scott  
Lieutenant Governor John S. Rodgers"

**Message from the Governor**

A message was received from His Excellency, the Governor, by Jaye Pershing Johnson, Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, as follows:

Mr. President:

I am directed by the Governor to deliver to the Senate a communication in writing.

**Appointment Journalized**

The President laid before the Senate the following communication from His Excellency, the Honorable Philip B. Scott, Governor of the State of Vermont, relating to the appointment of a new Senator from the District of Orange, which was ordered entered in the Journal, and is as follows:

"State of Vermont  
Executive Department  
Montpelier

January 2, 2026

The Honorable John S. Rodgers  
President  
Vermont State Senate  
State House  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5501

Dear Mr. President:

I have the honor to inform you that I have appointed

**JOHN BENSON, of Brookfield**

to serve in the Vermont State Senate, representing the Orange Senate District.

Sincerely,

/s/ Philip B. Scott

Philip B. Scott  
Governor"

PBS/kp

cc: Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Secretary of State

The Honorable John Bloomer, Secretary of the Senate"

**Oath Administered; New Senator Seated**

Thereupon, the Senate-appointee, John Benson, was escorted to the bar of the Senate by Senator Baruth of Chittenden-Central District, Senator Lyons of Chittenden-Southeast District, and Senator Beck of Caledonia District, and took and subscribed the oath of office required by the Constitution from the President of the Senate, John S. Rodgers.

The new Senator then took his seat and assumed his legislative duties.

**Standing Committees Realigned**

The President, on behalf of the Committee on Committees, and as a result of the resignations of Senators Samuel A. Douglass and Larry W. Hart, Sr. and subsequent replacement by Senators John Morley, III and John Benson, reported realignments and new appointments for three of the standing committees, as follows:

**Government Operations**

Senator Collamore, Chair  
Vyhovsky, Vice-Chair  
White  
Clarkson  
*Morley*

**Health and Welfare**

Senator Lyons, Chair  
Gulick, Vice-Chair  
Cummings  
*Morley*  
*Benson*

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**Institutions**

Senator Harrison, Chair  
Plunkett, Vice-Chair  
Ingalls  
Major  
*Benson*

**Message from the Governor  
Appointments Referred**

A message was received from the Governor, by Jaye Pershing Johnson, Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, submitting the following appointments, which were referred to committees as indicated:

The nominations of

Billings, Jireh of Plymouth - Member of the Capitol Complex Commission - from June 18, 2025 to February 28, 2027.

To the Committee on Institutions.

Delaini, Dani of Brattleboro - Member of the State Infrastructure Bank Board - from June 18, 2025 to February 28, 2026.

To the Committee on Finance.

Donohue, Mike of Shelburne - Member of the Vermont Economic Progress Council - from April 28, 2025 to March 31, 2029.

To the Committee on Finance

Falk, Gail of Plainfield - Member of the Board of Medical Practice -from August 12, 2025 to February 28, 2029.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare

Furman, Sarah of Rutland - Member of the Vermont Economic Development Authority - from June 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

To the Committee on Finance

Hayes, Katherine of Brattleboro - Member of the Council for Equitable Youth Justice - from May 7, 2025 to February 28, 2026.

To the Committee on Judiciary

Hollar, John of Montpelier - Member of the Capitol Complex Commission - from June 18, 2025 to February 28, 2027.

To the Committee on Institutions

Jones, Suzanne S. of Mendon - Member of the Board of Medical Practice - from August 12, 2025 to February 28, 2029.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare

Lagu, Aditeei of Essex Junction - Member of the Human Rights Commission - from June 26, 2025 to February 28, 2030

To the Committee on Judiciary

Marsh, Brianna of Newbury - Member of the State Board of Education - from July 14, 2025 to June 30, 2027.

To the Committee on Education

Owyang, Colin of Shelburne - Superior Court Judge - from October 6, 2025 to March 31, 2031

To the Committee on Judiciary

Paul, Annik of Jeffersonville - Commissioner of the Vermont State Housing Authority - from August 27, 2025 to February 28, 2030.

To the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

Peters, Gwenna of Duxbury - Member of the State Labor Relations Board - from May 23, 2025 to June 30, 2027.

To the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

Phelps, Michelle of Georgia - Member of the State Labor Relations Board - from July 15, 2025 to June 30, 2031.

To the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

Smith, Kendal of Barre - Commissioner of the Department of Labor - From September 22, 2025 to February 28, 2027.

To the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

Teachout, Sara of Stowe - Member of the Green Mountain Care Board - from July 28, 2025 to September 30, 2029.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare

Nolan, Christina E. of Burlington - Associate Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court - from January 5, 2026 to March 31, 2029.

To the Committee on Judiciary

Drescher, Michael of Hinesburg - Associate Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court - From January 5, 2026 to March 31, 2029.

To the committee on Judiciary.



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**Senate Resolutions Adopted**

Senate resolutions of the following titles were severally read and adopted, and are as follows:

Offered by Senator Baruth,

**S.R. 18.** Senate resolution relating to concurrently conducted electronic committee meetings.

***Resolved by the Senate:***

Notwithstanding the language in Permanent Senate Rule 32A limiting the applicability of Senate Rule 32A to Declarations of Emergency, the provisions of Permanent Senate Rule 32A regarding committee meetings shall be in effect through Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

Offered by Senator Baruth,

**S.R. 19.** Senate resolution relating to electronic participation in Senate Sessions.

***Resolved by the Senate:***

That temporary Rule 9B(b), be amended as follows:

Rule 9B. Temporary Rule Regarding Electronic Participation in Senate Sessions

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(b) This temporary rule shall remain in effect through ~~Wednesday, January 7, 2026~~ Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

**Joint Senate Resolutions Adopted on the Part of the Senate**

**J.R.S. 29.**

Joint Senate resolutions of the following titles were severally offered, read and adopted on the part of the Senate, and are as follows:

Offered by Senator Baruth,

**J.R.S. 29.** Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on January 9, 2026.

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

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, January 9, 2026, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, January 13, 2026.

Offered by Senator Baruth,

**J.R.S. 30.** Joint resolution to provide for a Joint Assembly to receive the State-of-the-State message from the Governor.

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

That the two Houses meet in Joint Assembly on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, at two o'clock in the afternoon to receive the State-of-the-State message from the Governor.

Offered by Senator Baruth,

**J.R.S. 31.** Joint resolution relating to Town Meeting adjournment.

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

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, February 27, 2026, or Saturday, February 28, 2026, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

**Bills Referred**

Pursuant to Temporary Rule 44A the following bills having failed to meet crossover and being released by the Committee on Rules were referred to their respective committees of jurisdictions:

**H. 46.** An act relating to the Rare Disease Advisory Council.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**H. 230.** An act relating to the management of fish and wildlife.

To the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

**H. 248.** An act relating to supplemental child care grants and the Child Care Financial Assistance Program.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**H. 293.** An act relating to health equity data reporting and registry disclosure requirements.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

On motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended and all Senate bills introduced and read for the first time today were read by number only.

**Bills Introduced**

Senate bills of the following titles were introduced, read the first time and referred:

**S. 159.**

By Senator Cummings,

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An act relating to removing the sunset on 30 V.S.A. § 248a.

To the Committee on Finance.

**S. 160.**

By Senator Baruth,

An act relating to firearms procedures.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 161.**

By Sen. Bongartz,

An act relating to the Governor's list of scholarship granting organizations.

To the Committee on Education.

**S. 162.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to miscellaneous provisions affecting the Department of Vermont Health Access.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 163.**

By Senator White,

An act relating to the role of advanced practice registered nurses in hospital care.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 164.**

By Senator Watson,

An act relating to health benefits for members of the General Assembly.

To the Committee on Government Operations.

**S. 165.**

By Senator Heffernan,

An act relating to grand list values of parcels with wetlands.

To the Committee on Finance.

**S. 166.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to issuing immunization recommendations.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 167.**

By Senators Clarkson, Chittenden, Cummings, Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Lyons, Major, Perchlik, Ram Hinsdale, Watson and White,

An act relating to prohibiting possession of semiautomatic assault weapons.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 168.**

By Senator Westman,

An act relating to the aggregate value of stolen property in certain crimes.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 169.**

By Senators Clarkson and Watson,

An act relating to Act 250 permit appeals.

To the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

**S. 170.**

By Senator Watson,

An act relating to net metering rates.

To the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

**S. 171.**

By Senator White,

An act relating to the Clean Fuels Program.

To the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

**S. 172.**

By Senator White,

An act relating to requiring the use of personal flotation devices during cold weather.

To the Committee on Transportation.

**S. 173.**

By Senator Ram Hinsdale,

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An act relating to workers' compensation and the Vermont Labor Relations Board.

To the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

**S. 174.**

By Senator Watson,

An act relating to the study of Green Bank models to support and accelerate investments in climate mitigation infrastructure, farming, and agriculture in Vermont.

To the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

**S. 175.**

By Senator Watson,

An act relating to climate change education.

To the Committee on Education.

**S. 176.**

By Senators Gulick, Hardy, Lyons, Major, Perchlik, Plunkett, Vyhovsky and White,

An act relating to prohibiting the use of the herbicide paraquat.

To the Committee on Agriculture.

**S. 177.**

By Senator White,

An act relating to the collection and recycling of waste motor vehicle tires.

To the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

**S. 178.**

By Senator Hashim,

An act relating to speedy trial procedures in criminal cases.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 179.**

By Senator Hashim,

An act relating to the Uniform Disclaimer of Property Interests Act.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 180.**

By Senator Hashim,

An act relating to the recommendations of the Post-Adjudication Reparative Program Working Group.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 181.**

By Senator Hashim,

An act relating to eliminating the requirement for a presentence investigation for imposition of a deferred sentence.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 182.**

By Senator Williams,

An act relating to animal cruelty violation forfeitures and the Animal Welfare Fund.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 183.**

By Senator Norris,

An act relating to home improvement and land improvement fraud.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 184.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to community justice centers.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 185.**

By Senator Clarkson,

An act relating to regional plan maps and Act 250 Tier 1.

To the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

**S. 186.**

By Senator Hashim,

An act relating to jurisdiction of the Criminal Division over plea agreements in proceedings related to juvenile offenders.

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To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 187.**

By Senator Williams,

An act relating to permitting members of the General Assembly to carry concealed handguns in the State House.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 188.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to hospital governance.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 189.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to an approval process for reducing or eliminating hospital services.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 190.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to the Green Mountain Care Board, reference-based pricing, and hospital outsourcing of clinical care.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 191.**

By Senator Watson,

An act relating to appliance efficiency.

To the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

**S. 192.**

By Senator Clarkson,

An act relating to municipal authority to compel the cleaning or repair of premises.

To the Committee on Government Operations.

**S. 193.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to establishing a forensic facility for certain criminal justice-involved persons.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 194.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to designated and specialized service agency payment methodology.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 195.**

By Senator Hashim,

An act relating to judicial proceedings for involuntary treatment.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 196.**

By Senator Clarkson,

An act relating to property tax sales.

To the Committee on Government Operations.

**S. 197.**

By Senators Lyons, Bongartz, Cummings, Gulick, Harrison, Ram Hinsdale, Watson and White,

An act relating to establishing a primary care payment reform program.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 198.**

By Senators Lyons and Clarkson,

An act relating to the regulation and taxation of tobacco products and tobacco substitutes.

To the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

**S. 199.**

By Senators Lyons, Cummings, Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Ram Hinsdale and White,

An act relating to establishing the Vermont Prescription Drug Discount Card Program.



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To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 200.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to the Medicaid school-based services program.

To the Committee on Education.

**S. 201.**

By Senators Lyons, Baruth, Chittenden, Hardy, Harrison, Ram Hinsdale, Watson and White,

An act relating to academic freedom in Vermont's postsecondary schools.

To the Committee on Education.

**S. 202.**

By Senators Watson, Bongartz, Chittenden, Clarkson, Gulick, Hardy, Lyons, Ram Hinsdale, Vyhovsky, Weeks and White,

An act relating to portable solar energy generation devices.

To the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

**S. 203.**

By Senator Hashim,

An act relating to penalties for second or subsequent violations of operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 204.**

By Senators White and Watson,

An act relating to electric ratepayer assistance and utility disconnections.

To the Committee on Finance.

**S. 205.**

By Senators White, Bongartz, Hardy, Major and Vyhovsky,

An act relating to a temporary moratorium on AI data centers and a report on the construction and operation of AI data centers in Vermont.

To the Committee on Finance.

**S. 206.**

By Senator Lyons,

An act relating to licensure of early childhood educators by the Office of Professional Regulation.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

**S. 207.**

By Senators White, Gulick, Harrison, Major, Plunkett and Vyhovsky,

An act relating to prohibiting surveillance pricing.

To the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

**S. 208.**

By Senators Hashim, Baruth, Ram Hinsdale, Bongartz, Chittenden, Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Lyons, Perchlik, Vyhovsky, Watson and White,

An act relating to standards for law enforcement identification.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**S. 209.**

By Senators Vyhovsky, Bongartz, Gulick, Hashim, Perchlik, Watson and White,

An act relating to prohibiting civil arrest in sensitive locations.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

**Message from the House No. 1**

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 a bill originating in the Senate of the following title:

**S. 23.** An act relating to the use of synthetic media in elections.

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

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

**J.R.S. 30.** Joint resolution to provide for a Joint Assembly to receive the State-of-the-State message from the Governor.

And has adopted the same in concurrence.

**Adjournment**

On motion of Senator Baruth, the Senate adjourned until one o'clock in the afternoon on Wednesday, January 7, 2026.