

Journal of the Senate

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2026

The Senate was called to order by the President.

Devotional Exercises

A moment of silence was observed in lieu of devotions.

Message from the House No. 13

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 joint resolution originating in the Senate of the following title:

J.R.S. 38. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on January 30, 2026.

And has adopted the same in concurrence.

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

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

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. Birong of Vergennes
Rep. Hango of Berkshire
Rep. Waters Evans of Charlotte.

The House has passed a House bill of the following title:

H. 532. An act relating to mandatory retirement of college professors.

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

Message from the House No. 14

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 passed House bills of the following titles:

H. 270. An act relating to confidentiality in peer support sessions for emergency service providers.

H. 516. An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Essex.

H. 790. An act relating to fiscal year 2026 budget adjustments.

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

The House has adopted House concurrent resolutions of the following titles:

H.C.R. 176. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 West Rutland High School Golden Horde's Division IV championship softball team.

H.C.R. 177. House concurrent resolution congratulating Twin Valley High School Athletic Director extraordinaire and 500 game-winning boys' soccer coach Buddy Hayford.

H.C.R. 178. House concurrent resolution in memory of former Senator William H. Carris of Wells.

H.C.R. 179. House concurrent resolution congratulating the Essex High School Hornets girls' volleyball team on winning the school's fifth consecutive divisional championship.

H.C.R. 180. House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Essex High School Hornets on winning the State boys' volleyball championship.

H.C.R. 181. House concurrent resolution congratulating the winners of the 2025 Spirit of the ADA Award.

H.C.R. 182. House concurrent resolution designating February 5, 2026, as Outdoor Recreation Day at the State House.

H.C.R. 183. House concurrent resolution recognizing July 2026 as Park and Recreation Month in Vermont and designating July 17, 2026, as Vermont Park and Recreation Professionals Day in Vermont.

H.C.R. 184. House concurrent resolution celebrating the restoration of a wild turkey population in Vermont.

In the adoption of which the concurrence of the Senate is requested.

Bill Committed

Appearing on the Calendar for notice, on motion of Senator Ingalls Senate Committee bill entitled:

S. 323. An act relating to miscellaneous agricultural subjects.

Was committed to the Committee on Agriculture.

Bill Referred to Committee on Finance

S. 161.

Senate 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 the Governor's list of scholarship granting organizations.

Committee Bills Introduced

Senate committee bills of the following titles were introduced, read the first time, and, under the rule, placed on the Calendar for notice the next legislative day:

S. 324.

Offered by the Committee on Government Operations,

An act relating to legislative operations and government accountability.

S. 325.

By the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy,

An act relating to studying the creation of model bylaws.

S. 326.

By the Committee on Transportation,

An act relating to miscellaneous amendments to laws relating to motor vehicles.

S. 327.

By the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs,

An act relating to economic development.

S. 328.

By the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs,

An act relating to housing and common interest communities.

Bills Referred

House bills of the following titles were read the first time and referred:

H. 270.

An act relating to confidentiality in peer support sessions for emergency service providers.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

H. 516.

An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Essex.

To the Committee on Government Operations.

H. 532.

An act relating to mandatory retirement of college professors.

To the Committee on Education.

H. 790.

An act relating to fiscal year 2026 budget adjustments.

To the Committee on Appropriations.

Appointment Confirmed

The following Gubernatorial appointment was confirmed by the Senate, upon full report given by the Committee to which it was referred:

The nomination of

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

Was confirmed by the Senate on a roll call, Yeas 30, Nays 0.

Senator Collamore having demanded the yeas and nays, they were taken and are as follows:

Roll Call

Those Senators who voted in the affirmative were: Baruth, Beck, Benson, Bongartz, Brennan, Brock, Chittenden, Clarkson, Collamore, Cummings, Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim, Heffernan, Ingalls, Lyons, Major, Mattos, Morley, Norris, Perchlik, Plunkett, Ram Hinsdale, Vyhovsky, Watson, Weeks, Westman, White, Williams.

Those Senators who voted in the negative were: None.

Remarks Journalized

During debate of the measure, Senator Vyhovsky addressed the Chair, and on motion of Senator Ram Hinsdale, her remarks were ordered entered in the Journal.

“The Senate Judiciary Committee has discussed for all of the time I have been here the different ways that we might make the process of judicial nominating more available and accessible to diverse candidates. We have made some movement in this direction, though I do believe we have more work to do.

“However, today I am happy to stand up and point to an instance where the work we have done is having the intended effect with this Judicial Confirmation. Judge Colin Owyang did not take a traditional path to the nominating board; he brings a diverse set of experiences, both professional and personal, and that is an incredible asset, in that it expands the life experience and perspectives on the bench. A more well-rounded bench will serve all Vermonters.

“Judge Owyang received his bachelor's cum laude in East Asian Languages and Literature from Yale University in 1991. He completed a Master of Arts in East Asian studies at Yale University in 1993. Judge Owyang completed his legal studies at the University of Michigan in 1995, graduating with his Juris Doctorate cum laude.

“Judge Owyang has a varied career spanning federal judicial clerkships, international commercial transactions, corporate finance and real estate, criminal law with the US Attorney’s Office in multiple jurisdictions, environmental law with the DOJ, and since 2009 a primary focus in energy law - working in multiple roles with National Grid USA from 2009-2015, as general counsel to VELCO from 2016-2020, general counsel with Franklin Energy (WI) from 2020-2022, returning to VELCO in 2022 and serving as their COO until joining the US attorneys office in 2023. Judge Owyang found his position at the US Attorney’s Office at an end under the Trump administration in March of 2025, at which time he returned to VELCO as their head of commercial development. In addition to the Judge's work experience I

want to highlight some of his volunteer experience including; as commissioner of the MA judicial nominating commission (2007-2009), membership on the board of trustees at both Framingham State University (2013-2015) and Champlain College (2018-2023), and as a Restorative Justice Panel Member with the Community Justice Center of Shelburne and South Burlington (2018-2023, 2025-present)

“Judge Owyang’s career and community service has spanned many types of law, in many different jurisdictions, and he brings a wealth of experience to the bench, where he was sworn in on October 5, 2025, and began training and service in the Chittenden Civil division.

“Judge Owyang is the child of refugees to the United States and spoke of his experience as a person of color and child of immigrants, and the many challenges that arise with these often marginalized identities. Judge Owyang spoke of the many intersections of his own privilege and oppression - describing it as a liminal space filled with both pain and pleasure. I would like to close with the Judge's own words: May I quote from the Judge's application to the Judicial Nominating Board?

“When asked the question; What makes you well qualified to hold the position you are seeking, the judge's response was;

I have had an untraditional breadth of professional and personal experiences that would both deepen and complement the Vermont judiciary. As a lawyer, I have seen the courtroom, both civilly and criminally. On the criminal side, I have spent most of my time as a prosecutor yet still recall the defendants I represented pro bono. In the regulatory arena, I have represented both the regulator and the regulated. As an in-house lawyer, I have served as both counsel to the internal clients and client to the outside counsel. Personally, I know what it means to be both a part of a system and apart from it -- I am a lawyer who knows his way around the legal system and know what it feels like to be at its mercy. I still recall vividly being a child when my parents were stopped for secondary inspection at the border by U.S. authorities -- as American citizens.

Walking between worlds gives me both the suggestion of belonging and the reality of temporariness. Whatever I have the fortune of enjoying can be taken away -- both as a result of the same legal system. After all, even my birthright citizenship may now be taken away by the same system which granted it.

I would bring these perspectives to the bench. I would use my capabilities in this craft of lawyering (or judging) with the humility of its power over the people it affects, having felt it in my own way firsthand.

“It is with great enthusiasm that I recommend that the Senate confirm the appointment of Judge Colin Owyang to the bench. At this moment in our history, I believe strongly that his voice, his experience, his courage, and his sense of finding justice within an unjust system for those who are most often harmed are important for progress forward. We need now more than ever judges who are willing to challenge the status quo and who see the incredible damage of not doing so or not understanding fully their impact on the people they are judging by just standing by and upholding the structures of power. It is my strong belief that Judge Colin Owyang is who we need right now, and that he will move us forward in the face of all that is on the horizon.

“Your committee on Judiciary voted 5-0-0 in support of this confirmation, and we ask the Senate to concur.”

Committee of Conference Appointed

S. 23.

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

Was taken up. Pursuant to the request of the House, the President announced the appointment of

Senator Collamore
Senator Vyhovsky
Senator Morley

as members of the Committee of Conference on the part of the Senate to consider the disagreeing votes of the two Houses.

House Concurrent Resolutions

The following joint concurrent resolutions having been placed on the consent calendar on the preceding legislative day, and no Senator having requested floor consideration as provided by the Joint Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, were adopted in concurrence:

Offered by Reps. Bosch and Burditt,

Offered by Senators Collamore, Weeks and Williams,

H.C.R. 176.

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 West Rutland High School Golden Horde’s Division IV championship softball team.

Offered by All Members of the House,

Offered by Sens. Bongartz, Harrison, Hashim and Plunkett,

H.C.R. 177.

House concurrent resolution congratulating Twin Valley High School Athletic Director extraordinaire and 500 game-winning boys' soccer coach Buddy Hayford.

Offered by All Members of the House,

Offered by All Members of the Senate,

H.C.R. 178.

House concurrent resolution in memory of former Senator William H. Carris of Wells.

Offered by Reps. Black and others,

Offered by Senators Baruth, Gulick, Mattos and Vyhovsky,

H.C.R. 179.

House concurrent resolution congratulating the Essex High School Hornets girls' volleyball team on winning the school's fifth consecutive divisional championship.

Offered by Reps. Black and others,

Offered by Senators Baruth, Gulick, Mattos and Vyhovsky,

H.C.R. 180.

House concurrent resolution congratulating the 2025 Essex High School Hornets on winning the State boys' volleyball championship.

Offered by Reps. Marcotte and others,

H.C.R. 181.

House concurrent resolution congratulating the winners of the 2025 Spirit of the ADA Award.

Offered by Reps. White and others,

H.C.R. 182.

House concurrent resolution designating February 5, 2026, as Outdoor Recreation Day at the State House.

Offered by Reps. Krasnow and others,

H.C.R. 183.

House concurrent resolution recognizing July 2026 as Park and Recreation Month in Vermont and designating July 17, 2026, as Vermont Park and Recreation Professionals Day in Vermont.

Offered by Rep. Pritchard,

H.C.R. 184.

House concurrent resolution celebrating the restoration of a wild turkey population in Vermont.

Adjournment

On motion of Senator Baruth, the Senate adjourned, to reconvene on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at nine o'clock and thirty minutes in the forenoon pursuant to J.R.S. 38.