

# Journal of the Senate

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

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**

### **S. 157.**

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 recovery residence certification.

## **Bill Referred to Committee on Appropriations**

### **S. 173.**

Senate bill of the following title, appearing on the Calendar for notice and carrying an appropriation or requiring the expenditure of funds, under the rule was referred to the Committee on Appropriations:

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

## **Joint Resolution Referred**

### **J.R.S. 42.**

Joint Senate resolution of the following title was offered, read the first time and is as follows:

Offered by Senator Vyhovsky,

**J.R.S. 42.** Joint resolution condemning the Russian Federation's military and political actions in Ukraine and especially their impact on Ukrainian children.

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*Whereas*, the large-scale Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, extended its occupation of sovereign Ukrainian territory, and

*Whereas*, this unjustified cross-border incursion was initiated with the illegal February–March 2014 invasion of Crimea, when the Russians quickly annexed Crimea, premised on the dubious election they ordered and controlled, and which in no way reflected the will of the individuals living in Crimea, as well as the later 2014 invasion of the Donbas region of Ukraine, and

*Whereas*, aside from the continuing presence and reinforcement of Russian military personnel, ongoing land-based warfare, and the unrelenting onslaught of missiles and attacks on civilian infrastructure, which has wrought havoc and loss of life on Ukrainians located far from the front lines of ground combat, including leaving millions of civilians without regular heating and power for months during Ukraine's harsh winter, the Russian invasion has resulted in a devastating impact on Ukrainian children, and

*Whereas*, on March 9, 2022, Russian forces attacked a maternity hospital in Mariupol, Ukraine, causing at least four deaths, including that of one child, and a minimum of 16 documented deaths, with likely more undocumented, and injuries, and

*Whereas*, according to a report by Yale University researchers in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State, forcibly transferring children from one group to another is potentially a war crime, and

*Whereas*, Maria Lvova-Belova, the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights of the Russian Federation, is closely associated with her nation's policy of abducting Ukrainian children, now numbering in the thousands, facilitating their forced relocation, and, in some instances, their involuntary adoption into Russian families or forced placement in the Russian military, and

*Whereas*, some of these children have relatives who are alive and remain in Ukraine, and

*Whereas*, on June 16, 2022, the proxy Russian government of the occupied Kherson region of Ukraine announced that all newborns would be granted Russian citizenship and that orphans will also be registered as Russian citizens; further, on July 11, 2022, Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, ordered an investigation into the deaths and injuries of Ukrainian children, and

*Whereas*, in both 2023 and 2025, the Yale School of Public Health Humanitarian Research Lab identified a large network of camps or centers, located in either Russian-occupied areas or within Russia's internationally recognized borders, that were dedicated to the systematic reeducation of Ukrainian children, attempting to change the children's language and cultural heritage, and also serving as a launching pad for involuntary Russian family adoptions or placement into military service, *now therefore be it*

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

That the General Assembly condemns the Russian Federation's horrific invasion of sovereign and internationally recognized Ukrainian territory, *and be it further*

***Resolved:*** That the General Assembly deplores the Russian Federation's abduction and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children; the large network of camps that facilitate the cultural and linguistic reeducation of Ukrainian children and the corresponding impact on the future of Ukraine's cultural, linguistic, and national identity; and the involuntary adoption and military induction of seized Ukrainian children, *and be it further*

***Resolved:*** That the General Assembly strongly urges the government of the Russian Federation to cease immediately its bombardment of Ukrainian infrastructure, withdraw its forces from Ukraine's internationally recognized territory, and return to Ukraine all children whom it has forcefully removed, *and be it further*

***Resolved:*** That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Russian Federation and Ukrainian ambassadors to the United States.

Thereupon, the President, in his discretion, treated the joint resolution as a bill and referred it to the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

**Rules Suspended; Report of Committee of Conference Accepted and Adopted on the Part of the Senate; Rules Suspended; Bill Messaged**

**H. 790.**

Appearing on the Calendar for notice, on motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended and the report of the Committee of Conference on House bill entitled:

An act relating to fiscal year 2026 budget adjustments.

Was taken up for immediate consideration.

Senator Perchlik, for the Committee of Conference, submitted the following report:

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

The Committee of Conference to which were referred the disagreeing votes of the two Houses upon House Bill entitled:

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

Respectfully reports that it has met and considered the same and recommends that the House accede to the Senate proposal of amendment and that the Senate proposal of amendment be further amended as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 37. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 37. to read as follows:

Sec. 37. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. B.330 is amended to read:

Sec. B.330 Disabilities, aging, and independent living - advocacy and independent living grants

Grants	<u>24,909,492</u>	<u>25,125,975</u>
Total	24,909,492	25,125,975
Source of funds		
General fund	8,585,909	8,804,020
Federal funds	7,321,114	7,191,114
Global Commitment fund	<u>9,002,469</u>	<u>9,130,841</u>
Total	24,909,492	25,125,975

Second: By striking out Sec. 44. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 44. to read as follows:

Sec. 44. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. B.347 is amended to read:

Sec. B.347 Total human services

Source of funds		
General fund	1,428,803,059	1,461,126,849
Special funds	231,430,533	232,655,939
Tobacco fund	23,088,208	23,088,208
State health care resources fund	31,074,772	31,074,772
Federal funds	1,946,078,413	1,993,089,108
Global Commitment fund	<u>2,148,606,890</u>	<u>2,213,122,801</u>
Internal service funds	403,853	403,853
Interdepartmental transfers	32,694,090	32,694,090
Permanent trust funds	<u>25,000</u>	<u>25,000</u>
Total	5,842,204,818	5,987,280,620

Third: In Sec. 51., by striking out 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. B.1100(t)(2) and inserting in lieu thereof:

(2) ~~\$500,000~~ \$885,000 General Fund for a grant to Vermont Foodbank for the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Program;

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Fourth: By striking out Sec. 79. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 79. to read as follows:

Sec. 79. HOUSING ASSISTANCE

(a) In fiscal year 2026 and fiscal year 2027, while the General Assembly is not in session the Emergency Board shall have the authority to transfer part of the appropriation in 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. B.1101(b)(2) to the Department for Children and Families for the purpose of assisting a housing authority to avoid termination of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 housing choice vouchers that would otherwise be lost as the result of federal action.

(b) If funds are transferred for this purpose, they may be made available at the request of a housing authority for one of the following purposes:

(1) to maintain a current housing assistance payment in use or to prevent the retirement of a housing assistance payment currently in use by the housing authority; or

(2) with prior written approval from HUD, to provide funding to a housing authority in order to prevent the termination of assistance to current housing choice voucher participants.

(c) If funds are transferred for this purpose, an affirmative vote of the majority of a housing authority's commissioners shall be required prior to a housing authority requesting funds.

(d) A housing authority shall notify the Department for Children and Families of its intent to request funds and submit a report on its financial need, including evidence that the request conforms to applicable HUD requirements and is a necessary and proper expense, to the Department on or before April 15, 2026.

(e) On or before May 1, 2026, the Department for Children and Families, in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development, shall:

(1) establish procedures for validating that such expenditures conform to applicable HUD requirements and are a necessary and proper expense prior to issuing funds; and

(2) establish guidelines to ensure that funds are distributed based upon need.

(f) If funds are transferred for this purpose, the Department for Children and Families shall report to the Joint Fiscal Committee at its September 2026 meeting and submit a written report on or before January 15, 2027, to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on the status of the appropriation.

(g) As used in this section, “housing authority” has the same meaning as in 24 V.S.A. § 4002.

Fifth: By striking out Sec. 83. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 83. to read as follows:

Sec. 83. DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES PAYMENT REFORM; IMPLEMENTATION

(a)(1) In fiscal year 2026, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living shall adjust the developmental disabilities home- and community-based services payment model to reflect per-member, per-month payments to designated and specialized service agencies that are calculated based on a minimum-assumed utilization rate of 65 percent. Reconciliation shall occur in compliance with the developmental disabilities home- and community-based services payment reform rules and the False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C. § 3729 et seq.

(2) Each agency currently below the 65 percent threshold and requiring financial stabilization shall prepare and submit a financial stabilization plan to the Department on or before October 1, 2027. The Department shall review the stabilization plan and work with the proposing agencies toward the goal of stabilization and sustainability.

(b) The designated and specialized service agencies shall submit to the Department on or before April 1, 2026, all information deemed necessary by the Department to enable it to perform a comprehensive fiscal analysis and to implement resolutions to address barriers that inhibit an increase in service delivery utilization.

(c)(1) On or before April 15, 2026, the Agency of Human Services and the Departments of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living and of Vermont Health Access shall convene a meeting with the Chairs of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, the House Committee on Human Services, and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, or their designees, and with the designated and specialized service agencies and other key members of the developmental disabilities services delivery system. At the

meeting, the parties shall discuss efforts that support the growth of a sustainable developmental disabilities services delivery system in which:

(A) increased service utilization meets the needs and goals of individuals and families and drives the designated and specialized service agencies' success;

(B) Medicaid compliance is assured; and

(C) all State and federal rules are adhered to.

(2) At the meeting, the parties shall also develop and recommend concrete solutions to mitigate short-term financial impacts and Medicaid compliance risks associated with the implementation of developmental disabilities services payment reform, to the extent permitted under federal Medicaid rules.

(d) On or before May 1, 2026, the Department shall submit a written progress report to the House Committee on Human Services and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare detailing recommended solutions, anticipated fiscal impacts to the designated and specialized service agencies, implementation timelines, and compliance safeguards, including how measures, such as the transitional utilization methodology, shall ensure continuity of care, prevent service disruption, and mitigate Medicaid compliance risks for providers and the State during the first year of payment reform implementation, to the extent permitted under federal Medicaid rules.

(e) If funds previously appropriated to the Agency of Human Services are insufficient to provide the State match needed to make the payment adjustment in subsection (a) of this section, notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 308b, the Commissioner of Finance and Management shall unreserve an amount of funds equal to the deficiency from the Human Services Caseload Reserve and, notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 706, transfer an amount of funds equal to the deficiency to the Agency of Human Services.

Sixth: By striking out Sec. 86. in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 86. to read as follows:

Sec. 86. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. E.330 is added to read:

Sec. E.330 DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES, AGING AND  
INDEPENDENT LIVING; VERMONT CENTER FOR  
INDEPENDENT LIVING; FUNDING

(a) Of the General Fund appropriation in Sec. B.330 of this act, \$55,000 shall be granted to the Vermont Center for Independent Living to provide home-delivered meals to individuals with disabilities under 60 years of age.

*SEN. ANDREW J. PERCHLIK*  
*SEN. VIRGINIA V. LYONS*  
*SEN. RICHARD A. WESTMAN*

*Committee on the part of the Senate*

*REP. ROBIN P. SCHEU*  
*REP. TIFFANY BLUEMLE*  
*REP. MARTHA A. FELTUS*

*Committee on the part of the House*

Thereupon, the question, Shall the Senate accept and adopt the report of the Committee of Conference?, was decided in the affirmative.

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

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

#### **H. 545.**

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

An act relating to issuing immunization recommendations.

#### **Third Reading Ordered**

#### **H. 516.**

Senator Morley, for the Committee on Government Operations, to which was referred House bill entitled:

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

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.

#### **Point of Privilege Journalized**

During announcements, on a point of personal privilege, Senator Vyhovsky addressed the President, and on motion of Senator Clarkson, her remarks were ordered entered in the Journal and are as follows:

“It has been four years since the full scale invasion of Ukraine. Four years of Ukrainian resistance, resilience, and trauma. Four years of air raid sirens, sleepless nights, and cold winters without heat or electricity because of constant attacks on civilian infrastructure. Four years of children going to

school in bomb shelters. Four years of waking up exhausted yet continuing on even though the sky is actually falling.

“I spent just 12 days in Ukraine in August experiencing daily life and was struck by both the inhumanity of what was happening and the strong resilience and resolve of the people who have been living with these conditions for four years.

“500,000 to 600,000 combat casualties, with 100,000 to 140,000 combat deaths. Streets filled with injured soldiers. 15,000 to 40,000 civilian deaths, with the potential for many more because we do not know how many died in the massacres at Bucha or Mariupol. We don't know how many have died in occupied Crimea, Kherson, Donetsk, or Donbas. And we don't know how many of the more than 20,000 children who have been kidnapped and sent to camps have died.

“Four years of terror and heartache.

“As Ukraine enters year five of fighting for its freedom, its independence, and sovereignty. I ask that we remember that we all must fight for each other. We all must stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable and oppressed across the globe.

“In the fight for freedom from imperialism and authoritarianism we are all in this together.

“Slava Ukraini”

### **Adjournment**

On motion of Senator Baruth, the Senate adjourned until one o'clock in the afternoon on Wednesday, February 25, 2026.