

# Journal of the Senate

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 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. 26

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

**H. 694.** An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Bennington concerning the Town Manager.

**H. 907.** An act relating to legislative review of reporting requirements.

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

## Bill Referred to Committee on Finance

### H. 237.

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 prescribing by doctoral-level psychologists.

## Joint Resolution Placed on Action Calendar

### J.R.S. 43.

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

Offered by Senator Collamore,

**J.R.S. 43** Joint resolution providing for a Joint Assembly to vote on the retention of six Superior Court Judges.

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

That the two Houses meet in Joint Assembly on Thursday, March 19, 2026, at ten o'clock and thirty minutes in the forenoon to vote on the retention of six Superior Court Judges. In case the vote to retain said Judges shall not be made on that day, the two Houses shall meet in Joint Assembly at ten o'clock and thirty minutes in the forenoon, on each succeeding day, Saturdays and Sundays excepted, and proceed until the above is completed.

Thereupon, in the discretion of the President, under Rule 51, the joint resolution was placed on the Calendar for action the next legislative day.

**Bills Referred**

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

**H. 639.**

An act relating to genetic data privacy.

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

**H. 694.**

An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Bennington concerning the Town Manager.

To the Committee on Government Operations.

**H. 907.**

An act relating to legislative review of reporting requirements.

To the Committee on Government Operations.

**Bill Amended; Bill Passed****S. 157.**

Senate bill entitled:

An act relating to recovery residence certification.

Was taken up.

Thereupon, pending third reading of the bill, Senator Hashim moved to amend the bill as follows:

First: In subdivision (b)(1)(A)(v), following “programming.” by striking out “commits a crime” and inserting in lieu thereof “is charged with a criminal offense”

Second: In subdivision (b)(1)(C), following “programming,” by striking out “commits a crime” and inserting in lieu thereof “is charged with a criminal offense”

Which was agreed to.

Thereupon, the bill was read the third time and passed.

**Bill Passed**

**S. 163.**

Senate bill of the following title was read the third time and passed:

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

**Bill Passed**

**S. 255.**

Senate bill entitled:

An act relating to establishing a pilot Law Enforcement Governance Council in Windham County.

Was taken up.

Thereupon, pending third reading of the bill, Senator Hardy moved to amend the bill by adding a new section to be Sec. 10a to read as follows:

Sec. 10a. 24 V.S.A. chapter 5 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 5. COUNTY OFFICERS; POWERS AND DUTIES

\* \* \*

§ 290. COUNTY SHERIFF’S DEPARTMENT

\* \* \*

(d)(1) Upon the election of a sheriff-elect who is not the incumbent sheriff, an announcement that the incumbent sheriff will not seek reelection, or an announcement that the incumbent sheriff intends to resign, whichever occurs earliest, all financial disbursements from the accounts of the department, including the transfer of real or personal property, or other assets, of the department, shall be co-signed by the sheriff and at least one assistant judge in that county, and the sheriff shall, within two weeks, provide the Department of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs, the Auditor of Accounts, and the assistant judges of that county with a written list of all transfers of departmental assets and financial disbursements to a single source, in aggregate, greater than \$10,000.00 anticipated to occur before the sheriff leaves office. Assistant

judges shall consult with the Director of Sheriffs' Operations when considering whether to co-sign any transfers of departmental assets or financial disbursements to a single source, in aggregate, greater than \$10,000.00. The assistant judges shall not unreasonably refuse to co-sign any disbursements or transfer of sheriff's department assets.

(2) A report of all financial disbursements and transfers made pursuant to this subsection shall be forwarded by the assistant judges to the Auditor of Accounts and the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs within 15 days following the sheriff leaving office.

§ 290b. AUDITS

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(d) Annually, each sheriff shall furnish the Auditor of Accounts on forms provided by the Auditor a financial report reflecting the financial transactions and condition of the sheriff's department. The sheriff shall submit a copy of this report to the assistant judges of the county. The assistant judges shall prepare a report reflecting funds disbursed by the county in support of the sheriff's department and forward a copy of their report to the Auditor of Accounts. The Auditor of Accounts shall compile the reports and submit ~~one~~ report copies to the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs, the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations and Military Affairs and on Judiciary, and the Senate Committees on Government Operations and on Judiciary. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the required report to be made under this subsection.

(e)(1) Biennially, according to a schedule established by the Auditor of Accounts, the Auditor shall retain a public accountant to conduct an audit of the financial systems, controls, and procedures within each department. The public accountant shall prepare a written report detailing the review of the department. A copy of this report shall be forwarded to the sheriff, assistant judges, ~~and the Auditor of Accounts,~~ the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs, the House Committees on Government Operations and Military Affairs and on Judiciary, and the Senate Committees on Government Operations and on Judiciary. The Auditor shall charge for the costs of the report pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 168(b).

(2) After receiving the written report pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, a sheriff shall implement any recommendations made in the report by the start of the following fiscal year. On or before the 30 days after implementing these recommendations, the sheriff shall submit a letter to the Auditor of Accounts detailing the changes made, including pertinent timelines, modified accounting practices, and anticipated outcomes.

(3) Willful failure to comply with this subsection shall constitute Category B conduct pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 2401(2).

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§ 293. DUTIES

(a) A sheriff so commissioned and sworn shall serve and execute lawful writs, warrants, and processes directed to the sheriff, according to the precept thereof, and do all other things pertaining to the office of sheriff.

(b) A sheriff shall maintain a record of the sheriff's work schedule, including work days, leave taken, and any remote work performed outside the sheriff's district for a period of more than three days. The sheriff shall submit this record monthly to the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs and publicly post this record on the sheriff's department's website.

(c) If an individual who has a relief from abuse order pursuant to 15 V.S.A. § 1103 requires assistance in the retrieval of personal belongings from the individual's residence and that individual requests assistance from a sheriff's department providing law enforcement services in the county in which that individual resides, the sheriff's department shall provide the assistance.

(d) A sheriff shall provide law enforcement and security services for each county and State courthouse within the sheriff's county of jurisdiction in accordance with section 291a of this title.

(e) Willful failure to comply with this section shall constitute Category B conduct pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 2401(2).

§ 294. SHERIFF IMPRISONED

(a) If a sheriff is confined in prison by legal process, ~~his or her~~ the sheriff's functions as ~~sheriff~~ shall be suspended. When the sheriff is released from imprisonment during ~~his or her~~ the sheriff's term of office, ~~he or she~~ the sheriff shall file a certificate of ~~his or her~~ the sheriff's discharge signed by one of the judges of the Superior Court, in the office of the county clerk, and deliver a like certificate to the high bailiff. Thereupon ~~he or she~~ the sheriff shall resume the powers and execute the duties of ~~sheriff~~ the office.

(b) If a sheriff is confined pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, notwithstanding the provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 1182, the sheriff's salary is suspended for the duration of the confinement or until the sheriff's duties are restored in accordance with any conditions of release or court order, whichever occurs later.

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## § 367. DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S ATTORNEYS AND SHERIFFS

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(e)(1) The Executive Director of the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs shall appoint a Director of Sheriffs' Operations who shall serve at the pleasure of the Executive Director.

(2) The Director of Sheriffs' Operations shall provide centralized support services for the sheriffs with respect to budgetary planning, policy development and compliance, training, and office management, and perform such other duties as directed by the Executive Director.

(3)(A) The Director of Sheriffs' Operations shall develop, maintain, and provide to each sheriff's department model policies on operational topics, including service of civil process, relief from abuse orders, transportation of prisoners, ethics, and sheriffs' responsibilities.

(B)(i) Each sheriff shall adopt the model policies issued pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3).

(ii) Willful failure to comply with this subdivision (B) shall constitute Category B conduct pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 2401(2).

Thereupon, pending the question, Shall the bill be amended as moved by Senator Hardy?, Senator Heffernan raised a *point of order* under Sec. 402 of Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure on the grounds that the recommendation of amendment offered by Senator Hardy was *not germane* to the bill and therefore could not be considered by the Senate.

Thereupon, the President *sustained* the point of order and ruled that the recommendation of amendment offered by Senator Hardy was *not germane* to the bill as it did not satisfy the criteria of Mason's Rule 402 regarding germaneness in that the recommendation changed the purpose, scope, and object of the bill beyond its purpose and scope of initiating a pilot project in a single county.

The President thereupon declared that the recommendation of amendment offered by Senator Hardy could *not* be considered by the Senate and the recommendation of amendment was ordered stricken.

Thereupon, Senator White moved that Sec. 402 of Mason's be suspended for the purpose of allowing a non-germane amendment.

Which was disagreed to.

Thereupon, the bill was read the third time and passed.

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**Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered****S. 243.**

Senator Gulick, for the Committee on Health and Welfare, to which was referred Senate bill entitled:

An act relating to distributing funds to the Vermont Language Justice Project.

Reported recommending that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

**Sec. 1. FINDINGS**

The General Assembly finds that:

- (1) Vermont ranks sixth per capita in refugee resettlement;
- (2) the Governor has recognized the important role immigrants play in Vermont's economy;
- (3) when health information is available in only one language and only in written format, it creates barriers that lead to confusion;
- (4) the Vermont Language Justice Project's videos fill a critical gap in patient education, particularly for families with limited English proficiency;
- (5) the Vermont Language Justice Project has created and distributed videos pertaining to COVID-19 and COVID-19 testing; the importance of immunizations and how immunizations work; Mpox; preventing mosquito and tick bites; and safety during flood events, hot and cold weather, cyanobacteria outbreaks, wildfires, and more;
- (6) the Vermont Language Justice Project's videos are made in 10 to 21 of the languages commonly spoken in Vermont and in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Health;
- (7) the Vermont Language Justice Project is usually able to respond to a crisis within 24 hours with information in multiple languages and in multiple formats, such as written translations, audio files, and videos; and
- (8) in January 2025, the Vermont Language Justice Project's grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention abruptly ended, leaving it to be funded solely through donations from individuals and foundations and through fee-for-service work.

**Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION; VERMONT LANGUAGE JUSTICE PROJECT**

In fiscal year 2027, \$150,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health for distribution to the Vermont Language Justice

Project to prepare informational materials for Vermonters who speak languages other than English in the event of a disease outbreak or other public health emergency, including ongoing personal and public health information.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

And that when so amended the bill ought to pass.

Senator Lyons, for the Committee on Appropriations, to which the bill was referred, reported recommending that the bill be amended as recommended by the Committee on Health and Welfare with the following amendment thereto by striking out Sec. 2, appropriation; Vermont Language Justice Project, in its entirety and by inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 2 to read as follows::

Sec. 2. VERMONT LANGUAGE JUSTICE PROJECT

In fiscal year 2027, to the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose, the Department of Health shall distribute \$150,000.00 to the Vermont Language Justice Project to prepare informational materials for Vermonters who speak languages other than English in the event of a disease outbreak or other public health emergency, including ongoing personal and public health information.

And that when so amended the bill ought to pass.

Thereupon, the bill was read the second time by title only pursuant to Rule 43, and the recommendation of the Committee on Health and Welfare was amended as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations.

Thereupon, the pending question, Shall the bill be amended as recommended by the Committee on Health and Welfare, as amended? was agreed to and third reading of the bill was ordered.

### **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. Burke and others,

Offered by Senators Harrison and Hashim,

### **H.C.R. 212.**

House concurrent resolution honoring the amazing Brooks Memorial Library Director Starr LaTronica.

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Offered by Reps. Rachelson and Cina,

Offered by Senator Vyhovsky,

**H.C.R. 213.**

House concurrent resolution recognizing March 2026 as Social Work Month in Vermont.

Offered by Reps. Casey and others,

**H.C.R. 214.**

House concurrent resolution celebrating the essential contributions of Irish American patriots in the struggle for our nation's independence.

Offered by Reps. Morrow and Pinsonault,

**H.C.R. 215.**

House concurrent resolution congratulating Ben Ogden of Landgrove on winning two 2026 Winter Olympics cross-country skiing silver medals.

Offered by Rep. Coffin,

Offered by Senators Clarkson, Major and White,

**H.C.R. 216.**

House concurrent resolution honoring Margo Caulfield for her exemplary and enormously appreciated volunteer leadership in the Town of Cavendish.

**Message from the House No. 27**

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 a House bill of the following title:

**H. 566.** An act relating to sealing post-charge court diversion records upon successful completion.

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

The House has considered the report of the Committee of Conference upon the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on House bill of the following title:

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

And has adopted the same on its part.

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

**H.C.R. 212.** House concurrent resolution honoring the amazing Brooks Memorial Library Director Starr LaTronica.

**H.C.R. 213.** House concurrent resolution recognizing March 2026 as Social Work Month in Vermont.

**H.C.R. 214.** House concurrent resolution celebrating the essential contributions of Irish American patriots in the struggle for our nation's independence.

**H.C.R. 215.** House concurrent resolution congratulating Ben Ogden of Landgrove on winning two 2026 Winter Olympics cross-country skiing silver medals.

**H.C.R. 216.** House concurrent resolution honoring Margo Caulfield for her exemplary and enormously appreciated volunteer leadership in the Town of Cavendish.

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

### **Adjournment**

On motion of Senator Baruth, the Senate adjourned, to reconvene on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at nine o'clock and thirty minutes in the forenoon pursuant to J.R.S. 31.