

Journal of the Senate

TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 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.

Message from the House No. 30

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. 512. An act relating to the regulation of the event ticketing market.

H. 573. An act relating to the first certification of an emergency examination.

H. 578. An act relating to penalties and procedures for animal cruelty offenses.

H. 686. An act relating to expanding identification of certain lobbying advertisements.

H. 744. An act relating to procedures for release after arrest.

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. 217. House concurrent resolution congratulating McNeil & Reedy of Rutland City on 70 years as a superb men's clothing retailer.

H.C.R. 218. House concurrent resolution recognizing April 2026 as the Month of the Military Child in Vermont.

H.C.R. 219. House concurrent resolution designating March 2026 as Athletic Trainers' Month in Vermont.

H.C.R. 220. House concurrent resolution welcoming the March 17, 2026, namesake visit of the officers and crew of the U.S. submarine VERMONT (USS VERMONT (SSN 792)) to the State House and designating April 18, 2026, as USS VERMONT (SSN 792) Day in Vermont.

H.C.R. 221. House concurrent resolution recognizing March 25, 2026, as National Medal of Honor Day in Vermont.

H.C.R. 223. House concurrent resolution honoring former Public Service Board Chair and East Montpelier Town Moderator Michael Dworkin.

H.C.R. 222. House concurrent resolution honoring the Vermont nonprofit sector and the pivotal leadership and support it receives from Common Good Vermont.

H.C.R. 224. House concurrent resolution congratulating the athletes representing Vermont at the 2025 National Senior Games and designating March 18, 2026, as Vermont Senior Games Day at the State House.

H.C.R. 225. House concurrent resolution honoring East Haven Selectboard Chair Kirwin Flanders for his extraordinary municipal public service career.

H.C.R. 226. House concurrent resolution remembering, with great sadness, the historic and interconnected 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters that struck the Tōhoku region of Japan.

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

The House has considered concurrent resolutions originating in the Senate of the following titles:

S.C.R. 7. Senate concurrent resolution designating October 5, 2026, as Italian American Day in Vermont..

S.C.R. 8. Senate concurrent resolution recognizing March 2026 as International Long COVID Awareness Month in Vermont..

And has adopted the same in concurrence.

Bills Referred to Committee on Finance

Senate bills of the following titles, appearing on the Calendar for notice, and affecting the revenue of the state, under the rule were referred to the Committee on Finance:

S. 64. An act relating to amendments to the scope of practice for optometrists.

S. 142. An act relating to a pathway to licensure for internationally trained physicians and medical graduates.

S. 275. An act relating to creation of the Cemetery Vandalism Response Fund.

S. 278. An act relating to cannabis.

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

S. 325. An act relating to studying the creation of model bylaws.

S. 328. An act relating to housing and common interest communities.

Bills Referred to Committee on Appropriations

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

S. 154. An act relating to health insurance coverage for biomarker testing.

S. 190. An act relating to the Green Mountain Care Board, reference-based pricing, and hospital outsourcing of clinical care.

S. 193. An act relating to establishing a forensic facility for certain criminal justice-involved persons.

S. 197. An act relating to establishing a primary care payment reform program.

S. 220. An act relating to addressing education spending in fiscal years 2028 and 2029.

Joint Senate Resolution Adopted on the Part of the Senate

J.R.S. 45.

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. 45. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on March 20, 2026.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, March 20, 2026, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, March 24, 2026.

Bills Referred

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

H. 512.

An act relating to the regulation of the event ticketing market.

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

H. 573.

An act relating to the first certification of an emergency examination.

To the Committee on Health and Welfare.

H. 578.

An act relating to penalties and procedures for animal cruelty offenses.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

H. 686.

An act relating to expanding identification of certain lobbying advertisements.

To the Committee on Government Operations.

H. 744.

An act relating to procedures for release after arrest.

To the Committee on Judiciary.

Bills Passed

Senate bills of the following titles were read the third time and passed:

S. 211. An act relating to motor vehicle inspections.

S. 298. An act relating to creating the Vermont Voting Rights Act.

Third Reading Ordered**S. 203.**

Senator Hashim, for the Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred Senate bill entitled:

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

Reported that the bill ought to pass.

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

Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered

S. 189.

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

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

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

Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. § 9405d is added to read:

§ 9405d. HOSPITAL SERVICE REDUCTIONS; NOTICE REQUIRED

(a) A hospital that proposes to intentionally reduce or eliminate any service shall:

(1) Provide a notice of intent to the Agency of Human Services, the Green Mountain Care Board, the Office of the Health Care Advocate, and the members of the General Assembly who represent the hospital service area not less than 60 days prior to the proposed reduction or elimination. The notice shall explain the rationale for the proposed reduction or elimination and describe how it is consistent with the Statewide Health Care Delivery Strategic Plan, once established, and the hospital's most recent community health needs assessment conducted pursuant to section 9405a of this title and 26 U.S.C. § 501(r)(3).

(2) Post the notice of intent on the hospital's website beginning on or before the day on which the notice is provided pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(3) Publish the notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the hospital service area within 10 days after notice is provided pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(4) Conduct a public engagement process, including holding one or more public hearings in the county in which the hospital is located and soliciting and responding to public comments, regarding the proposed service reduction or elimination. The public engagement process may begin prior to providing the notice required by subdivision (1) of this subsection and shall continue for not less than 30 days following the notice. The hospital shall provide a summary of the community's response to the proposal, including the

public comments received, to the Agency of Human Services following the conclusion of the public engagement process.

(b) The Agency of Human Services shall:

(1) analyze each proposed service reduction or elimination for consistency with the Statewide Health Care Delivery Strategic Plan, once established, and the community health needs assessment;

(2) consider the community's response and the impact of the proposal on access to necessary care and services in the hospital service area; and

(3) provide nonbinding recommendations regarding the proposed reduction or elimination to the hospital, the Green Mountain Care Board, and the public.

(c) If a hospital elects to proceed with reducing or eliminating a service after completing the process set forth in subsection (a) of this section, then within five business days after making the decision to proceed, the hospital shall notify the Agency of Human Services to inform the Agency's health care system transformation efforts and future versions of the Strategic Plan and the Green Mountain Care Board to enable the Board to review the impact on the hospital's budget pursuant to subdivision 9456(e)(2) of this title.

Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 9456 is amended to read:

§ 9456. BUDGET REVIEW

* * *

(e)(1) The Board, in consultation with the Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care, shall utilize mechanisms to measure hospital costs, quality, and access and alignment with the Statewide Health Care Delivery Strategic Plan, once established.

~~(2)(A) Except as provided in subdivision (D) of this subdivision (e)(2), a hospital that proposes to reduce or eliminate any service in order to comply with a budget established under this section shall provide a notice of intent to the Board, the Agency of Human Services, the Office of the Health Care Advocate, and the members of the General Assembly who represent the hospital service area not less than 45 days prior to the proposed reduction or elimination.~~

~~(B) The notice shall explain the rationale for the proposed reduction or elimination and describe how it is consistent with the Statewide Health Care Delivery Strategic Plan, once established, and the hospital's most recent community health needs assessment conducted pursuant to section 9405a of this title and 26 U.S.C. § 501(r)(3).~~

~~(C) The Board may evaluate the proposed reduction or elimination for consistency with the Statewide Health Care Delivery Strategic Plan, once established and the community health needs assessment, and may modify the hospital's budget or take such additional actions as the Board deems appropriate to preserve access to necessary services.~~

~~(D) A service that has been identified for reduction or elimination in connection with the transformation efforts undertaken by the Board and the Agency of Human Services pursuant to 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 167 does not need to comply with subdivisions (A) (C) of this subdivision (e)(2).~~

Upon receipt of notification from a hospital pursuant to subsection 9405d(b) of this title that the hospital intends to reduce or eliminate a service following its completion of the process set forth in subsection 9405d(a) of this title, the Board shall review the impact of the reduction or elimination on the hospital's approved budget. The Board may adjust the hospital's budget as necessary to reflect the elimination or reduction, which may include directing that any savings related to the reduction or elimination are returned to Vermonters to address affordability concerns or to payers to be reflected in health insurance premiums or are reinvested in primary care, prevention, and other community-based services.

(3) The Board, in collaboration with the Department of Financial Regulation, shall monitor the implementation of any authorized decrease reduction in or elimination of hospital services to determine its benefits to Vermonters or to Vermont's health care system, or both.

* * *

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: "An act relating to establishing a process for reducing or eliminating hospital services"

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, the recommendation of amendment was agreed to, and third reading of the bill was ordered.

Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered

S. 313.

Senator Williams, for the Committee on Education, to which was referred Senate bill entitled:

An act relating to transforming Vermont's career technical education system.

Reported recommending that the bill be amended in Sec. 2, career technical education system transformation; legislative intent, in subdivision (1)(D), following "or prevented from accessing CTE" by inserting the words "for lack of capacity"

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, the recommendation of amendment was agreed to, and third reading of the bill was ordered.

Adjournment

On motion of Senator Baruth, the Senate adjourned until eleven o'clock in the forenoon on Wednesday, March 18, 2026.