

Journal of the Senate

WEDNESDAY, MAY 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. 80

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 bills originating in the Senate of the following titles:

S. 71. An act relating to consumer data privacy and online surveillance.

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

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

The House has considered Senate proposals of amendment to the following House bills:

H. 757. An act relating to manufactured homes and limited equity cooperatives.

H. 932. An act relating to the regulation of forestry under Act 250.

H. 937. An act relating to miscellaneous judiciary procedures.

And has severally concurred therein.

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. 660. An act relating to fiscal year 2027 Opioid Abatement Special Fund appropriations.

And has adopted the same on its part.

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

J.R.S. 54. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on May 22, 2026.

And has adopted the same in concurrence.

Bills Passed in Concurrence with Proposal of Amendment

House bills of the following titles were read the third time and passed in concurrence with proposal of amendment:

H. 542. An act relating to terminating testing of schools in Vermont for polychlorinated biphenyls.

H. 710. An act relating to defining electricity generating facilities.

Third Reading Ordered

H. 294.

Senator Major, for the Committee on Institutions, to which was referred House bill entitled:

An act relating to telecommunications services and wages in correctional facilities.

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.

Proposal of Amendment; Proposal of Amendment Withdrawn; Third Reading Ordered

H. 567.

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

An act relating to unclaimed property, State retirement systems, and capital debt.

Reported that the bill ought to pass in concurrence.

Senator Hardy, for the Committee on Finance, to which the bill was referred, reported recommending that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill by adding a reader assistance heading and a new section to be Sec. 24a to read as follows:

* * * Vermont Higher Education Endowment Trust Fund Report * * *

Sec. 24a. VERMONT HIGHER EDUCATION ENDOWMENT TRUST
FUND REPORT

(a) On or before January 15, 2027, the State Treasurer shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Education and on Ways and Means and the Senate Committees on Education and on Finance regarding the Vermont Higher Education Endowment Trust Fund.

(b) As part of the report, the Treasurer shall provide recommendations on the following items:

(1) mechanisms, including requiring consultation with the Vermont Higher Education Endowment Trust Fund Council, for ensuring appropriate fiduciary oversight of the use of the Fund to ensure that the endowed funds, including principal and interest earnings, are available for the intended purpose of providing scholarships to Vermont students;

(2) how to expand or modify the membership of the Council to include student representatives of the recipient institutions of higher education; and

(3) how to expand the scope of scholarship awards, including award amounts, types of degrees covered, and institutions of higher education included in the scholarship program.

(c) In developing the report required by this section, the Treasurer shall consult with the Council and the respective student government associations of the University of Vermont, Community College of Vermont, and other institutions within the Vermont State Colleges System.

And that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with such proposal of amendment.

Senator Perchlik, for the Committee on Appropriations to which the bill was referred, reported recommending that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment.

Thereupon, Senator Hardy requested and was granted leave to withdraw the proposal of amendment of the Committee on Finance.

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

Committee of Conference Appointed**H. 955.**

An act relating to next steps in transforming Vermont's education system.

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

Senator Bongartz
 Senator Hardy
 Senator Mattos

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

Proposal of Amendment; Proposal of Amendment Substituted; Third Reading Refused**H. 772.**

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

An act relating to residential rental agreements, eviction procedures, and the creation of the positive rental payment credit reporting pilot program.

Reported recommending that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Residential Rental Agreements * * *

Sec. 1. 9 V.S.A. chapter 137 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 137. RESIDENTIAL RENTAL AGREEMENTS

Subchapter 1. General

§ 4451. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(11) “Domestic abuse” has the same meaning as abuse in 15 V.S.A. § 1101(1).

(12) “Protected tenant” has the same meaning as in section 4471 of this title.

(13) “Sexual assault” has the same meaning as in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(5).

(14) “Stalking” has the same meaning as in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(6).

* * *

Subchapter 2. Residential Rental Agreements

§ 4455. TENANT OBLIGATIONS; PAYMENT OF RENT; RENT INCREASES

(a) Rent is payable without demand or notice at the time and place agreed upon by the parties.

(b) An increase in rent shall take effect on the first day of the rental period following no less than 60 days' actual notice to the tenant.

(c) A landlord shall not increase rent more than once in any 12-month period. This subsection shall not prohibit a landlord from increasing rent after the purchase of a dwelling unit subject to the requirements of this section.

* * *

§ 4456a. RESIDENTIAL RENTAL APPLICATION

(a)(1) A landlord or a landlord's agent shall not charge an application fee to any individual in order to apply to enter into a rental agreement for a residential dwelling unit. This subsection shall not be construed to prohibit a person from charging a fee to a person in order to apply to rent commercial or nonresidential property.

(2) As used in this section, an "application fee" means any fee, charge, or cost to submit a residential rental application including any third-party processing payment.

(3) A landlord or a landlord's agent may charge actual costs to conduct a background or credit check of an applicant, unless the tenant or applicant provides a current credit report as part of the application, in which case the landlord or landlord's agent shall not charge for a credit check. For purposes of this subdivision, a "current credit report" means a report dated within 90 days prior to the date of the residential rental application.

(4) If charging for a background or credit check on an applicant, the landlord or the landlord's agent shall provide a copy of the results of the background or credit check to the applicant.

* * *

(c) A person who violates this section commits an unfair practice in commerce in violation of section 2453 of this title.

* * *

§ 4461. SECURITY DEPOSITS

(a)(1) A security deposit is any advance, deposit, or prepaid rent, however named, which is refundable to the tenant at the termination or expiration of the tenancy. The function of a security deposit is to secure the performance of a tenant's obligations to pay rent and to maintain a dwelling unit.

(2) A landlord shall not charge for or receive a security deposit exceeding an amount equal to two months' rent, in addition to any rent for the first month paid on or before initial occupancy.

(3) Subject to the requirements of this section, a landlord may charge a separate security deposit in addition to the amount authorized in subdivision (2) of this subsection as a condition for allowing the tenant to have a pet or pets during the rental period. A landlord shall not charge any amount under this subdivision for any animal that mitigates a disability.

* * *

(c) A landlord shall return the security deposit along with a written statement itemizing any deductions to a tenant within 14 days ~~from~~ after the date on which the landlord discovers that the tenant vacated or abandoned the dwelling unit or the date the tenant vacated the dwelling unit, provided the landlord received notice from the tenant of that date. In the case of the seasonal occupancy and rental of a dwelling unit not intended as a primary residence, the security deposit and written statement shall be returned within 60 days.

* * *

(g)(1) A town or municipality may adopt an ordinance governing security deposits on dwellings. The ordinance shall be supplemental to and not inconsistent with the minimum protections of the provisions of this section.

(2) The ordinance ~~may~~ shall not limit how a security deposit is held.

(3) The ordinance may:

(A) Limit the amount a landlord may charge for a security deposit to an amount less than two month's rent as provided in subdivision (a)(2) of this section.

(B) authorize Authorize the payment of interest on a security deposit.

(C) The ordinance may provide Provide that a housing board of review constituted pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 5005 may hear and decide disputes related to security deposits upon request for a hearing by a landlord or tenant. The board's actions shall be reviewable under 24 V.S.A. § 5006.

* * *

§ 4465. RETALIATORY CONDUCT PROHIBITED

(a) A landlord of a residential dwelling unit may not retaliate by establishing or changing terms of a rental agreement or by bringing or threatening to bring an action against a tenant who:

(1) has complained to a governmental agency charged with responsibility for enforcement of a building, housing, or health regulation of a violation applicable to the premises materially affecting health and safety;

(2) has complained to the landlord of a violation of this chapter; or

(3) has organized or become a member of a tenant's union or similar organization;

(4) has taken any legal action authorized by law against the landlord; or

(5) has contacted law enforcement to respond to an instance of domestic abuse.

(b) If the landlord acts in violation of this section, the tenant is entitled to recover damages and reasonable attorney's fees and has a defense in any retaliatory action for possession.

(c) If a landlord serves notice of termination of tenancy on any grounds other than for nonpayment of rent within 90 days after notice by any municipal or State governmental entity that the premises are not in compliance with applicable health or safety regulations, there is a rebuttable presumption that any termination by the landlord is in retaliation for the tenant having reported the noncompliance.

* * *

§ 4467. TERMINATION OF TENANCY; NOTICE

* * *

(b) Termination for breach of rental agreement.

* * *

(3) A landlord shall not terminate a rental agreement under this subsection based on a person seeking medical assistance for a drug overdose, being the subject of a good faith request for medical assistance, or being at the scene of a drug overdose or within close proximity of the scene of a drug overdose as provided in 18 V.S.A. § 4254 and evidence obtained from the good faith request for medical assistance for a drug overdose shall not be used in an ejectment action brought under 12 V.S.A. chapter 169.

(4)(A) A landlord shall not terminate a rental agreement of a protected tenant under this subsection (b) because of an incident or pattern of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

(B) A protected tenant may request to bifurcate the rental agreement as authorized in section 4472a of this title.

* * *

Sec. 1a. 9 V.S.A. § 4472a is added to read:

§ 4472a. RIGHT TO BIFURCATION OF A RENTAL AGREEMENT

(a)(1) Notwithstanding a contrary provision of a rental agreement or of subchapter 2 of this chapter, a landlord may approve a protected tenant's written request to bifurcate a rental agreement in order to eject, remove, or terminate a rental agreement with any individual who is a tenant or lawful occupant of the dwelling unit that engages in abuse, sexual assault, or stalking, against the protected tenant without ejecting, removing, or terminating the rental agreement with the protected tenant.

(2) If the protected tenant includes with a written request to bifurcate the rental agreement a copy of a court order that requires the perpetrator to leave the premises, a landlord shall bifurcate a rental agreement in order to eject, remove, or terminate a rental agreement to any individual who is a tenant or lawful occupant of the dwelling unit that engages in abuse, sexual assault, or stalking against the protected tenant without ejecting, removing, or terminating the rental agreement with the protected tenant.

(3) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require that a protected tenant submit documentation of the status of the protected tenant as a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking in order to request to bifurcate a rental agreement under this section.

(b)(1) In the event the bifurcation and removal of an individual under subsection (a) of this section results in the protected tenant being unable to cover the rent of the dwelling unit, the landlord shall provide the protected tenant with a reasonable opportunity to locate additional tenants or to otherwise find new housing.

(2) A reasonable opportunity under this section shall be not less than 90 days.

* * * Ejectment * * *

Sec. 2. [Deleted.]

Sec. 3. 12 V.S.A. chapter 169 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 169. EJECTMENT

* * *

Subchapter 3. Superior Court Ejectment

* * *

§ 4853a. PAYMENT OF RENT INTO COURT; EXPEDITED HEARING

[Subsection (a) as amended by 2007, Act No. 125 (Adj. Sess.), § 1.]

~~(a) In any action against a tenant for possession, the landlord may file a motion for an order that the tenant pay rent into court. The motion may be filed and served with the complaint or at any time after the complaint has been filed. The motion shall be accompanied by affidavit setting forth particular facts in support of the motion.~~

[Subsection (a) as amended by 2007, Act No. 176 (Adj. Sess.), § 51.]

(a) In any action against a tenant for possession brought in accordance with this chapter, 9 V.S.A. chapter 137, 10 V.S.A. chapter 153, or 11 V.S.A. chapter 14, the landlord may file a motion for an order that the tenant pay rent into court. The motion may be filed and served with the complaint or at any time after the complaint has been filed. The motion shall be accompanied by affidavit setting forth particular facts in support of the motion.

* * *

§ 4854a. PROPERTY OF TENANT REMAINING ON PREMISES AFTER EVICTION

(a) A landlord may dispose of any personal property remaining in a dwelling unit or leased premises without notice or liability to the tenant or owner of the personal property:

(1) ~~15 days after a writ of possession is served pursuant to this chapter or immediately upon the landlord being legally restored to possession of the dwelling unit or leased premises pursuant to this chapter, whichever is later;~~ or

(2) in the case of an eviction brought pursuant to 10 V.S.A. chapter 153, 40 days after a writ of possession issued for failure to pay rent into court pursuant to subsection 4853a(h) of this title is served or upon the landlord being legally restored to possession of the leased premises by a writ of possession issued for failure to pay rent into court pursuant to subsection 4853a(h) of this title, whichever is later.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, if the court stays the execution of a writ of possession issued pursuant to this chapter, then a landlord may dispose of any personal property remaining in a dwelling unit or leased premises without notice or liability to the tenant or owner of the personal property ~~one day~~ immediately after the landlord is legally restored to possession of the dwelling unit or leased premises.

* * *

* * * Trespass * * *

Sec. 4. PURPOSE

The purpose of Sec. 5 of this act is to override the Vermont Supreme Court's decision in State v. Dixon, 169 Vt. 15 (1999), and allow the landlord of a dwelling unit to obtain a no trespass order prohibiting the tenant's invitees or licensees from entering the dwelling unit's common areas if the invitee or licensee subject to the order has violated the terms of the lease agreement.

Sec. 5. 13 V.S.A. § 3705 is amended to read:

§ 3705. UNLAWFUL TRESPASS

(a)(1) A person shall be imprisoned for not more than three months or fined not more than \$500.00, or both, if, without legal authority or the consent of the person in lawful possession, the person enters or remains on any land or in any place as to which notice against trespass is given by:

* * *

(g)(1) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section or any provision of law to the contrary, a landlord of a dwelling unit may cause to be served an order against trespass that prohibits a tenant's invitees or licensees from trespassing in the dwelling unit or any of the dwelling unit's common areas if:

(A) the tenant responsible for the invitee or licensee consents to the order;

(B) the invitee or licensee subject to the order has violated the terms of the dwelling unit's lease agreement;

(C) the invitee or licensee has violated a State or federal law while on the premises of the dwelling unit; or

(D) the invitee or licensee has previously been ejected from a dwelling unit on the premises under 12 V.S.A. chapter 169 due to a termination of a rental agreement under 9 V.S.A. § 4467(b).

(2) Consent required under subdivision (1)(A) of this subsection shall be provided on an individualized basis. It shall be against the public policy of this State for a tenant to provide blanket consent under subdivision (1)(A) for all invitees or licensees, and any provision of a rental agreement that provides blanket consent from a tenant shall be void and unenforceable.

(3) An order against trespass served under this subsection shall be enforceable for one year from the date of the order being served. The order may be renewed for subsequent one-year periods if the landlord causes to be served a new order.

(4) As used in this subsection:

(A) "Dwelling unit" means a building or the part of a building that is used as a home, residence, or sleeping place by one or more persons who maintain a household.

(B) "Premises" means a dwelling unit; its appurtenances and the building; and the grounds, areas, and facilities held out for the use of tenants generally or whose use is promised to the tenant.

(C) "Tenant" means a person entitled under a rental agreement to occupy a residential dwelling unit to the exclusion of others.

Sec. 6. [Deleted.]

* * * Positive Rental Payment Pilot Program * * *

Sec. 7. POSITIVE RENTAL PAYMENT CREDIT REPORTING PILOT

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1) "Contractor" means the third-party vendor that the State Treasurer's Office contracts with to administer the pilot program described in this section.

(2) "Dwelling unit" has the same meaning as in 9 V.S.A. § 4451(3).

(3) "Participant property owner" means a landlord that has agreed in writing to participate in the pilot program and has satisfied the requirements described in subsection (c) of this section.

(4) "Participant tenant" means a tenant who has elected to participate in the pilot program and whose landlord is a participant property owner.

(5) "Rental payment information" means information concerning a participant tenant's timely payment of rent. "Rent payment information" does not include information concerning a participant tenant's payment or nonpayment of fees.

(b) Pilot program creation.

(1) The State Treasurer shall create and implement a two-year positive rental payment credit reporting pilot program to facilitate the reporting of rent payment information from participant tenants to consumer reporting agencies.

(2) On or before May 1, 2027, the State Treasurer shall contract with a third party to administer a positive rental payment credit reporting pilot program and facilitate the transmission of rent reporting information from a participant property owner to a consumer reporting agency. The third-party administrator shall be required to:

(A) enter into an agreement with one or more participant property owners in the State in accordance with the requirements of this section for participation in the pilot program;

(B) ensure that information to a credit reporting agency includes only rent payment information after the date on which the participant tenant elected to participate in the pilot program;

(C) develop and implement a process for removal of participant tenants for failure to comply with program requirements, including failure to make timely rental payments;

(D) establish a standard form for a participant tenant to use to elect to participate or cease participation in the pilot program, which shall include a statement that the tenant's participation is voluntary and that a participant may cease participating in the pilot program at any time and for any reason by providing notice to the participant's landlord and that the tenant may be removed from the program for failure to comply with program requirements, including failure to make timely rental payments; and

(E) offer an optional financial education course for participant tenants.

(c) Pilot program agreements. A participant property owner shall agree in writing:

(1) to participate in the pilot program for the duration of the pilot program;

(2) not to charge a participant tenant for participation in the pilot program;

(3) to comply with the requirements of the pilot program;

(4) to provide information as required by the State Treasurer concerning the implementation of the pilot program; and

(5) to assist in the recruitment of tenants to participate in the pilot program.

(d) Pilot program participants. On or before June 1, 2027, the contractor shall, in coordination with the State Treasurer, recruit not more than 10 participant property owners and, to the extent practicable, not fewer than 100 participant tenants to participate in the pilot program. The contractor shall seek to select participant tenants from populations that are underserved and underrepresented in home ownership. The contractor shall also seek to recruit participant landlords who offer:

(1) a variety of types of dwelling units for rent, including dwelling units of various sizes;

(2) dwelling units for rent that are located in geographically diverse areas of the State; and

(3) at least five dwelling units for rent.

(e) Termination. The State Treasurer may terminate the pilot program at any time in the Treasurer's sole discretion or terminate participation of a participant property owner for failure to comply with the requirements of the pilot program.

(f) Reports.

(1) On or before November 1, 2028, the State Treasurer shall submit an interim report to the House Committee on General and Housing and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs regarding the findings of the pilot program. The report shall include:

(A) the number of participant tenants, including information regarding the demographic makeup of participant tenants, such as race, ethnicity, gender, income, and age, as voluntarily provided by the participant;

(B) the number of participant tenants who ceased participating in the pilot program voluntarily;

(C) the number of participant tenants who were removed from the pilot program and the reasons why;

(D) a breakdown of costs of administering the pilot program, including the monthly costs associated with rent reporting;

(E) a description of challenges faced by the participant property owners and participant tenants during the pilot program;

(F) an analysis of the outcomes of rent reporting on participant tenants' credit scores; and

(G) recommendations for legislative action, including proposed statutory language and an appropriation for associated costs.

(2) On or before November 1, 2029, the State Treasurer shall submit a final report to the House Committee on General and Housing and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs regarding the findings of the pilot program. The report shall include an update to the information required in the interim report.

(g) Appropriation contingency. The duty to implement this section is contingent upon an appropriation of funds in fiscal year 2027 from the General Fund for the specific purposes described in this section.

* * * Residential Security Deposit Transition Period * * *

Sec. 8. SECURITY DEPOSIT; TRANSITION PERIOD

Notwithstanding 9 V.S.A. § 4461(a), a landlord may maintain a security deposit that exceeds an amount equal to two months' rent, provided that the residential rental agreement was in effect prior to July 1, 2026. Upon the termination of the rental agreement, the landlord shall return the security deposit in compliance with the requirements of 9 V.S.A. § 4461.

* * * Technical Training * * *

Sec. 9. LANDLORD AND TENANT EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(a) The Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) shall provide education and technical assistance to Vermont landlords and tenants regarding their rights, obligations, and remedies for statutory violations under Vermont rental statutes.

(b)(1) Training for tenants shall include training under the Preferred Renter Certification Program or its future equivalent.

(2) For landlords, CVOEO shall develop a curriculum to address any resource and information gaps to increase positive interactions with tenants and improve renter household stability.

(c) Assistance under this program shall include in-person, virtual, and on-demand options.

(d) The duty to implement this section is contingent upon an appropriation of funds in fiscal year 2027 from the General Fund for the specific purposes described in this section.

Sec. 10. [Deleted.]

* * * Statewide Housing Court Report * * *

Sec. 11. HOUSING COURT STUDY; REPORT

(a) On or before January 31, 2027, the Court administrator shall submit to the General Assembly a report on the feasibility of implementing a dedicated docket in Vermont for handling all matters governing residential rental agreements under 9 V.S.A. chapter 137 and ejectment actions under 12 V.S.A. chapter 169. The report shall include an examination of:

(1) the financial costs of implementing a dedicated housing docket in Vermont;

(2) the workforce impact of a dedicated housing docket, including:

(A) the number of judges and staff necessary to:

(i) resolve all ejectment actions statewide within 90 days following the filing of the complaint;

(ii) meet the timelines outlined in 12 V.S.A. chapter 169 for expedited hearings; and

(iii) resolve ejectment actions brought due to the termination of a residential rental agreement under 9 V.S.A. § 4467(b)(2) within 21 days from the date of filing of the complaint; and

(B) the impact on other court staff with the implementation of a dedicated housing docket;

(3) whether current State facilities have the capacity to support a dedicated housing docket statewide and whether new or expanded facilities would be required or whether current technical capacities within the Judiciary can handle the virtual statewide implementation of a centralized housing docket; and

(4) any other matter deemed relevant to the issue of implementing a statewide housing docket.

(b) The report shall include information on the legal issues to consider in requiring an expedited hearing for ejectment actions brought due to a termination of a residential rental agreement under 9 V.S.A. § 4467(b)(2), including:

(1) how the court could determine that a tenant is an ongoing threat to the health and safety of others if that were to be a condition upon which an expedited ejectment hearing would be allowed;

(2) whether there are procedural issues with beginning the 21-day timeline for an expedited ejectment hearing with the filing of the complaint versus the service of the answer;

(3) how the court would determine that damage to the dwelling unit is a threat to the health and safety of others; and

(4) whether there are procedural issues with shortening the timeframes for the termination of a residential rental agreement.

(c) In developing the report, the Court administrator shall work to balance the needs of interested parties in making its recommendations, including a balancing of the rights of tenants, the landlord's property interests, and the safety of other tenants and their neighbors.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

And that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with such proposal of amendment.

Senator Clarkson, for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, to which the bill was referred, reported recommending that the Senate propose to the House that the bill be amended as recommended by the Committee on Judiciary with further proposals of amendment as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 1, 9 V.S.A. chapter 137, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 1 to read as follows:

Sec. 1. [Deleted.]

Second: By striking out Sec. 1a, 9 V.S.A. § 4472a, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 1a to read as follows:

Sec. 1a. [Deleted.]

Third: By striking out Sec. 3, 12 V.S.A. chapter 169, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 3 to read as follows:

Sec. 3. [Deleted.]

Fourth: In Sec. 5, 13 V.S.A. § 3705, by striking out subdivision (g)(1)(B) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subdivision (g)(1)(B) to read as follows:

(B) the invitee or licensee subject to the order has engaged in a pattern of violating the terms of the dwelling unit's lease agreement;

Fifth: In Sec. 5, 13 V.S.A. § 3705, in subdivision (g)(1)(D), by inserting “(2)” after “4467(b)”

Sixth: In Sec. 5, 13 V.S.A. § 3705, by inserting a new subdivision to be subdivision (g)(4)(B) to read as follows and by relettering the remaining subdivisions to be alphabetically correct:

(B) “Pattern of violating” means two or more acts over a period of time, however short, in which a person violates the terms of the lease agreement.

Seventh: By striking out Secs. 7, positive rental payment credit reporting pilot; 8, security deposit; transition period; and 9, landlord and tenant education and technical assistance program, in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof new Secs. 7, 8, and 9 to read as follows:

Sec. 7. [Deleted.]

Sec. 8. [Deleted.]

Sec. 9. [Deleted.]

Eighth: By striking out Sec. 11, housing court study; report, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 11 to read as follows:

Sec. 11. HOUSING COURT STUDY; REPORT

(a) On or before January 31, 2027, the Court Administrator shall submit to the General Assembly a report on the feasibility of implementing a dedicated docket in Vermont for handling all matters governing residential rental agreements under 9 V.S.A. chapter 137 and ejectment actions under 12 V.S.A. chapter 169. The report shall include an examination of:

(1) the financial costs of implementing a dedicated residential rental docket in Vermont;

(2) the workforce impact of a dedicated residential rental docket, including:

(A) the number of judges and staff necessary to:

(i) resolve all ejectment actions statewide within 90 days following the filing of the complaint;

(ii) meet the timelines outlined in 12 V.S.A. chapter 169 for expedited hearings; and

(iii) resolve ejectment actions brought due to the termination of a residential rental agreement under 9 V.S.A. § 4467(b)(2) within 21 days after the date of filing of the complaint; and

(B) the impact on other court staff with the implementation of a dedicated residential rental docket;

(3) whether current State facilities have the capacity to support a dedicated residential rental docket statewide and whether new or expanded facilities would be required or whether current technical capacities within the Judiciary can handle the virtual statewide implementation of a centralized residential rental docket;

(4) procedural impacts for the timeline suggested in subdivision (2) of this subsection, including information about the impacts of beginning the 21-day timeline for an expedited ejection hearing with the filing of the complaint versus the service of the answer;

(5) whether to include other legal matters beyond residential rental agreements within the dedicated docket; and

(6) any other matter deemed relevant to the issue of implementing a statewide residential rental docket.

(b) In developing the report, the Court Administrator shall consult with interested parties, including landlords, tenants, Vermont Legal Aid, and others deemed necessary by the Court Administrator.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to residential rental agreements, ejections, and unlawful trespass”

And that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with such proposals of amendment.

Senator Norris, for the Committee on Appropriations, to which the bill was referred, reported recommending that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with proposal of amendment as recommended by the Committee on Judiciary, with further proposals of amendment by the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

Thereupon, the bill was read the second time by title only pursuant to Rule 43, and pending the question, Shall the recommendation of proposal of amendment of the Committee on Judiciary be amended as recommended by the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs?, Senator Hashim, moved to substitute proposals of amendment for the proposals of amendment of the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 1, 9 V.S.A. chapter 137, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 1 to read as follows:

Sec. 1. 9 V.S.A. chapter 137 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 137. RESIDENTIAL RENTAL AGREEMENTS

Subchapter 1. General

§ 4451. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(11) “Domestic abuse” has the same meaning as abuse in 15 V.S.A. § 1101(1).

(12) “Protected tenant” has the same meaning as in section 4471 of this title.

(13) “Sexual assault” has the same meaning as in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(5).

(14) “Stalking” has the same meaning as in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(6).

* * *

Subchapter 2. Residential Rental Agreements

* * *

§ 4467. TERMINATION OF TENANCY; NOTICE

* * *

(b) Termination for breach of rental agreement.

* * *

(3) A landlord shall not terminate a rental agreement under this subsection based on a person seeking medical assistance for a drug overdose, being the subject of a good faith request for medical assistance, or being at the scene of a drug overdose or within close proximity of the scene of a drug overdose as provided in 18 V.S.A. § 4254, and evidence obtained from the good faith request for medical assistance for a drug overdose shall not be used in an ejection action brought under 12 V.S.A. chapter 169.

(4)(A) A landlord shall not terminate a rental agreement of a protected tenant under this subsection (b) because of an incident or pattern of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

(B) A protected tenant may request to bifurcate the rental agreement as authorized in section 4472a of this title.

* * *

Second: By striking out Sec. 3, 12 V.S.A. chapter 169, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 3 to read as follows:

Sec. 3. [Deleted.]

Third: In Sec. 5, 13 V.S.A. § 3705, in subdivision (g)(1)(D), by inserting “(2)” after “4467(b)”

Fourth: By striking out Secs. 7, positive rental payment credit reporting pilot; 8, security deposit; transition period; and 9, landlord and tenant education and technical assistance program, in their entireties and inserting in lieu thereof new Secs. 7, 8, and 9 to read as follows:

Sec. 7. [Deleted.]

Sec. 8. [Deleted.]

Sec. 9. [Deleted.]

Fifth: By striking out Sec. 11, housing court study; report, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 11 to read as follows:

Sec. 11. HOUSING COURT STUDY; REPORT

(a) On or before January 31, 2027, the Court Administrator shall submit to the General Assembly a report on the feasibility of implementing a dedicated docket in Vermont for handling all matters governing residential rental agreements under 9 V.S.A. chapter 137 and ejectment actions under 12 V.S.A. chapter 169. The report shall include an examination of:

(1) the financial costs of implementing a dedicated residential rental docket in Vermont;

(2) the workforce impact of a dedicated residential rental docket, including:

(A) the number of judges and staff necessary to:

(i) resolve all ejectment actions statewide within 90 days following the filing of the complaint;

(ii) meet the timelines outlined in 12 V.S.A. chapter 169 for expedited hearings; and

(iii) resolve ejectment actions brought due to the termination of a residential rental agreement under 9 V.S.A. § 4467(b)(2) within 21 days after the date of filing of the complaint; and

(B) the impact on other court staff with the implementation of a dedicated residential rental docket;

(3) whether current State facilities have the capacity to support a dedicated residential rental docket statewide and whether new or expanded facilities would be required or whether current technical capacities within the Judiciary can handle the virtual statewide implementation of a centralized residential rental docket;

(4) procedural impacts for the timeline suggested in subdivision (2) of this subsection, including information about the impacts of beginning the 21-day timeline for an expedited ejectment hearing with the filing of the complaint versus the service of the answer;

(5) whether to include other legal matters beyond residential rental agreements within the dedicated docket; and

(6) any other matter deemed relevant to the issue of implementing a statewide residential rental docket.

(b) In developing the report, the Court Administrator shall consult with interested parties, including landlords, tenants, Vermont Legal Aid, and others deemed necessary by the Court Administrator.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to residential rental agreements, ejectments, and unlawful trespass.”

Which was agreed to, on a roll call, Yeas 17, Nays 12.

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

Roll Call

Those Senators who voted in the affirmative were: Baruth, Bongartz, Chittenden, Clarkson, Cummings, Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim, Lyons, Major, Perchlik, Plunkett, Ram Hinsdale, Vyhovsky, Watson, White.

Those Senators who voted in the negative were: Beck, Benson, Brennan, Brock, Collamore, Heffernan, Ingalls, Morley, Norris, Weeks, Westman, Williams.

The Senator absent and not voting was: Mattos.

Thereupon, pending the question, Shall the proposal of amendment of the Committee on Judiciary be amended as recommended by the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, as substituted?, Senators Ram Hinsdale and Chittenden moved to amend the proposal of amendment of the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, as substituted in the first instance of amendment by adding a new subdivision to be subdivision (b)(5) to 9 VSA § 4667 to read as follows:

(b) Termination for breach of rental agreement.

* * *

(5)(A) A landlord shall not terminate a tenancy under subdivision (1) of this subsection if the actions giving reason for the termination are directly related to a tenant's disability, until the landlord has engaged in an interactive process with the tenant to discuss reasonable accommodations that would enable the tenant with a disability to remain housed. If the landlord subsequently sends notice of termination due in whole or in part to disability-related actions of the tenant, the notice of termination shall describe efforts to grant reasonable accommodations.

(B) Notwithstanding subdivision (A) of this subdivision (5), a landlord may terminate a tenancy due to criminal activity, illegal drug activity, or acts of violence under subdivision (2) of this subsection (b) if, despite the tenant's disability, the tenant's continued occupation of the lands or tenements is threatening the health or safety of other residents, the landlord or the landlord's agent, or neighbors.

Which was disagreed to.

Thereupon, the pending question, Shall the proposal of amendment of the Committee on Judiciary be amended as recommended by the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, as substituted?, was decided in the affirmative.

Thereupon, the proposal of amendment recommended by the Committee on Judiciary, as amended, was agreed to and third reading of the bill was refused, on a roll call, Yeas 15, Nays 15.

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

Roll Call

Those Senators who voted in the affirmative were: Baruth, Bongartz, Clarkson, Collamore, Cummings, Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim, Lyons, Major, Perchlik, Plunkett, Watson, White.

Those Senators who voted in the negative were: Beck, Benson, Brennan, Brock, Chittenden, Heffernan, Ingalls, Mattos, Morley, Norris, Ram Hinsdale, Vyhovsky, Weeks, Westman, Williams.

There being a tie, the Secretary took the casting vote of the President, who voted "Nay".

Message from the House No. 81

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

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

Adjournment

On motion of Senator Baruth, the Senate adjourned until two o'clock and thirty minutes in the afternoon.

Called to Order

The Senate was called to order by the President.

Rules Suspended; Action Messaged

On motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended, and the action on the following bills was ordered messaged to the House forthwith:

H. 542. An act relating to terminating testing of schools in Vermont for polychlorinated biphenyls.

H. 710. An act relating to defining electricity generating facilities.

Proposals of Amendment; Third Reading Ordered**H. 935.**

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

An act relating to emergency management.

Reported recommending that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Ready Response Grant Program * * *

Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 52 is added to read:

§ 52. READY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM

(a) As used in this section, “ready response” means the provision of short-term food and bottled water resources, including logistical support and transportation, to individuals in Vermont who do not have adequate access to food and water at agreed upon times when the Division of Emergency Management seeks resource assistance from a grantee or responds to an all-hazards event or state of emergency.

(b) There is created the Ready Response Grant Program to be managed and administered by the Division of Emergency Management. The Division shall award an annual grant to an eligible food bank to source, store, and distribute shelf-stable, ready-to-eat foods and bottled water at times and in types and quantities per a written memorandum of agreement with the Division.

(c) The grant shall be in an amount sufficient to compensate the grantee for all costs incurred to procure and stage food and water in agreed upon quantities and locations, the costs of cycling the food and water at agreed-upon intervals, the value of distribution center storage capacity, the value of operational capacity to stage materials in anticipation of need, and the costs of distribution whenever the Division seeks resource assistance from the grantee or responds to an all-hazards event or state of emergency. As used in this subsection, the “value of operational capacity” includes leased storage space, delivery vehicles, drivers, warehouse selectors, and other operational costs.

(d) Food and water supplies subject to a grant and under the grantee’s control shall be rotated and replenished according to established industry guidelines and best practices. Rotated food and water shall be redistributed in an equitable manner by the grantee through Vermont’s charitable food system to Vermont nonprofit organizations qualifying under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3) that provide food to individuals in Vermont.

(e) To the extent that the Division requests services from the grantee that are not covered by the Grant Program, a separate agreement shall be reached between the Division and the grantee.

* * * Technical Rescue Grant Program * * *

Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 53 is added to read:

§ 53. TECHNICAL RESCUE GRANT PROGRAM

(a) Creation of Program. There is created the Technical Rescue Grant Program to assist Vermont fire departments, emergency medical services agencies, and technical rescue agencies with the improvement of operational readiness and investment in specialized equipment, personal protective gear, and training. The Program shall be administered by the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team program manager.

(b) Duties of USAR Team program manager. The USAR Team program manager, in addition to other duties described elsewhere in law, shall review grant applications, award grants, and otherwise administer the Program.

(c) Eligibility. Fire departments, emergency medical services agencies, and technical rescue agencies operating within Vermont shall be eligible for Program grants. Grant applicants shall demonstrate their use, planned use, or need for technical rescue operations within their service area. All grant applicants shall submit their application on a form adopted by the USAR Team program manager. The USAR Team program manager shall prioritize grant awards for applicants that:

(1) maintain a memorandum of understanding with the Division of Emergency Management for swiftwater rescue; or

(2) function as regional technical rescue teams providing services in multiple jurisdictions.

(d) Grant award limitations. The maximum award to any applicant in a given fiscal year shall be not more than \$5,000.00. The Program shall not award more than \$25,000.00 in total grants in a given fiscal year.

(e) Application review and scoring. The USAR Team program manager shall adopt procedures governing application submission, forms, review, scoring, and recommendation of awards. The procedures for application scoring shall include alignment with the Program priorities in subsection (a) of this section, operational need, geographic service area, feasibility of the proposed project, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of the applicant's services.

(f) Grant recipient reporting; report. Each grant recipient shall submit to the USAR Team program manager a final expenditure report, proof of purchase or training completion, and a narrative description of how the grant improved the recipient's technical rescue capacity. Annually on or before November 15, the USAR Team program manager shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations summarizing grant awards, outcomes, and Program recommendations.

(g) Rulemaking. The USAR Team program manager may adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 as needed to implement this section.

Sec. 2a. 20 V.S.A. § 50 is amended to read:

§ 50. URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

* * *

(b) The USAR Team program manager shall perform all the following duties:

* * *

(5) negotiate and enter into agreements with municipalities, municipal agencies that maintain swiftwater rescue teams, State-recognized swiftwater rescue teams, or other technical rescue teams to provide expert assistance and services to the USAR Team when necessary; ~~and~~

(6) coordinate USAR Team participation in search and rescue operations under chapter 112 of this title; and

(7) administer the Technical Rescue Grant Program pursuant to section 53 of this title.

* * *

* * * Disability Inclusion in Emergency Planning * * *

Sec. 3. 20 V.S.A. § 2 is amended to read:

§ 2. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(13) “Whole community” means the collective of residents; emergency management practitioners; organizational and community leaders; and local, State, and federal government officials.

Sec. 4. 20 V.S.A. § 6 is amended to read:

§ 6. LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

* * *

(c)(1) Each local organization shall develop and maintain an all-hazards emergency management plan in accordance with the State Emergency Management Plan and guidance set forth by the Division of Emergency Management.

* * *

(3) The Division shall advise municipalities that when a shelter is sited under a local emergency plan, the municipality should work with the ~~Agency of Human Services, the American Red Cross, and community-based emergency or charitable food providers~~ whole community, to assess the facility and the facility’s potential operations, including the characteristics of the surrounding area during an all-hazards event, multiple routes of travel and possible hazards that could prevent access to the shelter, and the need for immediate and sustained access to food and water for individuals using the shelter.

(4) The Division, in coordination with the ~~Agency of Human Services~~ whole community, shall advise municipalities, upon completion of a local emergency management plan, on how to conduct training and exercises pertaining to sheltering.

* * *

Sec. 5. 20 V.S.A. § 32 is amended to read:

§ 32. LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEES; CREATION;
DUTIES

* * *

(b) All local emergency planning committees shall include representatives from the following: fire departments; local and regional emergency medical services; local, county, and State law enforcement; other entities providing first responders or emergency management personnel; organizations serving vulnerable populations; media; transportation; regional planning commissions; hospitals; industry; the Vermont National Guard; the Department of Health's district office; and an animal rescue organization, and may include any other interested public or private individual or organization. Where the local emergency planning committee represents more than one region of the State, the Commission shall appoint representatives that are geographically diverse.

(c) A local emergency planning committee shall perform all the following duties:

(1) Carry out all the requirements of a committee pursuant to EPCRA, including preparing a local emergency planning committee plan. The plan shall be coordinated with the State ~~emergency management plan~~ Emergency Management Plan and may be expanded to address all-hazards identified in the State ~~emergency management plan~~ Emergency Management Plan. A local emergency planning committee shall coordinate with disability-led organizations throughout all phases of emergency management planning. At a minimum, the local emergency planning committee plan shall include the following:

* * *

Sec. 6. [Deleted.]

* * * Town Forest Fire Wardens * * *

Sec. 7. 10 V.S.A. § 2603 is amended to read:

§ 2603. POWERS AND DUTIES: COMMISSIONER

* * *

(d) The Commissioner or designee shall be the State fire warden Forest Fire Warden and may act as, and in place of, the town forest fire warden of any municipality, unorganized town, or gore as provided under subchapter 4 of this chapter. The Commissioner or designee, as State Forest Fire Warden, shall have the authority to:

(1) exercise the authority and duties of a town forest fire warden as set forth in subchapter 4 of this chapter;

(2) appoint special forest fire wardens and delegate the authority of the State Forest Fire Warden to the special forest fire wardens;

(3) take command and control of a forest fire in any municipality or unorganized town or gore in the State when, in the State Forest Fire Warden's determination, it is necessary to do so, or when resources are needed in addition to local resources, and act as incident commander over all other fire officials;

(4) delegate the authority to act as incident commander of a forest fire to another person or entity;

(5) serve on the Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission or designate an appropriate Department representative to serve in the Commissioner's place, pursuant to section 2503 of this title, and exercise all related authority;

(6) enter into mutual aid compact agreements as set forth in section 2462 of this title; and

(7) issue a ban on kindling fires on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources when necessary.

* * *

Sec. 8. 10 V.S.A. chapter 83, subchapter 4 is amended to read:

Subchapter 4. Forest Fires and Fire Prevention

§ 2641. TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDENS; APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL

(a) Upon approval by the selectboard and acceptance by the appointee, the Commissioner shall appoint a town forest fire warden for a term of five years or until a successor is appointed. A town forest fire warden may be reappointed for successive five-year terms by the Commissioner or until a successor is approved by the selectboard and appointed by the Commissioner. The warden may be removed for cause at any time by the Commissioner with the approval of the selectboard. A warden shall comply with training requirements established by the Commissioner. The chief of the fire

department, fire district, or private fire department with the jurisdictional responsibility to respond to a municipality, unorganized town, or gore is designated as the town forest fire warden and shall have the authority to exercise all the powers and duties of a town forest fire warden. For any municipality, unorganized town, or gore that is covered by two or more fire districts or has two or more fire departments, the municipality, unorganized town, or gore shall designate one fire chief as town forest fire warden and shall notify the Commissioner of the designation.

~~(b) The Commissioner may appoint a forest fire warden for an unorganized town or gore, who shall serve for a term of five years or until a successor is appointed. An appointed forest fire warden for an unorganized town or gore may be reappointed for successive five-year terms by the Commissioner until the Commissioner appoints and the unorganized town or gore approves a successor. The warden may be removed for cause at any time by the Commissioner with the approval of the unorganized town or gore. The forest fire warden of an unorganized town or gore shall have the same powers and duties as town forest fire wardens and shall be subject to the requirements of this subchapter. The chief of the fire department, fire district, or private fire department with the jurisdictional responsibility to respond to a municipality, unorganized town, or gore, as town forest fire warden, may designate deputy town forest fire wardens. The town forest fire warden shall provide a list of all designated deputy forest fire wardens to the Commissioner. Deputy forest fire wardens shall only have the authority to issue permits to kindle a fire as set forth in sections 2644 and 2645 of this subchapter.~~

~~(c) When there are woodlands within the limits of a city, the chief of the fire department of such city shall act as the city forest fire warden with all the powers and duties of town forest fire wardens. When a municipality, unorganized town, or gore does not have a fire department or is not covered by a fire district, the municipality, unorganized town, or gore may contract with a neighboring fire department or fire district to designate the chief of the fire department or fire district to serve as the town forest fire warden for the municipality, unorganized town, or gore. When a private fire department provides fire suppression and control services to a municipality, unorganized town, or gore, the chief of the private fire department may serve as the town forest fire warden when approved by the municipality, unorganized town, or gore.~~

~~(d) When the Commissioner deems it difficult in any municipality for one warden to take charge of protecting the entire municipality from forest fires, he or she may appoint one or more deputy forest fire wardens. Such wardens under the direction of the fire warden shall have the same powers, duties, and pay and make the same reports through the fire warden to the Commissioner as forest fire wardens. [Repealed.]~~

(e) The Commissioner may ~~appoint~~ designate special forest fire wardens who shall hold office ~~during~~ at the pleasure of the Commissioner. ~~Such~~ The fire wardens shall be employees of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation with forest fire suppression and control training, and shall have the same powers and duties throughout the State as town forest fire wardens, except that all expenses and charges incurred on account of their official acts shall be paid from the appropriations for the Department.

§ 2642. SALARY AND COMPENSATION OF TOWN FOREST FIRE
WARDENS

(a) The salary of a town forest fire warden and any deputy town forest fire warden shall be determined by the selectboard members for time spent in the performance of the duties of ~~his or her~~ the warden's office, which shall be paid by the town. ~~In addition thereto, he or she shall receive from the Commissioner \$30.00 annually for fulfilling the requirements of section 2645 of this title and keeping the required State records. He or she shall also receive from the Commissioner \$30.00 per diem for attendance at each training required by the Commissioner. He or she shall also receive annually an amount of \$10.00 for each fire report that is submitted by the forest fire warden under section 2644 of this title.~~

* * *

§ 2643. TOWN'S LIABILITY FOR SUPPRESSION OF FOREST FIRES;
STATE AID

(a) A municipality in which a forest fire occurs shall pay the cost to suppress a forest fire that occurs on land that is not owned by the Agency of Natural Resources, including the costs of personnel and equipment. The Commissioner may, ~~according to the Department fire suppression reimbursement policy~~ when funds have been appropriated or are otherwise available, reimburse a municipality for all or a portion of the costs of suppressing a forest fire on land that is not owned by the Agency of Natural Resources.

(b) For the purpose of suppressing forest fires on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources, the State ~~shall~~ may reimburse a ~~town municipality or unorganized town or gore~~ for some or all its forest fire suppression costs at a rate determined by the Commissioner ~~according to the Department fire suppression reimbursement policy~~. ~~If the total acreage of a forest fire is determined to be partially on land owned by the Agency of Natural Resources and partially on land owned by another party, the Commissioner shall, at a minimum, reimburse the town at a rate determined by the Commissioner according to the Department fire suppression~~

reimbursement policy for costs incurred by the municipality on land owned by the Agency of Natural Resources if, at a minimum, the requirements in subsection (c) of this section are satisfied. The Commissioner may establish additional requirements and guidance regarding reimbursement.

(c) For any forest fire on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources to be considered eligible for reimbursement from the State, a town forest fire warden shall have reported the forest fire to the Commissioner within 14 days of extinguishment of the fire as required under section 2644 of this title. For reimbursement of fire suppression costs for forest fires on land owned by the Agency of Natural Resources, the town forest fire warden and the Commissioner or designee shall approve the costs before submission to the municipality for payment. The town forest fire warden may submit to the State on an annual basis a request for reimbursement of fire suppression costs on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources. The State shall reimburse a town for all applicable forest fire suppression costs when the reimbursement request is presented in a form approved by the Commissioner to the Commissioner by December 31 of each year. a municipality, unorganized town, or gore shall, at a minimum, satisfy the following requirements:

(1) The town forest fire warden of a municipality, unorganized town, or gore shall request assistance within one hour of discovery after the forest fire from the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Wildland Fire Team, for the suppression of the forest fire on land owned by the Agency of Natural Resources.

(2) The town forest fire warden shall submit a report of the forest fire to the Commissioner within 24 hours after extinguishment of the fire as required under section 2644 of this title.

(3) The municipality, unorganized town, or gore shall submit detailed documentation of the costs of suppression of the forest fire to the Commissioner within 60 days after extinguishment of the forest fire.

(4) The Commissioner shall review and approve the request for reimbursement.

(d) For requests for reimbursement approved by the Commissioner for forest fire suppression costs of a municipality, unorganized town, or gore on land owned by the Agency of Natural Resources, payment of the costs shall be made by the Commissioner of Finance and Management to the municipality, unorganized town, or gore. The funds for the payment are to be taken from the appropriation for forest fire suppression.

§ 2644. DUTIES AND POWERS OF FIRE WARDEN

(a) When a forest fire or fire threatening a forest forestland is discovered in ~~his or her town~~ the warden's jurisdiction of responsibility, the town forest fire warden shall enter upon any premises and take measures for its prompt control, suppression, and extinguishment. ~~The town forest fire warden may call upon any person for assistance. The town forest fire warden may choose to share or delegate command authority to a chief engineer of a responding fire department or, in the chief's absence, the highest ranking assistant firefighter present during the fire.~~ Within 24 hours after discovery of the forest fire on lands not owned by the Agency of Natural Resources, the town forest fire warden shall notify the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation that the fire was discovered.

(b) A town forest fire warden shall ~~keep~~ prepare a report for all forest fires in the warden's jurisdiction that includes, at a minimum, the following information: a record of ~~his or her~~ the warden's acts, the number of forest fires and causes of the forest fires, the areas burned over, and the character and amount of damages done in the warden's jurisdiction. ~~Within two weeks~~ 48 hours after the extinguishment of a fire, the town forest fire warden shall file a report of the fire to the Commissioner, ~~but the making of a report under this subsection shall not be a charge against the town.~~

* * *

(d) Within 12 hours after granting permission to kindle a fire pursuant to section 2645 of this subchapter, the town forest fire warden or deputy forest fire warden shall issue a written "Permit to Kindle" stating when and where the fire may be kindled, including any conditions deemed appropriate by the town forest fire warden.

§ 2645. OPEN BURNING; PERMITS

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, a person shall not kindle or authorize another person to kindle a fire in the open air for the purpose of burning natural wood, brush, weeds, or grass without first obtaining ~~permission~~ a permit to kindle a fire from the town forest fire warden or deputy forest fire warden stating when and where ~~such~~ the fire may be kindled and imposing any conditions deemed necessary by the town forest fire warden or deputy forest fire warden. Special forest fire wardens designated by the Commissioner shall issue permits for Category 3 fires on land owned by the Agency of Natural Resources. ~~Wood, brush, weeds, or grass shall not be burned if they have been altered in any way by surface applications or injection of paints, stains, preservatives, oils, glues, or pesticides. Whenever such permission is granted, the fire warden, within 12 hours, shall issue a written "Permit to Kindle" for record purposes stating when and where such fire may be kindled.~~

~~(b) With the written approval of the Secretary, during~~ During periods of increased fire hazard, or when the Department of Environmental Conservation has issued an Air Quality Alert due to forecasted ambient air quality, the Commissioner may:

~~(1) notify~~ Notify town forest fire wardens that for a specified period no burning permits to kindle a fire shall be issued. The forest fire wardens shall issue no permits during the specified period.

~~(2) Notify town forest fire wardens that for a specified period of time permits for Category 2 or 3 fires shall be prohibited or restricted as set forth by the Commissioner.~~

~~(3) Notify town forest fire wardens that for a specified period of time, Category 1 fires shall be prohibited or restricted as set forth by the Commissioner.~~

~~(c) The provisions of this section will not apply to~~ A permit to kindle a fire is not required for the following categories or conditions when the requirements set forth below are satisfied:

~~(1) the kindling of a fire in a location where there is snow surrounding the open burning site;~~

~~(2) fires built in stone arches, outdoor fireplaces, or existing fire rings at State recreational areas or fires built in stone arches, outdoor fireplaces, or fire rings on private property that are not located within woodland, timberland, or a field containing dry grass or other flammable plant material contiguous to woodland; Category 1 fires; or~~

~~(3) the kindling of a fire in a location that is 200 feet or more from any woodland, timberland, or field containing dry grass or other flammable plant material contiguous to woodland; or~~

~~(4) areas within cities maintaining a fire department. the kindling of a fire that complies with all requirements established by rule adopted by the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation when a person is primitive camping on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources.~~

~~(d)(1) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation may issue a ban on kindling fires on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources when necessary.~~

~~(e) As used in this section, “natural wood”:~~

~~(1) “Category 1” includes campfires that meet the following requirements:~~

(A) fires 36 inches in diameter or less that are built in stone arches, outdoor fireplaces, or existing fire rings at State recreational areas, other public recreational areas, or on private property; or

(B) fires 36 inches in diameter or less built in a location that is 200 feet or more from any forestland, or field containing dry grass or other flammable plant materials contiguous to forestland.

(2) "Category 2" includes natural wood fires that meet the following requirements:

(A) fires in piles larger than 36 inches in diameter; or

(B) fires 36 inches in diameter or less, not built in stone arches, outdoor fireplaces, or existing fire rings at State recreational areas, other public recreational areas, or on private property.

(3) "Category 3 broadcast burn" includes fires that meet the following requirements:

(A) Fires applied to existing vegetation in a predetermined land area, in a manner to meet specific or prescribed objectives, including fuels management, slash abatement, firefighter training, agricultural field burning, forest management, wildlife habitat management, or introduced species management.

(B) All Category 3 fires must have a plan that includes location, objectives, and contingency for escaped fire.

(4) "Forestland" means woodlands, timberland, brushland, forest, and woodlots.

(5) "Natural wood" means:

* * *

(2)(6) "Natural wood" does not mean other wood products such as sawdust, plywood, particle board, or press board. "Natural wood" does not mean wood, brush, weeds, or grass if they have been altered in any way by surface applications or injections of paints, stains, preservatives, oils, glues, or pesticides.

* * *

§ 2646. PROCLAMATION BY GOVERNOR PROHIBITING KINDLING
OF FIRES: CLOSING OF ~~WOODLANDS~~ FORESTLANDS

(a) Whenever it appears to the Governor that there is excessive danger of forest fires, ~~he or she~~ the Governor may prohibit by proclamation the kindling of a fire in or adjoining forestland or close any or all sections of ~~woodland~~

forestland, or brushland, in any town for such time as the Governor may designate, to all persons ~~except the owner and his or her household, his or her tenants, servants, or agents and persons in the public employment engaged in abating such fire-hazardous condition.~~

(b) Proclamations shall be ~~published in such newspapers of the State and posted in such places and in such manner as the Governor may order in writing.~~ A copy of ~~such publication~~ the proclamation and order, attested by the Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, shall be filed with the Secretary of State and a like copy shall be furnished to the Commissioner who shall attend to the ~~publication and posting thereof~~ of the proclamation. The expenses of ~~such publication and posting~~ shall be paid by the Department. Notice of removal of restrictions imposed by proclamation shall be in the same manner.

§ 2647. FIRES IN ~~WOODS~~ FORESTLAND OF ANOTHER; PERMISSION

No one shall build a fire in the ~~woodlands~~ forestland of another without the permission of the owner, ~~lessee, holder of right-of-way, or his or her authorized agent between April 1 and November 1.~~ A person who builds a fire ~~in or adjoining any woods shall totally extinguish such fire before leaving it.~~

§ 2648. SLASH REMOVAL

(a) A person may cut or cause to be cut forest growth only if all slash adjoining the right-of-way of any public highway, or the boundary lines of ~~woodlots~~ forestland owned by adjoining property owners, is treated as follows:

(1) All slash shall be removed for a distance of 50 feet from the right-of-way of any public highway or from the boundary lines of ~~woodlots~~ forestland owned by adjoining property owners.

* * *

(d) As used in this section, "slash" means the branches, tree tops, and other woody debris left on the forest floor after logging.

Sec. 9. REPEAL

10 V.S.A. chapter 83, subchapter 7 (uniform fire prevention ticket) is repealed.

Sec. 10. 20 V.S.A. § 2673 is amended to read:

§ 2673. POWERS AND DUTIES DURING HAZARDOUS CHEMICAL OR SUBSTANCE INCIDENT, FIRES; THREAT OF FIRES OR EXPLOSIONS; FOREST FIRES

* * *

(e) The chief of a fire district is designated as the town forest fire warden under 10 V.S.A. chapter 83, subchapter 4 and shall have the authority and duties related to forest fires pursuant to that subchapter.

Sec. 11. 20 V.S.A. § 2992 is amended to read:

§ 2992. DEFINITION

The term “private fire department” includes fire protection organizations operated by industries, institutions, and establishments for self-protection and also nonprofit volunteer fire associations. Nothing contained in this subchapter shall be construed to interfere with the exclusive jurisdiction vested by law in the State Forester ~~and the State Forester’s subordinates~~ or the State Forest Fire Warden over forest fires as provided in 10 V.S.A. § 2603(d); 10 V.S.A. chapter 83, ~~subchapters subchapter 4 and 7;~~ or 10 V.S.A. chapter 81, nor to affect the laws governing prevention or extinguishment of forest fires. Nothing contained in this subchapter shall be construed to interfere with general authorization vested by law in a chief engineer of a fire district or chief of a volunteer fire department to give outside aid as provided in sections 2674 and 2961 of this title.

* * * Increasing Wildland Fire Response Capacity Task Force * * *

Sec. 11a. INCREASING WILDLAND FIRE RESPONSE CAPACITY
TASK FORCE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Increasing Wildland Fire Response Capacity Task Force to examine and report on increasing Vermont’s capacity for wildland fire response.

(b) Membership. The following individuals and entities shall be invited by Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to join the Task Force:

- (1) the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation;
- (2) Vermont Emergency Management;
- (3) the Department of Public Safety, Division of Fire Safety;
- (4) the Green Mountain National Forest;
- (5) the Vermont League of Cities and Towns; and

(6) two municipal fire chiefs, with one being a career fire fighter and the other being a volunteer fire fighter.

(c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall examine how to best increase Vermont’s capacity for wildland fire response, including:

(1) examining available information on wildland fire incidence and existing response capacity, and making recommendations regarding staffing, funding, equipment, supplies, and infrastructure, including vehicles, necessary to increase wildland fire response capacity; and

(2) identifying any potential policy or statutory changes needed to improve wildland fire response capacity; clarify statewide roles and responsibilities among State, municipal, and federal entities; and recommend any coordination and communication improvements.

(d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

(e) Report. On or before February 15, 2027, and again on or before July 2027, the Task Force shall submit a written report to House Committees on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and to the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy and on Government Operations with its findings to date and any recommendations for legislative action.

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Commissioner of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, or designee, shall call the first meeting of the Task Force.

(2) The Commissioner of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, or designee, shall be the chair of the Task Force.

(3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on November 16, 2027.

(g) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Task Force shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

* * * Public Safety Communications * * *

Sec. 12. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY; PUBLIC SAFETY
COMMUNICATIONS TASK FORCE; AUTHORIZATION FOR
ONGOING EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

(a) The General Assembly authorizes the use of monies appropriated or held in reserve pursuant 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 185, Sec. B.1100, as amended by 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. C.115 and 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 87, Sec. 49, for the Department of Public Safety to procure and implement a multidisciplinary computer-aided dispatch system for public safety communications, subject to the following:

(1) \$2,250,000.00 shall be available for immediate costs associated with establishing the multidisciplinary computer-aided dispatch system and five years of software licensing fees, provided that the Department issues requests for proposal and signs contracts for services on or before January 1, 2027;

(2) \$190,000.00 shall be immediately available for cybersecurity, expanded use of Rapid SOS, and geographic information systems; and

(3) \$4,500,000.00 shall be available incrementally over three years to:

(A) implement and expand the Land Mobile Radio network to include a Statewide conceptual design;

(B) detail designs for one or more proof of concept projects and initially implement pilot projects; and

(C) build out or improve 10 or more Land Mobile Radio sites, including equipment and antenna deployment at existing chosen sites.

(b) Notwithstanding any provisions of 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. C.114 to the contrary, the Public Safety Communications Task Force shall continue in existence until February 15, 2027. The Task Force shall meet as necessary to advise the Department of Public Safety on executing the Task Force recommendations and final design plan. Notwithstanding 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. C.114(d)(3), members of the Task Force shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Department of Public Safety.

(c) The Department of Public Safety shall submit written reports to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and Government Operations concerning the expenditure of monies pursuant to this section. The Department shall submit the written reports on or before May 1, 2027, January 15, 2028, and January 15, 2029, concerning the expenditures made during each respective reporting period.

(d) After the end of the three-year period described in subdivision (a)(3) of this section, the Department of Public Safety may submit a request to the General Assembly to authorize the use of any remaining monies from the appropriations appropriated or held in reserve pursuant 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 185, Sec. B.1100, as amended by 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. C.115 and 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 87, Sec. 49. Any remaining monies shall not be used by the Department unless authorized by the General Assembly.

Sec. 13. [Deleted.]

* * * Programs Contingent on Availability of Agency Funds * * *

Sec. 13a. PROGRAMS CONTINGENT ON AVAILABILITY OF AGENCY FUNDS

The duty to implement Secs. 1 (Ready Response Grant Program) and 2 (Technical Rescue Grant Program) of this act is contingent upon the availability of sufficient funds within the Department of Public Safety and the Agency of Administration to support the programs.

* * * Appropriation * * *

Sec. 13b. APPROPRIATION

The sum of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Safety in fiscal year 2027 for the Ready Response Grant Program administered by the Division of Emergency Management.

* * * Emergency Rule * * *

Sec. 13c. 3 V.S.A. § 844 is amended to read:

§ 844. EMERGENCY RULES

(a) Where an agency believes that there exists an imminent peril to public health, safety, or welfare, it may adopt an emergency rule. The rule may be adopted without having been prefiled or filed in proposed or final proposed form, and may be adopted after whatever notice and hearing the agency finds to be practicable under the circumstances. The agency shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that emergency rules are known to persons who may be affected by them.

* * *

(g) In the alternative to the grounds specified in subsection (a) of this section, an agency may adopt emergency amendments to existing rules using the process set forth in this section if each of the subdivisions (1)–(5) of this subsection applies. On a majority vote of the entire Committee, the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules may object to the emergency amendments on the basis that one or more of these subdivisions do not apply or under subdivision (e)(1)(A), (B), or (C) of this section, or both.

(1) The existing rules implement a program controlled by federal statute or rule or by a multistate entity.

(2) The controlling federal statute or rule has been amended to require a change in the program, or the multistate entity has made a change in the program that is to be implemented in all of the participating states.

(3) The controlling federal statute or rule or the multistate entity requires implementation of the change within 120 days or less.

(4) The adopting authority finds each of the following in writing:

(A) The agency cannot by the date required for implementation complete the final adoption of amended rules using the process set forth in sections ~~837 through 843~~ 837–843 of this title.

(B) Failure to amend the rules by the date required for implementation would cause significant harm to the public health, safety, or welfare or significant financial loss to the State.

(5) On the date the emergency rule amendments are adopted pursuant to this subsection, the adopting authority prefiles a corresponding permanent rule pursuant to section 837 of this title.

(h) In addition to the grounds for emergency rulemaking under subsections (a) and (g) of this section, an agency may adopt an emergency rule under this section if an amendment to a federal statute, rule, or policy will materially conflict with or threaten the ability of the agency to implement a statutory or regulatory program required under Vermont law. On a majority vote of the entire Committee, the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules may object to proposed emergency rules for adoption under this subsection on the basis that the provisions of this subsection do not apply.

Sec. 13d. SUNSET OF AGENCY EMERGENCY RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

3 V.S.A. § 844(h) (emergency rulemaking in response to federal action) is repealed on July 1, 2028.

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 14. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and sections 13c and 13d shall take effect upon passage.

(b) All other sections shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

And that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with such proposal of amendment.

Senator Perchlik, for the Committee on Appropriations, to which the bill was referred, reported recommending that the Senate propose to the House that the bill be amended as recommended by the Committee on Government Operations with further proposals of amendment as follows:

First: In Sec. 12, Department of Public Safety; Public Safety Communications Task Force; authorization for ongoing expenditure of funds, by striking out subsection (d) in its entirety.

Second: By striking out Sec. 13b, appropriation, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 13b to read as follows:

Sec. 13b. [Deleted.]

And that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with such proposals of amendment.

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

Thereupon, the proposal of amendment recommended by the Committee on Government Operations, as amended, was agreed to and third reading of the bill was ordered.

Proposals of Amendment; Third Reading Ordered

H. 942.

Senator Heffernan, for the Committee on Agriculture, to which was referred House bill entitled:

An act relating to miscellaneous agricultural subjects.

Reported recommending that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill as follows:

First: In Sec. 3, 6 V.S.A. chapter 37, in section 681, after subdivision (3), by adding a new subdivision (4) to read as follows and by renumbering the remaining subdivisions to be numerically correct:

(4) “Convenience store” means a type of retail establishment that sells a limited number of everyday items such as motor fuel, tobacco products, made-to-order food, snacks, and beverages that serve as a quick, accessible retail option for consumers who typically purchase a small number of products, and that does not offer a sufficient quantity of consumer commodities to make unit pricing as useful to consumers. “Convenience store” does not include a grocery store, drug store, dollar store, or any other type of store. The Secretary has the discretion to determine whether a retail establishment is a convenience store.

Second: In Sec. 3, 6 V.S.A. chapter 37, in section 686, by striking out subsection (a) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (a) to read as follows:

(a) The unit price requirements of this chapter shall not apply to ~~sales of~~ consumer ~~commodities~~ commodity sales as follows:

(1) At a retail store with less than 7,000 square feet of floor space dedicated to the sale of consumer commodities. This ~~exception~~ exemption shall not apply to ~~the sales agencies or instrumentalities~~ retail establishments of a company having two or more sales ~~agencies or instrumentalities~~ locations as parts of that company.

(2) ~~For use or consumption on the premises where sold~~ Convenience stores.

(3) When different brands or products are commingled in one receptacle for a limited-time one-priced sale.

(4) When commodities are individually marked with a clearance or sale tag and are located in a clearance or limited-time sale section of the store. Clearance or limited-time sale sections may be on a shelf or multiple shelves, or in another defined area of the store.

(5) When the unit price is identical to the total selling price.

(6) When the item falls into one of the following categories:

(A) seasonal decorations; or

(B) beverages subject to the Federal Alcoholic Administration Act packing and labeling requirements.

Third: By striking out Sec. 4, effective date, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 4 and reader assistance heading to read as follows:

* * * Equine Farming for Use Value Appraisal * * *

Sec. 4. 32 V.S.A. § 3752 is amended to read:

§ 3752. DEFINITIONS

As used in this subchapter:

(1) "Agricultural land" means any land, exclusive of any housesite, in active use to grow hay or cultivated crops, pasture livestock, cultivate trees bearing edible fruit, or produce an annual maple product, and that is 25 acres or more in size, except as provided in this subdivision (1). ~~Agricultural land shall include~~ includes buffer zones as defined and required in the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets' Required Agricultural Practices rule adopted under 6 V.S.A. chapter 215. There shall be a presumption that the land is used for agricultural purposes if:

-
- (A) it is owned by a farmer and is part of the overall farm unit;
- (B) it is used by a farmer as part of the farmer's operation under written lease for at least three years; or
- (C) it has produced an annual gross income from the sale of farm crops or from equine farming in one of two, or three of the five, calendar years preceding of at least:
- (i) \$2,000.00 for parcels of up to 25 acres; and
 - (ii) \$75.00 per acre for each acre over 25, with the total income required not to exceed \$5,000.00.
 - (iii) Exceptions to these income requirements may be made in cases of orchard lands planted to fruit-producing trees, bushes, or vines that are not yet of bearing age. As used in this section, the term "farm crops" also includes animal fiber, cider, wine, and cheese, produced on the enrolled land or on a housesite adjoining the enrolled land, from agricultural products grown on the enrolled land.

* * *

(7) "Farmer" means a person:

- (A) who earns at least one-half of the farmer's annual gross income from the business of farming as that term is defined in Regulation 1.175-3 issued under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or from the business of equine farming; or
- (B)(i) who produces farm crops that are processed in a farm facility situated on land enrolled by the farmer in a use value appraisal program or on a housesite adjoining the enrolled land;
- (ii) whose gross income from the sale of the processed farm products pursuant to subdivision (i) of this subdivision (B), when added to other gross income from the business of farming as used in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (7), equals at least one-half of the farmer's annual gross income; and
- (iii) who produces on the farm a minimum of 75 percent of the farm crops processed in the farm facility.
- (C) The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall assist the Director in making determinations of eligibility pursuant to subdivision (B) of this subdivision (7).

* * *

(18) “Equine farming” means the raising, feeding, or management of four or more equines owned or boarded by the farmer, including training, showing, and providing instruction and lessons in riding, training, and the management of equines.

Fourth: By adding a reader assistance heading and one new section to be Sec. 5 to read as follows:

* * * Community Development Initiatives * * *

Sec. 5. 10 V.S.A. § 325m is amended to read:

§ 325m. RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

(a) Definitions. As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Rural area” means a county of the State designated as “rural” or “mostly rural” by the U.S. Census Bureau in its most recent decennial census.

(2) “Small town” means a town in the State with a population of less than 5,000 at the date of the most recent U.S. Census Bureau decennial census.

(3) “Community development initiatives” means priority projects located throughout the State that support agriculture, historic preservation, outdoor recreation, and other critical economic development needs, which may be supported when State resources or staffing assistance is not available.

(b) Establishment. There is created the Rural Economic Development Initiative to be administered by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board for the purpose of promoting and facilitating community economic development in the small towns and rural areas of the State, and supporting community development initiatives. The Rural Economic Development Initiative shall collaborate with municipalities, businesses, regional development corporations, regional planning commissions, and other appropriate entities to access funding and other assistance available to small towns and businesses primarily in rural areas of the State when existing State resources or staffing assistance is not available.

(c) Services; access to funding. The Rural Economic Development Initiative shall provide the following services to small towns and businesses primarily in rural areas:

(1) identification of grant or other funding opportunities that facilitate business development, infrastructure development, or other economic development opportunities; or

(2) technical assistance in writing grants, accessing other funding, coordination with providers of grants or other funding, strategic planning for the implementation or timing of activities funded by grants or other funding, and compliance with the requirements of grant awards or awards of other funding.

(d) Priority. In providing services under this section, the Rural Economic Development Initiative shall give first priority to projects that have received necessary State or municipal approval and that are ready for construction or implementation.

(e) Priority projects. The Rural Economic Development Initiative shall ~~seek to assist~~ include the following priority types of projects:

(1) milk plants, milk handlers, or dairy products, as those terms are defined in 6 V.S.A. § 2672;

(2) outdoor recreation and equipment enterprises;

(3) value-added food and forest products enterprises;

(4) farm operations, including phosphorus removal technology for farm operations;

(5) coworking or business generator and accelerator spaces;

(6) commercial composting facilities; and

(7) restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings in community centers.

(f) Coordination. In providing services under this section, the Rural Economic Development Initiative shall coordinate with the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, regional development corporations, and regional planning commissions.

(g) Report. Beginning on January 31, 2019, and annually thereafter, the Rural Economic Development Initiative shall submit to the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and the House Committees on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and on Commerce and Economic Development a report regarding the activities and progress of the Initiative as part of the report of the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability Program. The report shall summarize the Initiative's activities in the preceding year; evaluate the effectiveness of the services provided by the Initiative; provide an accounting of the grants or other funding that the Initiative facilitated or helped secure; and recommend any changes to the program to further economic development in small towns and rural areas of the State.

Fifth: By adding a reader assistance heading and one new section to be Sec. 6 to read as follows:

* * * Retail Sales Tax * * *

Sec. 6. 32 V.S.A. § 9741 is amended to read:

§ 9741. SALES NOT COVERED

Retail sales and use of the following shall be exempt from the tax on retail sales imposed under section 9771 of this title and the use tax imposed under section 9773 of this title:

* * *

(12) Motor vehicle purchases and use taxed under chapter 219 of this title and the transactions exempted therefrom that are listed in section 8911 of this title. Provided, however, that notwithstanding subdivision 8911(5) of this title, construction, earthmoving, logging, and motorized equipment that has not been registered as a motor vehicle is subject to tax under this chapter, and further provided that power take off and other auxiliary equipment on motor vehicles, whether attached prior to or subsequent to registration, is not exempt under this section, except for equipment under subdivision (51) of this section. Motor vehicle parts purchased by a dealer registered under the provisions of 23 V.S.A. §§ 451–468 shall be exempt from the tax under this chapter when used to recondition a used motor vehicle owned by the dealer in its inventory for resale.

* * *

(51) The following machinery, including repair parts, used for timber cutting, timber removal, and processing of timber or other solid wood forest products intended to be sold ultimately at retail: skidders with grapple and cable; feller bunchers; cut-to-length processors; forwarders; delimiters; loader slashers; log loaders; whole-tree chippers; stationary screening systems; firewood processors, elevators, and screens, semi-trailers, tractors, truck cranes, truck tractors, trailers, and motor trucks and motor vehicles with a manufacturer's listed gross vehicle weight of 10,000 pounds or more; and when sold for use on any machinery listed under this subdivision, traction enhancement accessories, tire chains, track systems, and winch cables. The Department of Taxes shall publish guidance relating to the application of this exemption. The Department of Taxes may require a purchaser at the time of purchase to certify that a motor vehicle or other equipment is exempt under this section. As used in this subdivision, "motor vehicle" has the same meaning as in 23 V.S.A. § 4(21) and "motor truck" has the same meaning as in 23 V.S.A. § 4(20).

* * *

Sixth: By adding a reader assistance heading and one new section to be Sec. 7 to read as follows:

* * * Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund * * *

Sec. 7. 6 V.S.A. § 4643(e) is amended to read:

(e) All administratively complete applications shall be evaluated by the Review Board. Within 15 days following receipt of an administratively complete application, the Review Board by majority vote shall recommend to the Secretary whether to issue a payment to the applicant. ~~If the Review Board recommends an award under this section, the~~ The Secretary shall issue the ~~award~~ make a final award determination within 15 days following the date of the Review Board's recommendation.

Seventh: By adding a reader assistance heading and one new section to be Sec. 8 to read as follows:

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) Sec. 4 shall take effect on July 1, 2027.

(b) All other sections shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

And that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with such proposals of amendment.

Senator Brock, for the Committee on Finance, to which the bill was referred, reported recommending that the Senate propose to the House that the bill be amended as recommended by the Committee on Agriculture with the following further proposals of amendment:

First: In the third instance of amendment, by striking out Sec. 4, 32 V.S.A. § 3752 (definitions), in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 4 to read as follows:

Sec. 4. EQUINE FARMING AND USE VALUE APPRAISAL STUDY;
REPORT

(a) The Commissioner of Taxes shall study and provide recommendations for including equine farming in the Use Value Appraisal Program. The Commissioner shall submit the recommendations to the House Committees on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and on Ways and Means and the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on Finance on or before December 15, 2026. The Commissioner's recommendations shall include an analysis of the potential fiscal impact of permitting agricultural land and farm buildings that are used for equine farming to enroll in the Use Value Appraisal Program.

(b) As used in this section:

(1) "Agricultural land" has the same meaning as in 32 V.S.A. § 3752(1).

(2) "Equine farming" means the raising, feeding, or management of four or more equines owned or boarded by a farmer for gain or profit, including training, showing, and providing instruction and lessons in riding, training, and the management of equines.

(3) "Farm buildings" has the same meaning as in 32 V.S.A. § 3752(14).

(4) "Farmer" has the same meaning as in 32 V.S.A. § 3752(7).

Second: In the fifth instance of amendment, by striking out Sec. 6, 32 V.S.A. § 9741, in its entirety and by renumbering the remaining sections to be numerically correct

Third: In the seventh instance of amendment, by striking out the newly renumbered Sec. 7, effective dates, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a reader assistance heading and a new Sec. 7 to read as follows:

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

And that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with such proposals of amendment.

Thereupon, the bill was read the second time by title only pursuant to Rule 43, and the recommendation of proposals of amendment of the Committee on Agriculture were amended as recommended by the Committee on Finance.

Thereupon, the proposals of amendment recommended by the Committee on Agriculture, as amended, were agreed to and third reading of the bill was ordered.

Rules Suspended; Bill Passed in Concurrence with Proposal of Amendment

H. 935.

On motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended and House bill entitled:

An act relating to emergency management.

Was placed in all remaining stages of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment.

Thereupon, the bill was read the third time and passed in concurrence with proposal of amendment.

Rules Suspended; Bill Passed in Concurrence with Proposal of Amendment

H. 942.

On motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended and House bill entitled:

An act relating to miscellaneous agricultural subjects.

Was placed in all remaining stages of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment.

Thereupon, the bill was read the third time and passed in concurrence with proposal of amendment.

Rules Suspended; Proposal of Amendment; Bill Passed in Concurrence with Proposal of Amendment

H. 294.

On motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended and House bill entitled:

An act relating to telecommunications services and wages in correctional facilities.

Was placed in all remaining stages of its passage in concurrence.

Thereupon, pending the question, Shall the bill be read the third time?, Senator Vyhovsky moved that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill in Sec. 2, Department of Corrections; evaluation of telecommunications services; report, in subsection (b), by striking out subdivision (4) in its entirety and by renumbering the remaining subdivisions to be numerically correct.

Which was agreed to.

Thereupon, the bill was read the third time and passed in concurrence with proposal of amendment.

Rules Suspended; Bill Passed in Concurrence

H. 567.

On motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended and House bill entitled:

An act relating to unclaimed property, State retirement systems, and capital debt.

Was placed in all remaining stages of its passage in concurrence.

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

**Report of Committee of Conference Accepted and Adopted on the Part of
the Senate; Rules Suspended ; Immediate Reconsideration; Report of
Committee of Conference Accepted and Adopted on the Part of the
Senate**

S. 325.

Senator Watson, 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 Senate Bill, entitled:

S.325. An act relating to regional planning and Act 250 Tier jurisdiction.

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

First: In Sec. 6, 10 V.S.A. § 6081, by striking out subsection (t) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (t) to read as follows:

(t)(1) No permit or permit amendment is required for the construction of improvements for an accessory on-farm business for the storage or sale of qualifying products or the other eligible enumerated products as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4412(11)(A)(i)(I).

(2) No permit or permit amendment is required for the construction of improvements for an accessory on-farm business for the preparation or processing of qualifying products as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4412(11)(A)(i)(I), provided that more than 50 percent of the total annual sales of the prepared or processed qualifying products come from products produced on the farm where the business is located. ~~This subsection shall not apply to~~

(3) ~~No permit or permit amendment is required for the construction of improvements related to hosting events or farm stays as part of~~ for an accessory on-farm business of educational, recreational, or social events that feature agricultural practices or qualifying products, or both, as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4412(11)(A)(i)(II). Types of events may include concerts and farm stays with five or fewer dwelling units. To qualify for this exemption, the accessory on-farm business shall not:

(A) have noise exceed 70 dB at the property boundaries; and

(B) have events that continue past 10:00 p.m.

(4) For purposes of this subsection, “feature agricultural practices or qualifying products” means that a host farm’s agricultural practices or its qualifying products are a substantial component of any educational, recreational, or social event the accessory on-farm business hosts.

Second: In Sec. 9, public engagement plan, in subsection (a), by striking out subdivisions (1) and (2) in their entireties and inserting in lieu thereof new subdivisions (1) and (2) to read as follows:

(1) ensure the engagement planning process does not presuppose outcomes or take positions on policy and political issues;

(2) utilize nonpartisan facilitation for statewide, democratic public engagement;

Third: In Sec. 9, public engagement plan, in subsection (b), by striking out subdivisions (1) and (2) in their entireties and inserting in lieu thereof new subdivisions (1) and (2) to read as follows:

(1) the risks of losing working lands, both agricultural and forestland, and the causes of those risks, and critical natural resources not already well-protected by current land use policy, permitting programs, or other regulatory tools, including agricultural soils, rare natural communities, forest blocks, habitat connectors of statewide significance, and headwaters; and

(2) equitable, efficient, and effective regulatory or nonregulatory tools to protect these working lands and critical natural resources and the barriers to land stewardship.

Fourth: In Sec. 10, 2 V.S.A. chapter 32, in section 1031, by striking out subsection (b) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (b) to read as follows:

(b) Composition. The Committee shall be composed of six members: three members of the House of Representatives, who shall not all be from the same party, appointed by the Speaker of the House; and three members of the Senate, who shall not all be from the same party, appointed by the Committee on Committees.

Fifth: In Sec. 10, 2 V.S.A. chapter 32, in section 1031, in subsection (c), by striking out the last sentence in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new sentence to read as follows:

A quorum shall consist of four members.

Sixth: In Sec. 10, 2 V.S.A. chapter 32, in section 1031, by striking out subsection (g) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (g) to read as follows:

(g) Duties. The Committee shall meet with the Land Use Review Board to ensure strong communication and coordination regarding the interpretation and implementation of the statutes amended as part of 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 181, how the permitting process under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 is working, and how the new Board structure is working. The Committee shall also meet with the Agency of Natural Resources to learn about Agency efforts to improve and better coordinate its permitting processes and to coordinate efforts for further improvements to the process for applicants and outcomes for Vermonters.

Seventh: In Sec. 14, 24 V.S.A. § 4303, in subdivision (43), by striking out subdivision (E) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subdivision (E) to read as follows:

(E) serves to strengthen agricultural and forest industries, including homesteading, small-scale agriculture and forestry, and the housing that supports these activities, while minimizing conflicts of development with these industries;

Eighth: In Sec. 20, 24 V.S.A. § 5808, by striking out subdivision (1) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subdivision (1) to read as follows:

(1) a summary of the Community Investment Program's activities during the preceding fiscal year, including which municipalities received a designation or new Step, or other actions taken by the Board that confer eligibility for or priority access to State funding, tax credits, and other Program benefits;

Ninth: In Sec. 21, municipal appeals and discretionary review of housing; report, in subsection (a), by striking out subdivision (5) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subdivision (5) to read as follows:

(5) data on housing that has been built in the areas exempt from Act 250 jurisdiction under 10 V.S.A. § 6081(dd), including the number of units; the type of units, including the number of affordable units, market-rate units, second homes, units for short-term rental, units for long-term rental, single-unit dwellings, and multiunit dwellings; the price; and where the units were constructed; and

Tenth: By striking out Sec. 23, effective date, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 23 to read as follows:

Sec. 23. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026, except that in Sec. 6 (10 V.S.A. § 6081), subsection (t) shall take effect on July 1, 2027.

SEN. ANNE E. WATSON
SEN. SETH BONGARTZ
SEN. TERRY K. WILLIAMS

Committee on the part of the Senate

REP. AMY D. SHELDON
REP. LARRY LABOR
REP. ELA CHAPIN

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 a roll call Yeas 27, Nays 3.

Senator Watson 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, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim, Ingalls, Lyons, Major, Mattos, Morley, Norris, Perchlik, Plunkett, Ram Hinsdale, Watson, Weeks, Westman, White, Williams.

Those Senators who voted in the negative were: Gulick, Heffernan, Vyhovsky.

Thereupon, on motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended to permit reconsideration of the action just taken on Senate Bill S. 325.

Thereupon, assuring the Chair that he voted with the majority whereby the Senate accepted and adopted the report of the Committee of Conference, Senator Baruth moved that the Senate reconsider its action on Senate Bill S. 325, which was agreed to.

Thereupon, the pending question, Shall the Senate accept and adopt the report of the Committee of Conference?, was decided in the affirmative, on a roll call, Yeas 28, Nays 2.

Senator Watson 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, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim, Heffernan, Ingalls, Lyons, Major, Mattos, Morley, Norris, Perchlik, Plunkett, Ram Hinsdale, Watson, Weeks, Westman, White, Williams.

Those Senators who voted in the negative were: Gulick, Vyhovsky.

**Report of Committee of Conference Accepted and Adopted on the Part of
the Senate****H. 740.**

Senator Watson, 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.740. An act relating to the greenhouse gas inventory and registry.

Respectfully reports that it has met and considered the same and recommends that the House accede to the Senate proposal of amendment with further amendment thereto by striking out Sec. 1, 10 V.S.A. § 582, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 1 to read as follows:

Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. § 582 is amended to read:

§ 582. GREENHOUSE GAS INVENTORIES; REGISTRY

(a) Inventory and forecasting. The Secretary shall work, in conjunction with other states or a regional consortium, to establish a periodic and consistent inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. The Secretary shall publish the Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory and Forecast by not later than June 1, 2010, and updates shall be published annually until ~~2028~~ 2030, until a regional or national inventory and registry program is established in which Vermont participates, or until the federal National Emissions Inventory includes mandatory greenhouse gas reporting. The Secretary of Natural Resources shall include a supplemental accounting in the Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Forecast that measures the upstream and lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of liquid, gaseous, solid geologic and biogenic fuels combusted in Vermont.

* * *

(e) Rules.

(1) The Secretary may adopt rules to implement the provisions of this section and shall review existing and proposed international, federal, and State greenhouse gas emission reporting programs and make reasonable efforts to promote consistency among the programs established pursuant to this section and other programs, and to streamline reporting requirements on greenhouse gas emission sources. Except as provided in subsection (g) of this section, nothing in this section shall limit a State agency from adopting any rule within its authority.

(2) The Secretary has authority to adopt rules that create a comprehensive greenhouse gas emission reporting program that covers all sources of emissions, including fuel suppliers. Suppliers of transportation and heating fuels covered by the rules shall comply with requests from the Secretary for information. The Secretary shall adopt a rule that at a minimum includes the types and volume of fossil fuels sold by sector for the transportation, residential, commercial, and industrial sectors and by zip code, municipality, or the smallest geographic level practicable that also protects the individual identities of consumers.

* * *

*SEN. ANNE E. WATSON
SEN. SETH BONGARTZ
Committee on the part of the Senate*

*REP. KATHLEEN C. JAMES
REP. R. SCOTT CAMPBELL
REP. DARA TORRE
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 a roll call, Yeas 17, Nays 13.

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

Roll Call

Those Senators who voted in the affirmative were: Baruth, Bongartz, Chittenden, Clarkson, Cummings, Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim, Lyons, Major, Perchlik, Plunkett, Ram Hinsdale, Vyhovsky, Watson, White.

Those Senators who voted in the negative were: Beck, Benson, Brennan, Brock, Collamore, Heffernan, Ingalls, Mattos, Morley, Norris, Weeks, Westman, Williams.

Report of Committee of Conference Accepted and Adopted on the Part of the Senate

H. 952.

Senator Harrison, 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.952. An act relating to capital construction and State bonding budget adjustment.

Respectfully reports that it has met and considered the same and recommends that the Senate recede from its proposal of amendment and that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Legislative Intent * * *

Sec. 1. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 1 is amended to read:

Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that of the ~~\$111,965,288.44~~ \$123,564,624.67 authorized in Secs. 2-16 this act, not more than ~~\$61,969,761.44~~ \$61,449,761.44 shall be appropriated in the first year of the biennium, and the remainder shall be appropriated in the second year.

* * *

* * * Bond-Funded Project Authorizations * * *

Sec. 2. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 2 is amended to read:

Sec. 2. STATE BUILDINGS

* * *

(b) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2026:

* * *

(2) Statewide, three-acre parcel stormwater compliance: ~~\$1,500,000.00~~ \$500,000.00

* * *

(c) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2027:

(1) Statewide, major maintenance: ~~\$8,500,000.00~~ \$8,683,413.18

* * *

(4) ~~Statewide, three-acre parcel stormwater compliance: \$1,100,000.00~~
[Repealed.]

* * *

(7) Montpelier, State House replacement of ~~historie~~ interior finishes:
\$50,000.00

(8) Montpelier, 120 State Street HVAC – steam lines interior renovation: \$2,000,000.00 \$1,000,000.00

* * *

(12) Montpelier, State House entryway upgrades, design documents, including comprehensive parking plan and delivery truck access, and second-floor egress design: \$1,300,000.00

(d) On or before January 15, 2027, the Sergeant at Arms and the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall report to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions on the status of the designs for the State House entryway and second-floor egress under subdivision (c)(12) of this section and on estimates for construction costs.

Appropriation – FY 2026	\$13,726,680.44 <u>\$12,726,680.44</u>
Appropriation – FY 2027	\$15,925,000.00 <u>\$15,308,413.18</u>
Total Appropriation – Section 2	\$28,951,680.44 <u>\$28,035,093.62</u>

Sec. 3. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 3 is amended to read:

Sec. 3. HUMAN SERVICES

(a) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2026 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for the following projects:

* * *

(4) St. Johnsbury, Northeast Correctional Complex (NECC) door control system replacements: \$1,000,000.00 \$1,480,000.00

* * *

(b) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2027 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for the following projects:

(1) Statewide, planning, design, and construction for HVAC system upgrades at correctional facilities: \$1,000,000.00 \$9,426,254.21

* * *

(4) St. Johnsbury, Northeast Correctional Complex (NECC) door control system replacements: \$2,600,000.00 \$2,920,000.00

(5) ~~Newport, Northern State Correctional Facility (NSCF) sprinkler system upgrades:~~ ~~\$500,000.00 [Repealed.]~~

(6) Newport, Northern State Correctional Facility (NSCF) boiler replacement: \$700,000.00

(7) Maintenance, replacement, and renovations at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility or other correctional facilities utilized in response to overcrowding for the incarcerated women's population: \$598,850.00

* * *

Appropriation – FY 2026	\$8,225,000.00	<u>\$8,705,000.00</u>
Appropriation – FY 2027	\$4,800,000.00	<u>\$14,345,104.21</u>
Total Appropriation – Section 3	\$13,025,000.00	<u>\$23,050,104.21</u>

Sec. 4. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 4 is amended to read:

Sec. 4. COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

* * *

(b) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2027 to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for the following projects:

(1) Major maintenance at statewide historic sites: \$550,000.00
\$750,000.00

* * *

(3) Roadside historic site markers: \$25,000.00 \$45,000.00

* * *

Appropriation – FY 2027	\$621,000.00	<u>\$841,000.00</u>
Total Appropriation – Section 4	\$1,667,000.00	<u>\$1,887,000.00</u>

Sec. 5. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 6 is amended to read:

Sec. 6. VETERANS' HOME

(a) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2026 to the Vermont Veterans' Home for the following projects:

(1) Replacement of air handlers: \$710,000.00

(2) Expansion of laundry facilities: \$340,000.00

(b) The Chief Executive Officer of the Vermont Veterans' Home is authorized to transfer any unexpended project balances between the amounts appropriated in subdivisions (a)(1)–(2) of this section and the amount appropriated in subsection (c) of this section.

(c) The sum of \$1,250,000.00 is appropriated in FY 2027 to the Vermont Veterans' Home for sewage system and elevator upgrades.

Appropriation – FY 2026	\$1,050,000.00
<u>Appropriation – FY 2027</u>	<u>\$1,250,000.00</u>
Total Appropriation – Section 6	\$1,050,000.00 <u>\$2,300,000.00</u>

Sec. 6. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 10 is amended to read:

Sec. 10. CLEAN WATER INITIATIVES

* * *

~~(e) The sum of \$10,000,000.00 is appropriated in FY 2027 to the Agency of Natural Resources for the Department of Environmental Conservation for clean water implementation projects. [Repealed.]~~

(f) In FY 2026 and FY 2027, any agency that receives funding from this section shall consult with the State Treasurer to ensure that the projects are capital eligible.

(g) The sum of \$1,500,000.00 is appropriated in FY 2027 to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for water quality grants and contracts.

(h) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2027 to the Agency of Natural Resources for the Department of Environmental Conservation for the following projects:

- (1) Clean Water State Revolving Fund: \$1,577,600.00
- (2) Municipal pollution control grants: \$3,922,400.00

(i) The sum of \$200,000.00 is appropriated in FY 2027 to the Agency of Natural Resources for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for water quality improvements to forest access roads.

(j) The following sums are appropriated in FY 2027 to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board for the following projects:

- (1) Agricultural water quality projects: \$800,000.00
- (2) Land conservation and water quality projects: \$2,000,000.00

* * *

Sec. 7. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 14 is amended to read:

Sec. 14. JUDICIARY

* * *

(c) The sum of \$1,720,818.84 is appropriated in FY 2027 to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Judiciary for the Newport Courthouse project.

Appropriation – FY 2026	\$5,075,910.00
<u>Appropriation – FY 2027</u>	<u>\$1,720,818.84</u>
Total Appropriation – Section 14	\$5,075,910.00 <u>\$6,796,728.84</u>

* * * Reallocations * * *

Sec. 8. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 17 is amended to read:

Sec. 17. REALLOCATION AND REVERSION OF FUNDS; TRANSFER OF FUNDS

(a) The following sums ~~are reallocated~~ appropriated to the Department of Buildings and General Services from prior capital appropriations are reallocated to defray expenditures authorized in Secs. 2–16 of this act:

* * *

(12) of the amount appropriated in 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 84, Sec. 13(b)(2), as added by 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 190, Sec. 10 (CJTC East Cottage): \$43,190.08

(13) of the amounts appropriated in 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 42, Sec. 2(c) (various projects): \$1,624,241.12

(14) of the amounts appropriated in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 2(b) (various projects): \$393,854.32

(15) of the amount appropriated in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 3(a)(2) (women’s correctional facilities): \$97,890.12

(16) of the amounts appropriated in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 2(c) (various projects): \$618,000.00

(17) of the amounts appropriated in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 2(b) (various projects): \$350,420.67

(18) of the amounts appropriated in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 2(c) (various projects): \$150,000.00

(19) of the amounts appropriated in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 3(b)(1) (women’s correctional facilities, replacement): \$868,850.00

(b) The following sums appropriated to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development from prior capital appropriations are reallocated to defray expenditures authorized in Secs. 2–16 of this act:

* * *

(3) of the amount appropriated in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 4(a)(4) (Unmarked Burial Fund): \$31,320.70

* * *

(h) Of the amount appropriated from the Capital Infrastructure subaccount of the Cash Fund for Capital and Essential Investments to the Vermont Veterans' Home in 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 113, Sec. B.1103(a)(7) and authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(d)(7) (design for the renovation of the Brandon and Cardinal units), \$1,500,000.00 is ~~reallocated~~ reverted to defray expenditures authorized in Sec. 19 of this act.

(i) Of the amount appropriated from the Capital Infrastructure subaccount of the Cash Fund for Capital and Essential Investments to the Department of Buildings and General Services in 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 113, Sec. B.1103(a)(9) and authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(d)(10) (111 State Street; renovation of the stack area), \$200,000.00 is ~~reallocated~~ reverted to defray expenditures authorized in Sec. 19 of this act.

* * *

(n) Of the amount appropriated to the Vermont Veterans' Home in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 15(b)(2) (elevator upgrade), \$500,000.00 is reallocated to defray expenditures authorized in Sec. 6 of this act.

(o) Of the amount appropriated to the Enhanced 911 Board in 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 84, Sec. 6(b)(9), as added by 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 190, Sec. 5 (Enhanced 911 Compliance Grants Program), \$63,413.15 is reallocated to defray expenditures authorized in Secs. 2–16 of this act.

(p) Of the amount appropriated to the Agency of Natural Resources for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 42, Sec. 11(j), as added by 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 139, Sec. 7 (State-owned forest and recreational access points), \$0.03 is reallocated to defray expenditures authorized in Secs. 2–16 of this act.

(q) The following sums appropriated from the Capital Infrastructure subaccount of the Cash Fund for Capital and Essential Investments to the Department of Buildings and General Services in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. B.1105(a) are reverted to defray expenditures authorized in Sec. 19 of this act:

(1) of the amount authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(c)(1) (planning, reuse, and contingency): \$119,114.60

(2) of the amount authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(c)(6) (120 State Street renovation): \$1,000,000.00

(3) of the amount authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(c)(8) (CJTC administration building and West Cottage): \$450,000.00

(4) of the amount authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(c)(10) (DCF short-term stabilization facility): \$372,557.10

(5) of the amount authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(c)(11) (Washington County Superior Courthouse in Barre): \$750,000.00

(6) of the amount authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(c)(13) (planning and design of the Rutland Field Station): \$250,000.00

(7) of the amount authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(c)(15) (EV charging stations): \$995,040.00

(r) Of the amount appropriated from the Capital Infrastructure subaccount of the Cash Fund for Capital and Essential Investments to the Department of Buildings and General Services in 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 113, Sec. B.1103(a)(3) and authorized in 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 18(d)(3), as amended by 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 162, Sec. 11 (120 State Street renovation), \$1,500,000.00 is reverted to defray expenditures authorized in Sec. 19 of this act.

Bonded Dollars \$5,074,938.48 \$9,816,118.67

Cash \$1,700,000.00 \$7,136,711.70

Total Reallocations, Reversions, and Transfers – Section 17 \$6,774,938.48
\$16,952,830.37

* * * Cash-Funded Project Authorizations * * *

Sec. 9. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 19 is amended to read:

Sec. 19. FY 2026 AND 2027; CAPITAL PROJECTS; FY 2026 AND FY 2027 APPROPRIATIONS ACT ACTS; INTENT; AUTHORIZATIONS

* * *

(b) Intent. It is the intent of the General Assembly to authorize certain capital projects eligible for funding by 32 V.S.A. § 1001b in this act but appropriate the funds for these projects in the FY 2026 and FY 2027 Appropriations Act Acts. It is also the intent of the General Assembly that the FY 2026 and FY 2027 Appropriations Act appropriate Acts transfer funds to the Fund established in 32 V.S.A. § 1001b for projects in FY 2026 and FY 2027.

(c) Authorizations; Capital Infrastructure subaccount. In FY 2026, spending authority for the following capital projects from the Capital Infrastructure subaccount of the Cash Fund for Capital and Essential Investments are authorized as follows:

* * *

(7) to the Vermont Veterans' Home for the design and construction of the American unit and sprinkler system installation: \$1,500,000.00

* * *

(f) Authorizations; Capital Infrastructure subaccount. In FY 2027, spending authority for the following capital projects from the Capital Infrastructure subaccount of the Cash Fund for Capital and Essential Investments are authorized as follows:

(1) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for statewide major maintenance: \$1,781,173.60

(2) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for statewide physical security enhancements: \$225,000.00

(3) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for Asa Bloomer roof replacement: \$3,600,000.00

(4) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for Rutland multimodal garage renovation: \$900,000.00

(5) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for Burlington, 32 Cherry St. parking garage repairs: \$3,000,000.00

(6) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for HVAC upgrades at correctional facilities:
\$1,050,000.00

(7) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for statewide correctional facilities security upgrades:
\$225,000.00

(8) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for St. Johnsbury, Northeast Correctional Complex (NECC) door control system replacements: \$2,700,000.00

(9) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for the Northern State Correctional Facility boiler replacement: \$1,000,000.00

(10) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for Newport, Northern State Correctional Facility sprinkler system upgrades: \$500,000.00

(11) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for maintenance, replacement, and renovations at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility or other correctional facilities utilized in response to overcrowding for the incarcerated women's population: \$500,000.00

(12) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Agency of Human Services for the Department for Children and Families' youth short-term stabilization facility: \$772,557.10

(13) to the Department of Environmental Conservation for the State match for federal Drinking Water State Revolving Fund: \$2,498,000.00

(14) to the Department of Environmental Conservation for Waterbury Dam Penstock project cost overruns: \$150,000.00

(15) to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for park infrastructure and rehabilitation, improvement, and three-acre rule compliance: \$400,000.00

(16) to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for dam maintenance and safety planning: \$200,000.00

(17) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Department of Public Safety for an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) facility: \$500,000.00

(18) to the Judiciary for the Essex County Courthouse connector project: \$500,000.00

(19) to the Department of Buildings and General Services for the Judiciary for renovations at the White River Junction courthouse: \$1,600,000.00

(20) to the Vermont Historical Society for the replacement of a climate control unit: \$566,724.00

(21) to the Department of Corrections to work with the Agency of Digital Services to develop a plan for providing network connectivity in State correctional facilities that modernizes processes and reduces reliance on paper; improves staff efficiency and addresses workforce challenges, such as staff retention; supports real-time data-driven operations; lays the foundation for future capabilities, such as wearable technology and mobile device-supported operations; and ensures secure, compliance connectivity in key facilities, each as outlined in the *Business Transformation Project Recommendations Report* issued by the Agency: \$750,000.00

* * * Policy * * *

* * * Department of Environmental Conservation * * *

Sec. 10. 24 V.S.A. § 4752 is amended to read:

§ 4752. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(21) “Eligible mobile home park water system” means a privately owned nonprofit community type system that serves a majority of the users who reside in a nonprofit- or resident-owned mobile home park registered with the Department of Housing and Community Development pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 6254.

Sec. 11. 24 V.S.A. § 4771 is amended to read:

§ 4771. CONDITIONS OF LOAN AGREEMENT

(a) VEDA may make loans to applicants on behalf of the State for one or more of the purposes set forth in subsection 4770(b) of this title. Each such loan shall be made subject to the following conditions:

(1) The loan shall be evidenced by a note payable over a term not to exceed 30 years. Repayment shall commence not later than one year after completion of the project for which loan funds have been applied.

(2) The loan shall be secured with assets as determined by VEDA. VEDA may also require that the applicant assign all or a portion of the water system revenues as security for the loan, or may require the establishment of a reserve fund.

(3) The loan recipient shall establish a dedicated source of revenue for repayment of the loan which may include a pledge of revenue from user charges, tap fees, development charges, and pledges of accounts receivable and the proceeds therefrom.

(4) The rate of interest charged for loans shall be set by the State Treasurer, taking into consideration prevailing borrowing rates available to similarly situated applicants from private lenders and administrative fees to be charged to applicants. VEDA, in cooperation with the Secretary, shall periodically recommend interest rates to be set by the State Treasurer ~~which~~ that are the lowest practicable rates consistent with maintaining the long-term integrity of the Fund. The interest rate set by the State Treasurer may be less than the prevailing borrowing rates available to similarly situated applicants from private lenders, but not less than zero percent.

(5)(A) Notwithstanding ~~subdivision~~ subdivisions (1) and (4) of this subsection (a), a privately owned nonprofit community type system may qualify for a 40-year loan term at an interest rate, plus administrative fee, to be established by the Secretary of Natural Resources that shall be not more than three percent or less than minus three percent, provided that the applicant system meets the income level and annual household user cost requirements of a disadvantaged municipality as defined in subdivision 4752(12)(A) of this title or is an eligible mobile home park water system, and at least 80 percent of the residential units served by the water system is continuously occupied by local residents and at least 80 percent of the water produced is for residential use.

(B) [Repealed.]

(C) If the Secretary determines that a privately owned nonprofit community type system qualifies for a loan under this subdivision (5), the Secretary shall certify the loan term and interest rate to VEDA. ~~In no instance shall the~~ Except as applied to an eligible mobile home park water system, the Secretary shall not certify an annual interest rate, plus an administrative fee, ~~be pursuant to this subdivision (C) that is~~ less than is necessary to achieve an annual household user cost equal to one percent of the median household income of the applicant water system computed in the same manner as prescribed in subdivision 4763c(b)(2) of this title.

* * *

* * * Division for Historic Preservation * * *

Sec. 12. 22 V.S.A. § 725 is amended to read:

§ 725. ACCEPTANCE AND SOLICITATION OF FUNDS OR GIFTS FOR HISTORIC SITES AND VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGY HERITAGE CENTER

(a) ~~With~~ Notwithstanding 3 V.S.A. § 1203g and with the approval of the Secretary of Administration, the State Historic Preservation Officer may accept and solicit grants, gifts, donations, loans, or other things of value on behalf of the Division for Historic Preservation for use by the Division for Historic Preservation in establishing and maintaining displays and exhibits at any historic site and at the Vermont Archaeology Heritage Center, or restoring any historic site maintained and developed under section 723 of this chapter.

(b) In any request for approval of solicitation under this section, the State Historic Preservation Officer shall specify the project and fundraising goal for which the Officer is undertaking fundraising.

* * * Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation * * *

Sec. 13. DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, PARKS AND RECREATION;
LITTLE RIVER STATE PARK LEASE

(a) Notwithstanding 29 V.S.A. § 166, in fiscal year 2027, the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation is authorized to enter into a long-term lease with Vermont Huts Association Ltd. for the use of a structure at Little River State Park and the land on which the structure is located, provided that the lease specifies:

(1) the term of 20 years with an option to renew for an additional two 10-year terms at the Commissioner's discretion;

(2) the fee or fee formula to be used to compensate the State;

(3) conditions on the use of the structure, including the boundaries of the land and structure to be leased;

(4) that Vermont Huts Association Ltd. shall secure insurance and be subject to an indemnification clause consistent with Attachment C, Standard State Provisions for Contracts and Grants, approved by the Agency of Administration in Administrative Bulletin 3.5;

(5) provisions for the termination of the lease;

(6) requirements for the operation and maintenance of the leased structure and lands, including responsibility for the costs of maintenance;

(7) how any conflict between the parties shall be resolved; and

(8) that a contract between the Department and Vermont Huts Association Ltd., executed in accordance with the Standard State Provisions for Contracts and Grants set forth in Administrative Bulletin 3.5 of the Agency of Administration, be required for the relocation and reconstruction of the Goodell House located at Little River State Park.

(b) The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall report to the Chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and Senate Committee on Institutions with a report on the status of the lease negotiations under this section on or before August 15, 2026, and immediately prior to execution of any related lease agreement and shall provide to the Chairs the lease agreement promptly following execution.

* * * Department of Buildings and General Services * * *

Sec. 14. SOUTHERN STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; PROPERTY TRANSFER

(a) Notwithstanding 29 V.S.A. § 166, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services is authorized to transfer to the Town of Springfield a portion of the Southern State Correctional Facility property consisting of approximately 22.93 acres to be used for municipal purposes, including economic development as an industrial parcel, provided that the Commissioner may transfer the property only if:

(1) the State obtains any State or local zoning or subdivision approvals required for transfer;

(2) the State and the Town negotiate updates to the 1999 Agreement to:

(A) establish responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the access road and the water and sewer service lines for the Facility and the transferred property; and

(B) mitigate impacts to the Springfield community; and

(3) the transferred property does not include any brownfields.

(b) If the Town has not begun developing the transferred property for purposes of economic development by the end of March 2030, the Town shall consult with the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services to examine alternative uses for the property.

Sec. 15. REPEALS

(a) 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 162, Sec. 23 (Southern State Correctional Facility; transfer of parcel) is repealed.

(b) Sec. 14 of this act (Southern State Correctional Facility; property transfer) is repealed on July 1, 2030.

Sec. 16. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 69, Sec. 22(a) is amended to read:

(a)(1) 110 State Street. ~~Notwithstanding 29 V.S.A. § 166(b), the~~ The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services is authorized to sell the property located at 110 State Street in the City of Montpelier, provided that the Commissioner includes in any contract for sale appropriate interior and exterior protective covenants developed in consultation with the Division for Historic Preservation and the Vermont Advisory Council on Historic Preservation pursuant to 22 V.S.A. § 743. ~~The Commissioner shall first offer in writing to the City the right to purchase the property.~~

~~(1) The City's preferential right to purchase the property authorized in this subsection shall terminate unless the City submits a written notification to the Commissioner of its intent to purchase the property on or before October 15, 2023.~~

~~(2) If the City submits a notification of its intent to purchase the property pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, the City shall submit a written offer to the Commissioner not later than June 1, 2024. In the event the City fails to submit a written offer by June 1, 2024, then the City's preferential right to purchase the property shall terminate and the Commissioner is authorized to sell the property to another party. The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall provide to the Chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions copies of any related request for proposal and any executed contract for sale of 110 State Street in the City of Montpelier promptly after each becomes available.~~

~~(3) It is the intent of the General Assembly to ensure that 110 State Street in the City of Montpelier is sold at fair market value; that historic attributes of the property are protected for future generations; that the Chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions receive timely notice of status updates on the disposition of the property; and that the initial purchaser of the property provides notification of any intent to sell to the Secretary of Administration and the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, who shall then promptly notify the Chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions of the potential sale.~~

Sec. 17. CHITTENDEN REGIONAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Among the uses of the funds appropriated in 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Secs. 3(b)(7) and 19(f)(11), as amended by this act, the Department of Buildings and General Services shall prioritize repairs of bathrooms, showers, and flooring at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility. If the Department of Buildings and General Services applies funds to other correctional facilities to respond to overcrowding at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services and the Commissioner of Corrections shall provide an overview of the use of funds to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee at the Committee's regularly scheduled meetings in calendar year 2026.

* * * Agency of Human Services * * *

Sec. 18. HIGH-END SYSTEM FACILITIES FOR YOUTH

(a) At the August, October, and December 2026 meetings of the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee, the Departments for Children and Families and of Buildings and General Services shall report on their plan to develop the Green Mountain Youth Facility.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, before the Departments for Children and Families and of Buildings and General Services approve design documents for construction and prior to approval of the lease for the facility, the Department of Buildings and General Services shall submit their approved design to the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Institutions and on Health and Welfare. At the same time, the Department for Children and Families shall submit a draft operating budget.

* * * Department of Corrections and Agency of Digital Services * * *

Sec. 19. REPORT; NETWORK CONNECTIVITY IN STATE
CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

The Commissioner of Corrections and the State Chief Information Officer of Digital Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, shall report to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee at each scheduled meeting of the Committee in calendar year 2026 on the plan for providing network connectivity in State correctional facilities authorized pursuant to 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 33, Sec. 19(f)(21), including any prioritization and schedule.

* * * Stormwater Utilities * * *

Sec. 20. 24 V.S.A. § 4414(9) is amended to read:

(9) Stormwater management and control. Any municipality may adopt bylaws to implement stormwater management and control consistent with the program developed by the Secretary of Natural Resources pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 1264. The creation of a regional stormwater utility under statute or rules of the Agency of Natural Resources shall not prevent a municipality from regulating stormwater under this subdivision, including adoption by the municipality of a bylaw establishing a municipal stormwater utility. Municipalities shall not charge an impervious surface fee or other stormwater fee under this subdivision or under other provisions of this title on property regulated under the Required Agricultural Practices for discharges of agricultural waste or agricultural nonpoint source pollution.

Sec. 21. 24 V.S.A. § 3626 is added to read:

§ 3626. MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY TO AUTHORIZE AND OPERATE
STORMWATER UTILITY

The creation of a regional stormwater utility under statute or rules of the Agency of Natural Resources shall not prevent a municipality from regulating stormwater under this chapter, including adoption by the municipality of a bylaw authorizing the operation of a municipal stormwater utility that establishes an assessment on an equivalent residential unit or impervious surface.

* * * General Assembly * * *

Sec. 22. STATE HOUSE; ENTRYWAY DESIGN; SPECIAL COMMITTEE

(a) A special committee consisting of the Joint Legislative Management Committee and the Chairs of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions (special committee) is hereby established. The special committee is authorized to meet to review, approve, or recommend alterations to the State House entryway design at a regularly scheduled Joint Legislative Management Committee meeting.

(b) The special committee shall be entitled to per diem and expenses as provided in 2 V.S.A. § 23.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 23. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

SEN. WENDY K. HARRISON

SEN. ROBERT PLUNKETT

SEN. JOHN BENSON

Committee on the part of the Senate

REP. ALICE M. EMMONS

REP. MARY A. MORRISSEY

REP. BRIAN MINIER

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.

Rules Suspended; Bills Messaged

On motion of Senator Baruth, the rules were suspended, and the following bills were ordered messaged to the House forthwith:

H. 294. An act relating to telecommunications services and wages in correctional facilities.

H. 567. An act relating to unclaimed property, State retirement systems, and capital debt.

H. 935. An act relating to emergency management.

H. 942. An act relating to miscellaneous agricultural subjects.

H. 952. An act relating to capital construction and State bonding budget adjustment.

Message from the House No. 82

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. 278. An act relating to cannabis.

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

The Governor has informed the House that on May 27, 2026, he approved and signed bills originating in the House of the following titles:

H. 635. An act relating to eliminating Department of Corrections supervisory fees.

H. 778. An act relating to dam safety.

Adjournment

On motion of Senator Baruth, the Senate adjourned until ten o'clock in the morning.