



To: House Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure
From: House Clerk's Office
Date: Fri., Jan. 17, 2025
Re: Overview of committee procedure

I. Overview of Committees

Committees perform the fundamental legislative task of considering and making recommendations on legislation. The heart of legislating in the General Assembly beats in committees. This document provides an overview of the role of committees in our legislative process and the rules that apply to the work they perform.

Committees are instruments or agencies of the body appointing them, and their function is to carry out the will of the body. *Mason's* § 615-1. The functions of a legislative committee are purely advisory. Their acts are subject to review by the body and may be approved or rejected. They can only make recommendations, which have no force until approved by the body. *Mason's* § 615-4.

The rules of procedure in a committee are the same as the rules of the body, as far as they are applicable. But as conditions permit, the rules of debate should be relaxed in order to give free discussion and not hamper the work of the committee. *Mason's* § 638.

House standing committees are set forth in [House Rule 25](#). This rule establishes those committees, provides the number of members on each one, and defines their jurisdiction. Except for committee bills as set forth in [House Rule 48](#), the Speaker refers each bill to the appropriate standing committee. [House Rule 44\(a\)](#).

Committees are not required to take up a bill. However, if a committee does take up a bill and ultimately votes it out—ie., “reports” the bill, as further described below—and the bill or the committee report has a fiscal impact, pursuant to [House Rule 35\(a\)](#), the bill must be referred to the applicable “money committee”: If the bill would affect State revenue or materially affect the revenue of one or more municipalities, it must be referred to the Committee on Ways and Means; and if the bill carries an appropriation, it must be referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

Upon motion, a bill may also be “committed” to another committee.

In all of these cases, if the committee reports the bill, the committee must follow the subsequent procedure to get the bill on the Notice Calendar so that it may ultimately be considered by the House.

II. Committee Reports

A. Defined

“Committee report” is the term used to describe a committee’s recommendations on a bill referred or committed to it. Often, a committee will either report a bill *favorably* (without any amendments recommended by the committee) or *favorably with amendment* (with a recommended committee amendment). Less frequently used are the options to report a bill *without recommendation* (ie., without taking a position on it) or *adversely* (ie., ought not to pass).¹

B. Voting on Committee Reports

[Here is a link](#) to a document that provides common motions that a committee can use to vote on a committee report. The motions depend on what the committee is recommending, and whether it is a House or Senate bill.

Note that if a committee is voting on a committee report that is *favorable with amendment*, there will be two votes: 1) *to approve the specific amendment*; and 2) *to report [bill #] favorable with amendment*. It is the second vote that is reported and printed in the Calendar.

C. Bill Reporter

i. Designation and Overall Responsibility

Pursuant to [House Rule 31](#), the Chair designates a member of the committee to be the Bill Reporter. This member delivers the committee report to the Clerk’s Office “and is responsible for the committee report’s accuracy, the propriety of its language, and for explaining the committee report when it is considered by the House.”

On the House floor, in addition to explaining the committee report, the Bill Reporter will be asked to provide the committee’s “straw poll vote”² on any subsequent committee reports or individual member amendments that would impact the contents of the bill within the committee’s jurisdiction.

If the House passes the bill, the Bill Reporter will follow the bill through its process and explain to the House any Senate proposals of amendment to the bill and the committee’s straw poll vote on its recommended action on those proposals.

¹ See [House Rules 34, 35, 46, and 47](#).

² It is called a “straw poll vote” because the committee no longer has possession of the bill.

ii. Obligation of and Process for Bill Reporter to Deliver Bill

But before the House can consider the bill and the committee report, the Bill Reporter must deliver the committee report to the Clerk's Office so that the bill can be entered on the Notice Calendar. The Clerk's Office accepts committee reports electronically. We request that Bill Reporters deliver the committee report by email to our office email address: House_Staff@leg.state.vt.us.

THE COMMITTEE REPORT DELIVERED TO THE CLERK'S OFFICE MUST BE THE FINAL, EDITED VERSION. Please, **NEVER** turn in a draft, unedited version. For example, a committee report should never contain **highlighting** or **underlined strikethrough**.

And pursuant to [House Rule 31](#), it is the Bill Reporter who is responsible to deliver the committee report to the Clerk's Office. Therefore, we will only accept the email from the Bill Reporter. For example, a Committee Assistant cannot deliver the report on the Reporter's behalf.

Here is the information the Bill Reporter must provide in the email:

1. Confirmation that the committee member is the Bill Reporter.
2. The type of committee report:
 - a. If *Favorable*, that means the committee does not recommend any amendments to the bill, as it was referred or committed to the committee (ie., the bill as introduced, along with any preceding committee reports); or
 - b. If *Favorable with Amendment*, that means the committee recommends an amendment to the bill, as it was referred or committed to the committee.
The Bill Reporter must include the committee's recommended amendment.
3. The committee's vote on the committee report. Again, if *Favorable with Amendment*, the vote reported is the second vote (to report the bill favorably with the amendment agreed to in the first vote).

Please note that each day, we ask committees to alert our office by **3:30 p.m.** if the committee will have a committee report for the Calendar. Without notice of any anticipated committee reports, we will assume none will be voted out, and we will prepare and finalize the Calendar for the next legislative day and send it to the BGS Print Shop as soon as it is finalized. At this point, the Calendar is closed.

However, if our office is advised that a committee will be turning in a committee report for the Calendar, we will wait and hold the Calendar open until the Bill Reporter turns it in. **The Bill Reporter should deliver the report to us as soon as possible and alert us as soon as possible if plans change.**

Please, Bill Reporters, monitor your email in order to answer any follow-up clarifying questions about your committee report, and to receive final confirmation of its receipt and inclusion in the Calendar.

III. Committee Bills

The process to deliver committee bills is different than that of committee reports: Committee bills are the same as individual members' bills: They must be delivered to the Office of Legislative Counsel's Drafting Operations via email at [LC Drafting Operations Staff@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:LC_Drafting_Operations_Staff@leg.state.vt.us).

Both the Chair and the applicable Legislative Counselor must confirm to Drafting Operations via email the final, edited version of the bill draft, along with the committee vote. We in the Clerk's Office also appreciate being copied on the email, and that it specify the Bill Reporter. This helps us prepare for when the bill is taken up on the floor.

IV. How to Provide a Floor Report³

*As the Bill Reporter designated by your Chair
to be responsible for your Committee Report via [House Rule 31](#)*

1. Generally describe the bill that was referred or committed to your committee. If your committee is the first House committee to report the bill, you will describe the House Bill as Introduced or the Senate Bill As Passed by Senate. Or, if your committee took possession of the bill after one or more other House committees reported (voted out) the bill, describe the bill as recommended by those committees with a focus on the portion of the bill within your committee's jurisdiction.

- ❖ *Madam Speaker, your House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry was referred House Bill 123, which is "An act relating to dogs and cats."*
- ❖ *The bill as introduced would add a section to Title 1 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated to declare as official State policy that between dogs and cats—which are the top two species of Vermont pets—dogs are the better one.*
- ❖ *It would also appropriate \$10,000 to the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets for the purpose of producing informational materials related to this declaration.*

³ Use ATTACHMENTS A (mock Bill as Introduced) and B (mock Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry committee report) of this document for reference.

2. **Generally describe: a) what your committee considered in reviewing the bill; and b) your committee’s recommendation for the bill** (including by noting the type of committee report you are offering, which is usually Favorable or Favorable with Amendment).

- ❖ *Through testimony, we delved into the differences between the two species, and learned that Vermonters have very strong opinions on this matter.*
- ❖ *In our deliberations, we compared the loyal companionship of dogs and all of their car-window slobbering, to the resolute aloofness of cats and their rewarding purr (if you are so lucky to experience it).*
- ❖ *Ultimately, we determined that it is not fair to either species to name one of them as “better.” They each have different personality traits and care needs that might work better for different Vermonters, depending on their circumstances.*
- ❖ *However, we believe it is important to codify these two species’ apparent parity in State statute, so that our State policy is clear: These two types of species may be dramatically different, but they deserve equal recognition as our best and most beloved pets in the State.*
- ❖ *Therefore, the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry reports this bill Favorable with Amendment.*

3. **Walk through your committee report.** If your committee report is Favorable, this means your committee is not recommending any amendments to the bill as your committee received it. Conversely, if your committee report is Favorable with Amendment, this means your committee is recommending one or more amendments to the bill as your committee received it.

- ❖ *I will now walk you through our committee report,⁴ which you can find on starting on page 45 of today’s House Calendar.⁵*
- ❖ *As you will see, in our first instance of amendment, we recommend striking out Section 1 of the Bill as Introduced and inserting in lieu thereof a new Section 1. In the Bill as Introduced, Section 1 declared dogs to be the better of the two pets. But our recommended new Section 1 declares the following: “It is the policy of this State that dogs and cats be declared to equally share the top spot of Vermont’s best pets.”*

⁴ **PRO TIP!** If you are reporting a committee report that is Favorable with Amendment, do NOT ask the Speaker for permission “to speak to our committee’s recommended amendment, as well as the underlying bill.” This is an unnecessary habit that sometimes get repeated. It’s unnecessary because reporting your committee’s package of recommended amendments to the underlying bill is what you are there to do!

⁵ Note that only House committee reports are printed in the Calendar – House Bills as Introduced and Senate Bills as Passed by the Senate are not.

- ❖ *In our second instance of amendment, we recommend amending Section 2 of the Bill as Introduced by adding a second sentence to specify that the \$10,000 appropriation to the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets for informational materials related to this declaration be spent in a manner that promotes both species equally.*
- ❖ *And since we do not recommend an amendment to it, Section 3's effective date of July 1, 2025 would remain unchanged.*

4. Describe the entities from which your committee took testimony, convey your committee vote on the committee report, and ask for the body's support.

- ❖ *We took testimony from the Office of Legislative Counsel; the Joint Fiscal Office; the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets; an organization advocating on behalf of dogs; an organization advocating on behalf of cats; an organization advocating on behalf of both dogs and cats; and concerned citizens from multiple towns in the State. I have a full witness list if any members are interested.*
- ❖ *The vote in our committee was 9-2-0 and we ask for your support.*

ATTACHMENT A: MOCK BILL

BILL AS INTRODUCED
2025

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1 H.123
2 Introduced by Representative Canine of Canaan
3 Referred to Committee on
4 Date:
5 Subject: General provisions; State declarations; dogs and cats; best pet
6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to declare as
7 official State policy that between dogs and cats—which are Vermonters’
8 top-two pets—dogs are better.

9 An act relating to dogs and cats

10 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

11 Sec. 1. 1 V.S.A. § 520 is added to read:

12 § 520. BEST PET

13 Although dogs and cats are Vermonters’ top-two pets, dogs are better.

14 Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION: AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND
15 MARKETS; INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

16 The amount of \$10,000.00 is appropriated to the Agency of Agriculture,
17 Food, and Markets for the purpose of producing informational materials related
18 to the declaration set forth in Sec. 1 of this act.

19 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

ATTACHMENT B: MOCK COMMITTEE REPORT

(Draft No. 1.1 – H.123)
11/11/2024 - BAW - 04:16 PM

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1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry to which was
3 referred House Bill No. 123 entitled “An act relating to dogs and cats”
4 respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the
5 bill be amended as follows:

6 First: By striking out Sec. 1, 1 V.S.A. § 520 (best pet), in its entirety and
7 inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 1 to read as follows:

8 Sec. 1. 1 V.S.A. § 520 is added to read:

9 § 520. BEST PETS

10 It is the policy of this State that dogs and cats be declared to equally share
11 the top spot of Vermont’s best pets.

12 Second: In Sec. 2, Appropriation; Agency of Agriculture, Food, and
13 Markets; Informational Materials, at the end of the section, by adding a second
14 sentence to read as follows: “The Agency shall ensure that this appropriation
15 is spent in a manner that promotes dogs and cats equally.”

16

17

18 (Committee vote: 9-2-0)

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Representative Feline of Ferrisburgh
FOR THE COMMITTEE|