

1 H.907

2 Representative Marcotte of Coventry moves that the House concur in the  
3 Senate proposal of amendment with further proposal of amendment as follows:

4 First: By striking out Sec. 32, effective date, and its reader assistance  
5 heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a reader assistance  
6 heading and a new section Sec. 32 to read as follows:

7 \* \* \* Vermont Sister State Program \* \* \*

8 Sec. 32. 3 V.S.A. § 2479 is added to read:

9 § 2479. VERMONT SISTER STATE PROGRAM

10 (a) Creation and purpose.

11 (1) The Vermont Sister State Program is created within the Agency of  
12 Commerce and Community Development. The Agency shall provide support  
13 to the Program and to the Sister State Program Committee as required.

14 (2) The purpose of the Program is to strengthen Vermont’s international  
15 engagement and to foster mutually beneficial relationships with national and  
16 subnational governments abroad, with a goal of promoting cultural exchange,  
17 economic development, and educational cooperation.

18 (b) Program oversight.

19 (1) The Sister State Program Committee, composed of the following  
20 members, shall oversee the Program:

1           (A) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or  
2           designee;

3           (B) a member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the  
4           Speaker of the House;

5           (C) a member of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on  
6           Committees;

7           (D) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Council on  
8           World Affairs or designee;

9           (E) the Vermont Adjutant General or designee;

10          (F) the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Vermont Arts Council  
11          or designee; and

12          (G) three members, as follows:

13               (i) one member with expertise in cultural exchange or in Peace  
14               Corps operations, appointed by the Governor;

15               (ii) one member representing a private institution of higher  
16               education, appointed by the Committee on Committees; and

17               (iii) one member representing a public institution of higher  
18               education, appointed by the Speaker.

19           (2) Members of the Committee shall serve two-year terms, provided that  
20           members appointed pursuant to subdivision (1)(G) of this subsection shall

1 serve initial terms of three years each to establish staggered terms. Members  
2 may be reappointed.

3 (3) The Committee shall elect a chair and vice chair from among its  
4 members that shall each serve a two-year term.

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

6 (c) Meetings.

7 (1) All meetings shall be called by the Chair, but in the event that the  
8 Committee does not have a chair, a meeting may be called by the Secretary of  
9 Commerce and Community Development or designee.

10 (2) The Committee shall meet:

11 (A) at least once quarterly, for the purpose of:

12 (i) evaluating current Program agreements;

13 (ii) proposing new Program agreements;

14 (iii) preparing its annual report; or

15 (iv) discussing any other matter that the Committee deems

16 relevant to its work; and

17 (B) to review and score an eligible Program application not later than  
18 30 days after the Committee receives the application from the Agency,  
19 pursuant to subdivision (d)(3) of this section.

20 (d) Program application, review, and approval procedures.

1           (1) Development of application process. The Agency, in consultation  
2           with the Committee, shall develop a process by which an entity can apply and  
3           be considered for admission as a partner to the Program. This process shall  
4           include the development of:

5                   (A) an official application to be in the Program;

6                   (B) a confidential internal review procedure to be used by the  
7           Agency to review Program applicants for sensitive political, legal, ethical, and  
8           strategic factors;

9                   (C) minimum eligibility requirements to be considered for the  
10           Program;

11                   (D) a fixed-scoring system, including a rubric, to be uniformly  
12           applied by the Committee to evaluate all eligible applications;

13                   (E) a memorandum of understanding template to be used and signed  
14           by the State and an approved Program partner that shall include a termination  
15           date; and

16                   (F) any other necessary Program parameters, including the length of  
17           time for partner agreements to be in effect.

1           (2) Agency initial verification.

2           (A) When a Program application has been received by the Agency  
3 pursuant to this section, the Agency shall, before the Committee may meet to  
4 review the application:

5           (i) verify that the application meets the Program’s minimum  
6 eligibility requirements; and

7           (ii) conduct a confidential internal review of the applicant.

8           (B) Not later than 10 days after completion of the Agency’s initial  
9 verification and review of an application pursuant to subdivision (A) of this  
10 subdivision (2), the Agency shall send the Committee a copy of the application  
11 along with a summary of the Agency’s analysis.

12           (C) The confidential internal review process conducted in subdivision  
13 (A)(ii) of this subdivision (2), along with any and all documents reviewed  
14 during that process, shall be exempt from public inspection and copying.

15           (3) Committee review and recommendation.

16           (A) The Committee, upon receiving an application that has received  
17 preliminary approval from the Agency, shall meet to review the application  
18 pursuant to subdivision (c)(2)(B) of this section not later than 30 days after  
19 receipt of the application from the Agency.

20           (B) If the Committee recommends that an application reviewed  
21 pursuant to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (3) be approved, the Committee

1 shall submit its recommendation to the Governor along with a copy of the  
2 application not later than 30 days after completing its review of the application.

3 The Committee shall not send to the Governor an application that the  
4 Committee does not recommend be approved.

5 (4) Governor’s review.

6 (A) The Governor shall have the sole authority to issue final approval  
7 or disapproval of a Sister State Program application that the Committee  
8 recommended be approved. The Governor shall send written notice of the  
9 Governor’s decision to the Agency not later than 10 days after the Governor’s  
10 decision.

11 (B) If the Governor disapproves a Program application, the  
12 Governor’s notice in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (4) shall include a  
13 written explanation of why the Governor did not follow the recommendation of  
14 the Committee.

15 (C) Upon the Agency’s receipt of the Governor’s decision pursuant  
16 to subdivision (A) of this subdivision (4), the Agency shall notify the applicant  
17 of the Governor’s decision not later than 30 days after the Agency receives  
18 notice of the Governor’s decision.

19 (D) If the application is approved by the Governor, the Agency shall  
20 finalize a memorandum of understanding between the State and the Sister State  
21 Program applicant.

1           (5) Termination.

2                   (A) The Committee may, at one of its meetings, propose to the  
3 Governor upon a majority vote that an active Sister State Program partnership  
4 be terminated.

5                   (B) The Governor shall have the sole authority to terminate an active  
6 Sister State Program partnership.

7           (e) Reporting. The Committee shall submit an annual report not later than  
8 January 15 of each year to the Governor and to the House Committee on  
9 Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on  
10 Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs that includes the  
11 following:

12                   (1) an executive summary of key development and outcomes of the  
13 Program;

14                   (2) a description of Committee activities, including a summary of  
15 attendance and decisions at its meetings;

16                   (3) updates on the Program, including an evaluation of sister state  
17 applications, new partners, significant developments, metrics of success, and  
18 challenges;

19                   (4) a description of stakeholder engagement with the Program;

20                   (5) a financial overview, including a summary of funding sources and  
21 expenditures; and

1           (6) an outlook for the Program, which shall include strategic objectives,  
2           potential new agreements, and growth opportunities for the next year.

3           (f) Compensation and reimbursement.

4           (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General  
5           Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in the member's  
6           capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and  
7           reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than eight  
8           meetings per year. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to  
9           the General Assembly.

10           (2) Other members of the Committee shall be entitled to per diem  
11           compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.  
12           § 1010 for not more than eight meetings per year. These payments shall be  
13           made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Commerce and Community  
14           Development.

15           Second: By inserting a reader assistance heading and adding a new section  
16           to be Sec. 33 to read as follows:

17                                   \* \* \* Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission \* \* \*

18           Sec. 33. 9 V.S.A. chapter 111B is amended to read:

19                                   CHAPTER 111B. TRADE COMMISSIONS

20           § 4129. VERMONT-IRELAND TRADE COMMISSION

1 (a) The Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission is established within the State  
2 Treasurer's office to advance bilateral trade and investment between Vermont  
3 and Ireland. The Commission shall consist of ~~seven~~ nine members as follows:

4 (1) two members, appointed by the Governor;

5 (2) two members, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

6 (3) two members, appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees;

7 ~~and~~

8 (4) the State Treasurer or designee;

9 (5) the Commissioner of Economic Development or designee; and

10 (6) the President of the University of Vermont or designee.

11 \* \* \*

12 (c) The members of the Commission, ~~except for the State Treasurer or~~  
13 ~~designee, appointed pursuant to subdivisions (a)(1)–(3) of this section:~~

14 (1) shall be appointed for terms of four years each and shall continue to  
15 serve until their successors are appointed, except that in order to achieve  
16 staggered terms, the two members appointed by the Governor shall serve initial  
17 terms of two years each and the two members appointed by the Speaker of the  
18 House shall serve initial terms of three years each;

19 (2) Members may be reappointed; upon the expiration of the member's  
20 term;



1 groups, and accept donations, grants, and bequests from individuals,  
2 corporations, foundations, governmental agencies, and public and private  
3 organizations and institutions, to defray the Commission’s administrative  
4 expenses ~~and to carry out its purposes as set forth in this chapter.~~

5 (2) The funds, donations, grants, or bequests received pursuant to this  
6 chapter subdivision (1) of this subsection shall be deposited in a bank account  
7 and allocated annually by the State Treasurer’s office to defray the  
8 Commission’s administrative expenses and carry out its purposes. Any monies  
9 so withdrawn shall not be used for any purpose other than the payment of  
10 administrative expenses under incurred pursuant to this chapter section and  
11 shall be itemized and tracked for reporting purposes by the State Treasurer’s  
12 office. Interest earned shall remain in the bank account. The State Treasurer  
13 shall include the balance of the account in the annual reporting required  
14 pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.

15 (3) For purposes of this section, “administrative expenses” does not  
16 include any:

17 (A) expenses related to:

18 (i) campaign or election activity; or

19 (ii) food or beverages provided at official Commission meetings;

20 or

1           (B) other expense that is not specific to the administrative functions  
2           of the Commission.

3           (h) Members of the Commission shall not receive any compensation or be  
4           entitled to reimbursement of expenses by the State of Vermont or from the  
5           fund managed by the State Treasurer pursuant to subsection (g) of this section  
6           for their service on the Commission.

7           Third: By adding a new section to be Sec. 34 to read as follows:

8           Sec. 34. REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF THE VERMONT-IRELAND  
9                           TRADE COMMISSION

10           On or before December 1, 2029, the Vermont-Ireland Trade Commission  
11           shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Commerce and  
12           Economic Development and to the Senate Committee on Economic  
13           Development, Housing and General Affairs with the following information:

14                   (1) a summary of the accomplishments of the Commission since its  
15           inception;

16                   (2) a detailed analysis as to how the Commission has served its  
17           legislative purposes pursuant to 9 V.S.A. § 4129(b); and

18                   (3) an accounting on funds raised and details on gifts received pursuant  
19           to 9 V.S.A. § 4129(g) since the Commission's inception.

20           Fourth: By inserting a reader assistance heading and adding a new section  
21           to be Sec. 35 to read as follows:

1

\* \* \* Effective Dates \* \* \*

2

Sec. 35. EFFECTIVE DATES

3

(a) Secs. 1–31 shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

4

(b) This section and Secs. 32–34 shall take effect on passage.