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H.762

An act relating to the County and Regional Governance Study Committee

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

Sec. 1. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 118, Sec. 1 is amended to read:

Sec. 1. COUNTY AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE STUDY

COMMITTEE; REPORT

(a) Legislative intent and ~~Creation~~ creation of Committee.

(1) Legislative intent. It is the intent of the General Assembly that existing direct coordination and communication between the State and Vermont municipalities should be retained or strengthened. County or regional governance should enhance the work of local and State governments and not become a procedural barrier between the State and municipalities.

(2) Creation of Committee. There is created the County and Regional Governance Study Committee to address local government capacity challenges, enhance and optimize public safety, regional collaboration and planning, efficient, equitable, and transparent public resource allocation, and effective regional public services for individuals and municipalities.

(b) Membership. The Committee shall be, to the extent possible, composed of members from geographically diverse regions of the State. The Committee shall elect its chair from among its members. The Committee shall be composed of the following members:

1 (1) three current members of the House of Representatives, who shall
2 not all be from the same political party, ~~the first of whom shall be the Chair of~~
3 ~~the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, and the~~
4 ~~second and third of whom~~ shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House; and

5 (2) three current members of the Senate, who shall not all be from the
6 same political party, ~~the first of whom shall be the Chair of the Senate~~
7 ~~Committee on Government Operations, and the second and third of whom~~
8 shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees.

9 (c) Powers and duties.

10 (1) The Committee shall study and make recommendations to the
11 General Assembly on how to improve the structure and organization of county
12 and regional government, including:

13 (A) ~~enhancement~~ coordination and optimization of ~~public~~
14 ~~safety services~~ regional government provided by State, regional, and local
15 agencies, including for public safety, emergency management, and public
16 health purposes;

17 (B) enhancement of regional collaboration and planning and
18 implementation;

19 (C) coordination, increased transparency, potential efficiencies, and
20 service improvements of nongovernmental agencies providing regional public

1 services, including but not limited to designated mental health agencies and
2 public transit providers;

3 (D) efficient, equitable, and transparent allocation of public
4 resources;

5 ~~(D)~~(E) promotion of effective regional public services for individuals
6 and municipalities;

7 ~~(E)~~(F) ~~clarification of~~ review the role and ~~oversight~~ authority of
8 elected county officials and their departments;

9 ~~(F)~~(G) reduction of duplicated or conflicting public services and
10 promotion of opportunities for intermunicipal collaboration;

11 ~~(G)~~(H) balance of availability and cost of services across
12 municipalities in each county;

13 ~~(H)~~(I) review of mechanisms of county and regional government
14 structures in other states; ~~and~~

15 ~~(I)~~(J) impact of climate change and resiliency on the maintenance of
16 public infrastructure, delivery of regional government services, and
17 coordination of regional emergency planning; and

18 (K) the role of Department of Public Safety and Vermont Emergency
19 Management in responding to all hazards events.

20 * * *

1 (e) Report. On or before ~~November 1, 2025~~ December 15, 2026, the
2 Committee shall report to the House Committee on Government Operations
3 and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations
4 with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

5 (f) Meetings.

6 * * *

7 (4) The Committee shall cease to exist on July 1, ~~2026~~ 2028.

8 * * *

9 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

10 This act shall take effect on passage.