

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Judiciary to which was referred Senate Bill No. 109
3 entitled “An act relating to miscellaneous judiciary procedures” respectfully
4 reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the House propose
5 to the Senate that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting
6 clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. 3 V.S.A. § 164 is amended to read:

8 § 164. ADULT COURT DIVERSION PROGRAM

9 (a) Purpose.

10 (1) The Attorney General shall develop and administer an adult court
11 diversion program, for both pre-charge and post-charge referrals, available in
12 all counties.

13 (2) The program shall be designed to provide a restorative option for
14 persons alleged to have caused harm in violation of a criminal statute or who
15 have been charged with violating a criminal statute as well as for victims or
16 those acting on a victim’s behalf who have been allegedly harmed by the
17 ~~responsible party~~ person referred to the program. The diversion program can
18 accept referrals to the program as follows:

19 * * *

20 (c) Adult diversion program policy and referral requirements.

21 * * *

(B) A prosecutor may refer a person to diversion either before or after arraignment and shall notify in writing the diversion program and the court of the prosecutor's ~~of the~~ referral to diversion.

Sec. 2. 4 V.S.A. § 71 is amended to read:

(a) ~~There shall be 34 Superior judges, whose term of office shall, The~~
number of Superior Judges shall be as determined by the General Assembly.

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* * *

Sec. 3. 4 V.S.A. § 1102 is amended to read:

§ 1102. JUDICIAL BUREAU; JURISDICTION

(a) The Judicial Bureau is created within the Judicial Branch under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

(b) The Judicial Bureau shall have jurisdiction of the following matters:

* * *

(4) Violations of 7 V.S.A. § 1005, relating to possession and procurement of tobacco products by a person under 21 years of age.

* * *

Sec. 4. 4 V.S.A. § 1106 is amended to read:

§ 1106. HEARING

* * *

(d) ~~A~~ Unless otherwise provided by law, a law enforcement officer may void or amend a complaint issued by that officer by so marking the complaint and returning it to the Bureau, regardless of whether the amended complaint is a lesser included violation. At the hearing, a law enforcement officer may, unless otherwise provided by law, void or amend a complaint issued by that officer in the discretion of that officer.

* * *

1 Sec. 5. 7 V.S.A. § 1005(c) is amended to read:

2 (c) A person under 21 years of age who misrepresents ~~his or her~~ the
3 person's age by presenting false identification to purchase tobacco products,
4 tobacco substitutes, or tobacco paraphernalia shall be ~~fined~~ subject to a civil
5 penalty of not more than \$50.00 or provide up to 10 hours of community
6 service, or both.

7 Sec. 6. 12 V.S.A. § 5 is amended to read:

8 § 5. DISSEMINATION OF ELECTRONIC CASE RECORDS

9 (a) The Court shall not permit public access via the ~~Internet~~ internet to
10 criminal, family, or probate case records. The Court may permit criminal
11 justice agencies, as defined in 20 V.S.A. § 2056a, ~~Internet~~ internet access to
12 criminal case records for criminal justice purposes, as defined in 20 V.S.A.
13 § 2056a.

14 (b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the Court shall provide
15 licensed Vermont attorneys in good standing with access via the internet,
16 through the Judiciary's Public Portal website or otherwise, to nonconfidential
17 criminal, family, and probate case records.

18 (c) This section shall not be construed to prohibit the Court from providing
19 electronic access to:

20 (1) court schedules of the Superior Court or opinions of the Criminal
21 Division of the Superior Court;

1 (2) State agencies in accordance with data dissemination contracts
2 entered into under Rule 12 of the Vermont Rules for Public Access to Court
3 Records; or

4 (3) decisions, recordings of oral arguments, briefs, and printed cases of
5 the Supreme Court.

6 Sec. 7. 12 V.S.A. § 4937 is amended to read:

7 § 4937. ATTORNEY'S FEES

8 When a mortgage contains an agreement on the part of the mortgagor to pay
9 the mortgagee, in the event of foreclosure, the attorney's fees incident thereto,
10 and claim is made therefor in the complaint, ~~upon hearing~~, the court in which
11 the complaint is brought shall allow such fee as in its judgment is just.

12 Sec. 8. 13 V.S.A. § 4013 is amended to read:

13 § 4013. ZIP GUNS; ~~SWITCHBLADE KNIVES~~

14 A person who possesses, sells, or offers for sale a weapon commonly
15 known as a "zip" gun, ~~or a weapon commonly known as a switchblade knife,~~
16 ~~the blade of which is three inches or more in length,~~ shall be imprisoned not
17 more than 90 days or fined not more than \$100.00, or both.

18 Sec. 9. EXPUNGEMENT OF CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS

19 The court shall order the expungement of criminal history records of
20 convictions of 13 V.S.A. § 4013 for possessing, selling, or offering for sale a
21 switchblade knife that occurred prior to July 1, 2025. The process and effect

1 for expungement of these records shall be as provided for in 13 V.S.A. § 7606
2 and shall be completed by the court and all entities subject to the order not later
3 than July 1, 2026.

4 Sec. 10. 13 V.S.A. § 5351(7) is amended to read:

5 (7) “Victim” means:

6 (A) a person who sustains injury or death as a direct result of the
7 commission or attempted commission of a crime;

8 (B) an intervenor who is physically injured or killed in an attempt to
9 assist the person described in subdivision (A) of this subdivision (7) or the
10 police a protected professional as defined in subdivision 1028(d)(1) of this
11 title;

12 (C) a surviving immediate family member of a homicide victim,
13 including a spouse, domestic partner, parent, sibling, child, grandparent, or
14 other survivor who may suffer severe emotional harm as a result of the
15 victim’s death as determined on a case-by-case basis in the discretion of the
16 Board; or

17 (D) a resident of this State who is injured or killed as the result of a
18 crime committed outside the United States.

19 Sec. 11. 13 V.S.A. § 7282 is amended to read:

20 § 7282. SURCHARGE

21 * * *

1 (c) ~~SIU surcharge~~. In addition to any penalty or fine imposed by the court
2 for a criminal offense committed after July 1, 2009, the clerk of the court shall
3 levy an additional surcharge of \$100.00 to be deposited in the General Fund, in
4 support of the Specialized Investigative Unit Grants Board created in 24
5 V.S.A. § 1940(c), and used to pay for the costs of Specialized Investigative
6 Units.

7 ~~Sec. 12. 12 V.S.A. § 5135(b) is amended to read:~~

8 ~~(b) A defendant who attends a hearing held under section 5133 or 5134 of~~
9 ~~this title at which a temporary or final order under this chapter is issued and~~
10 ~~who receives notice from the court on the record that the order has been issued~~
11 ~~shall be deemed to have been served. A defendant notified by the court on the~~
12 ~~record shall be required to adhere immediately to the provisions of the order.~~
13 ~~However, even when the court has previously notified the defendant of the~~
14 ~~order, the court shall transmit the order for additional service by a law~~
15 ~~enforcement agency. The clerk shall mail a copy of the order to the defendant~~
16 ~~at the defendant's last known address.~~

17 Sec. 13. 14 V.S.A. § 2 is amended to read:

18 § 2. DEPOSIT OF WILL FOR SAFEKEEPING; DELIVERY; FINAL
19 DISPOSITION

20 (a) A will may be deposited for safekeeping in the Probate Division of the
21 Superior Court for the district in which the testator resides on payment to the

1 court of the applicable fee required by ~~32 V.S.A. § 1434(a)(17)~~ 32 V.S.A.
2 § 1434(a)(18). The register shall give to the testator a receipt, shall safely keep
3 each will so deposited, and shall keep an index of the wills so deposited.

4 * * *

5 Sec. 14. 14 V.S.A. § 3068 is amended to read:

6 § 3068. HEARING

7 * * *

8 (e)(1) If upon completion of the hearing and consideration of the record the
9 court finds that the respondent is not a person in need of guardianship, it shall
10 dismiss the petition and seal the records of the proceeding.

11 (2) If a motion to withdraw the petition is made before the final hearing,
12 the court shall dismiss the petition and seal the records of the proceeding.

13 (f) If upon completion of the hearing and consideration of the record the
14 court finds that the petitioner has proved by clear and convincing evidence that
15 the respondent is a person in need of guardianship or will be a person in need
16 of guardianship on attaining 18 years of age, it shall enter judgment specifying
17 the powers of the guardian pursuant to sections 3069 and 3070 of this title and
18 the duties of the guardian pursuant to section 3071 of this title.

19 (g) Any party to the proceeding before the court may appeal the court's
20 decision in the manner provided in section 3080 of this title.

§ 4051. STATUTORY FORM POWER OF ATTORNEY

VERMONT STATUTORY FORM POWER OF ATTORNEY IMPORTANT
INFORMATION

* * *

My agent MAY NOT do any of the following specific acts for me UNLESS I have INITIALED the specific authority listed below:

() An agent who is not an ancestor, spouse, or descendant may exercise authority under this power of attorney to create in the agent or in an individual to whom the agent owes a legal obligation of support an interest in my property whether by gift, rights of survivorship, beneficiary designation, disclaimer, or otherwise

- 1 () Create, amend, revoke, or terminate an inter vivos, family, living,
- 2 irrevocable, or revocable trust
- 3 () Consent to the modification or termination of a noncharitable irrevocable
- 4 trust under 14A V.S.A. § 411
- 5 () Make a gift, subject to the limitations of 14 V.S.A. § 4047 (gifts) and any
- 6 special instructions in this power of attorney
- 7 ~~() Consent to the modification or termination of a noncharitable irrevocable~~
- 8 ~~trust under 14A V.S.A. § 411~~
- 9 () Create, amend, or change rights of survivorship
- 10 () Create, amend, or change a beneficiary designation
- 11 () Waive the principal's right to be a beneficiary of a joint and survivor
- 12 annuity, including a survivor benefit under a retirement plan
- 13 () Exercise fiduciary powers that the principal has authority to delegate
- 14 () Authorize another person to exercise the authority granted under this power
- 15 of attorney
- 16 () Disclaim or refuse an interest in property, including a power of appointment
- 17 () Exercise authority with respect to elective share under 14 V.S.A. § 319
- 18 () Exercise waiver rights under 14 V.S.A. § 323
- 19 () Exercise authority over the content and catalogue of electronic
- 20 communications and digital assets under 14 V.S.A. chapter 125 (Vermont
- 21 Revised Uniform Fiduciary Access to Digital Assets Act)

() Exercise authority with respect to intellectual property, including, without limitation, copyrights, contracts for payment of royalties, and trademarks
() Convey, or revoke or revise a grantee designation, by enhanced life estate deed pursuant to 27 V.S.A. chapter 6 or under common law.

* * *

Sec. 16. 14A V.S.A. § 1316 is amended to read:

§ 1316. OFFICE OF TRUST DIRECTOR

Unless the terms of a trust provide otherwise, the rules applicable to a trustee apply to a trust director regarding the following matters:

- (1) acceptance under section 701 of this title;
- (2) giving of bond to secure performance under section 702 of this title;
- (3) reasonable compensation under section 708 of this title;
- (4) resignation under section 705 of this title;
- (5) removal under section 706 of this title; and
- (6) vacancy and appointment of successor under section 704 of this title.

Sec. 17. 33 V.S.A. § 5204(b)(2)(A) is amended to read:

(2)(A)(i) The Family Division of the Superior Court shall hold a hearing under subsection (c) of this section to determine whether jurisdiction should be transferred to the Criminal Division under subsection (a) of this section if the delinquent act set forth in the petition is:

1 (I) [Repealed.]

2 (II) human trafficking or aggravated human trafficking in
3 violation of 13 V.S.A. § 2652 or 2653;

4 (III) defacing a firearm's serial number in violation of ~~13~~
5 ~~V.S.A. § 4024~~ 13 V.S.A. § 4026; or

6 (IV) straw purchasing of firearm in violation of 13 V.S.A.
7 § 4025; and

8 (ii) the child had attained 16 years of age but not 19 years of age at
9 the time the act was alleged to have occurred.

10 Sec. 18. 33 V.S.A. § 5225 is amended to read:

11 § 5225. PRELIMINARY HEARING; RISK ASSESSMENT

12 (a) Preliminary hearing. A preliminary hearing shall be held at the time
13 and date specified on the citation or as otherwise ordered by the court. If a
14 child is taken into custody prior to the preliminary hearing, the preliminary
15 hearing shall be at the time of the temporary care hearing. Counsel for the
16 child shall be assigned prior to the preliminary hearing.

17 (b) Risk and needs screening.

18 (1) Prior to the preliminary hearing, the child shall be afforded an
19 opportunity to undergo a risk and needs screening, which shall be conducted
20 by the Department or by a community provider that has contracted with the

1 Department to provide risk and need screenings for children alleged to have
2 committed delinquent acts.

3 (2) If the child participates in such a screening, the Department or the
4 community provider shall report the risk level result of the screening, the
5 number and source of the collateral contacts made, and the recommendation
6 for charging or other alternatives to the State's Attorney. The State's Attorney
7 shall consider the results of the risk and needs screening in determining
8 whether to file a charge. In lieu of filing a charge, the State's Attorney may
9 refer a child directly to a youth-appropriate community-based provider that has
10 been approved by the Department, which may include pre-charge diversion
11 pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 163, a community justice center, or a balanced and
12 restorative justice program. Referral to a community-based provider pursuant
13 to this subsection shall not require the State's Attorney to file a charge. If the
14 community-based provider does not accept the case or if the child fails to
15 complete the program in a manner deemed satisfactory and timely by the
16 provider, the child's case shall return to the State's Attorney for charging
17 consideration.

18 * * *

§ 348. INSTRUMENTS CONCERNING REAL PROPERTY VALIDATED

* * *

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1 the instrument is recorded, an action challenging the release, discharge, or
2 assignment is commenced and a copy of the complaint is recorded in the land
3 records of the town where the release, discharge, or assignment is recorded.
4 This subsection shall not apply to releases, discharges, or assignments obtained
5 by fraud or forgery.

6 (e) A power of attorney made for the purpose of conveying, leasing,
7 mortgaging, or affecting any interest in real property that has been
8 acknowledged and signed in the presence of at least one witness shall be valid,
9 notwithstanding its failure to comply with 14 V.S.A. § 3503 or the
10 requirements of the Emergency Administrative Rules for Remote Notarial Acts
11 adopted by the Vermont Secretary of State, unless within three years after
12 recording, an action challenging its validity is commenced and a copy of the
13 complaint is recorded in the land records of the town where the power of
14 attorney is recorded. This subsection shall not apply to a power of attorney
15 obtained by fraud or forgery.

16 (f) Notwithstanding section 305 of this title, a deed, mortgage, lease, or
17 other instrument executed for the purpose of conveying or encumbering real
18 property executed by a person purporting to act as the agent or attorney-in-fact
19 for the party named in the deed, mortgage, lease, or other instrument that has
20 been recorded for at least 15 years in the land records where the real property
21 is located shall be valid even if no power of attorney authorizing and

empowering an agent or attorney-in-fact appears of record, unless, within 15
years after recording, an action challenging the validity of the deed, mortgage,
lease, or other instrument is commenced and a copy of the complaint is
recorded in the land records of the town where the property is located. This
subsection shall not apply to an instrument obtained by fraud or forgery.

Sec. 20. 32 V.S.A. § 1003 is amended to read:

§ 1003. STATE OFFICERS

* * *

(c) The officers of the Judicial Branch named in this subsection shall be
entitled to annual salaries as follows:

	Annual	Annual
	Salary	Salary
	as of	as of
	July 14,	July 13,
	2024	2025
(1) Chief Justice of Supreme Court	\$214,024	\$225,581
(2) Each Associate Justice	\$204,264	\$215,294
(3) Administrative Chief Superior Judge	\$204,264	\$215,294
(4) Each Superior Judge	\$194,185	\$204,671
(5) [Repealed.]		
(6) Each Magistrate	\$146,413	\$154,319

1 (7) Each Judicial Bureau hearing

2 officer \$146,413 \$154,319

3 * * *

4 Sec. 21. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 27, Sec. 5 (forensic facility report) is
5 amended to read:

6 Sec. 5. [Deleted.]

7 Sec. 22. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 40, Sec. 4 is amended to read:

8 Sec. 4. REPEALS

9 * * *

10 (c) 28 V.S.A. § 126 (Coordinated Justice Reform Advisory Council) is
11 repealed on July 1, 2028 July 1, 2025.

12 ~~Sec. 23. REPEAL~~

13 ~~2019 Acts and Resolves No. 6, Secs. 99 and 100 (amendments to 18 V.S.A.~~

14 ~~§§ 4810(d)–(j) and 4811 that prohibited public inebriates from being~~

15 ~~incarcerated in a Department of Corrections’ facility) are repealed.~~

16 ~~Sec. 24. 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 6, Sec. 105 is amended to read:~~

17 ~~Sec. 105. EFFECTIVE DATES~~

18 * * *

19 ~~(c) Secs. 99 and 100 (amending 18 V.S.A. §§ 4910 and 4811) shall take~~

20 ~~effect on July 1, 2025. [Deleted.]~~

21 * * *

1 Sec. 24. FIREARM SURRENDER ORDER COMPLIANCE WORKING
2 GROUP; REPORT

3 (a) Creation. The Office of the Attorney General shall convene a Firearm
4 Surrender Order Compliance Working Group to develop a uniform process to
5 ensure compliance with court orders to surrender firearms. The Working
6 Group shall study what examine the statutory or policy changes are needed
7 necessary to create a uniform process to monitor compliance, support entities
8 charged with storing and returning surrendered firearms pursuant to court
9 orders, and identify a stable and reliable funding source for any additional
10 resources needed to monitor compliance.

11 (b) Membership. The Working Group shall be composed of the following
12 members:

13 (1) the Attorney General or designee, who shall be the chair;

14 (2) the Chief Superior Court Judge or designee;

15 (3) the Defender General or designee;

16 (4) one State's Attorney or designee, appointed by the Department of
17 State's Attorneys and Sheriffs;

18 (5) a member, appointed by the Vermont Network Against Domestic
19 and Sexual Violence;

20 (6) a member, appointed by the Vermont Council on Domestic
21 Violence;

1 ~~(7) a member, appointed by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim~~

2 Services;

3 ~~(8) a member of the Vermont State Police, appointed by the~~

4 Commissioner of Public Safety;

5 ~~(9) a police chief, appointed by the Vermont Association of Chiefs of~~

6 Police; and

7 ~~(10) a federal firearms licensee, appointed by the Attorney General.~~

8 (c) Consultation. The Working Group shall consult with stakeholders

9 including:

10 (1) the Commissioner of Corrections;

11 ~~(2) law enforcement;~~

12 (2) family law practitioners;

13 (3) victim advocates;

14 (4) advocates from culturally specific advocacy organizations that work

15 with domestic violence victims;

16 (5) the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs;

17 (6) the Vermont Office of the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms;

18 (7) the Vermont Medical Society;

19 (8) the Commissioner of Mental Health;

20 (9) the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services;

21 (10) the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence; AND

1 (11) the Commissioner for Fish and Wildlife.

2 (d) Report. On or before November 15, 2025, the Working Group shall
3 report its recommendations to the House and Senate Committees on Judiciary
4 and to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee. The report shall
5 include:

6 (1) a workable statewide compliance model that is adaptable to both the
7 Family and Criminal Divisions of the Superior Courts and that ensures:

8 (A) accountability of respondents and defendants while addressing
9 safety needs of the plaintiffs and victims; and

10 (B) proper storage and return of firearms surrendered pursuant to
11 court orders; and

12 (2) recommendations for any legislative changes necessary to support
13 the model.

14 (e) Meetings. The Working Group shall meet not more than six times.

15 (f) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Working Group
16 who are not employees of the State of Vermont or who are not otherwise
17 compensated or reimbursed for their attendance shall be entitled to
18 compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010
19 for not more than six meetings.

20 Sec. 25. 15A V.S.A. § 3-504 is amended to read:

21 § 3-504. GROUNDS FOR TERMINATING RELATIONSHIP OF PARENT

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1 Sec. 25a. 33 V.S.A. § 5231(d) is amended to read:

2 (d) Termination of parental rights. If the Commissioner or the attorney for
3 the child seeks an order terminating parental rights of one or both parents and
4 transfer of custody to the Commissioner without limitation as to adoption, the
5 court shall consider the best interests of the child in accordance with section
6 5114 of this title. The Department's Family Services Division shall not
7 consider payment of child support to the Family Services Division to offset the
8 cost of foster care as a factor in a petition to terminate parental rights.

9 Sec. 25b. 33 V.S.A. § 5317(d) is amended to read:

10 (d) Termination of parental rights. If the Commissioner or the attorney for
11 the child seeks an order at disposition terminating the parental rights of one or
12 both parents and transfer of legal custody to the Commissioner without
13 limitation as to adoption, the court shall consider the best interests of the child
14 in accordance with section 5114 of this title. The Department's Family
15 Services Division shall not consider payment of child support to the Family
16 Services Division to offset the cost of foster care as a factor in a petition to
17 terminate parental rights.

18 Sec. 26. Sec. 1. 15 V.S.A. § 202 is amended to read:

19 § 202. PENALTY FOR DESERTION OR NONSUPPORT

20 A married person who, without just cause, shall desert or willfully neglect
21 or refuse to provide for the support and maintenance of ~~his or her~~ the person's

1 spouse and children, leaving them in destitute or necessitous circumstances or
2 a parent who, without lawful excuse, shall desert or willfully neglect or refuse
3 to provide for the support and maintenance of ~~his or her~~ the child ~~or an adult~~
4 ~~child possessed of sufficient pecuniary or physical ability to support his or her~~
5 ~~parents, who unreasonably neglects or refuses to provide such support when~~
6 ~~the parent is destitute, unable to support himself or herself, and resident in this~~
7 ~~State,~~ shall be imprisoned not more than two years or fined not more than
8 \$300.00, or both. Should a fine be imposed, the court may order the same to
9 be paid in whole or in part to the needy spouse, ~~parent,~~ or to the guardian,
10 custodian, or trustee of the child. The Office of Child Support attorneys, in
11 addition to any other duly authorized person, may prosecute cases under this
12 section in Vermont Superior Court.

13 Sec. 27. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 19, Sec. 5 is amended to read:

14 Sec. 5. [Deleted.]

15 Sec. 28. 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 19, Sec. 6 is amended to read:

16 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATES

17 * * *

18 (b) ~~Sec. 5 (marriage licenses; 32 V.S.A. § 1712) shall take effect on July 1,~~
19 ~~2025.~~ [Deleted.]

20 * * *

21 Sec. 29. 13 V.S.A. § 7556 is amended to read:

1 § 7556. APPEAL FROM CONDITIONS OF RELEASE OR BAIL

2 REVOCATION DENIAL

3 (a) A person who is detained, or whose release on a condition requiring
4 ~~him or her~~ the person to return to custody after specified hours is continued,
5 after review of ~~his or her~~ the person's application pursuant to subsection
6 7554(d) or (e) of this title by a judicial officer, other than a judge of the court
7 having original jurisdiction over the offense with which ~~he or she~~ the person is
8 charged or a Justice of the Supreme Court, may move the court having original
9 jurisdiction over the offense with which ~~he or she~~ the person is charged to
10 amend the order. The motion shall be determined promptly.

11 (b) When a person is detained after a court denies a motion under
12 subsection (a) of this section or when conditions of release have been imposed
13 or amended by the judge of the court having original jurisdiction over the
14 offense charged, an appeal may be taken to a single Justice of the Supreme
15 Court who may hear the matter or at ~~his or her~~ the Justice's discretion refer it
16 to the entire Supreme Court for hearing. No further appeal may lie from the
17 ruling of a single Justice in matters to which this subsection applies. Any order
18 so appealed shall be affirmed if it is supported by the proceedings below. If
19 the order is not supported, the Supreme Court or single Justice hearing the
20 matter may remand the case for a further hearing or may, with or without

1 additional evidence, order the person released. The appeal shall be determined
2 forthwith.

3 (c)(1) When a person is released, with or without bail or other conditions of
4 release, an appeal may be taken by the State to a single Justice of the Supreme
5 Court who may hear the matter or at ~~his or her~~ the Justice's discretion refer it
6 to the entire Supreme Court for hearing. No further appeal may lie from the
7 ruling of a single Justice in matters to which this subsection applies. Any order
8 so appealed shall be affirmed if it is supported by the proceedings below. If
9 the order is not supported, the Supreme Court or single Justice hearing the
10 matter may remand the case for a further hearing or may, with or without
11 additional evidence, modify or vacate the order. The appeal shall be
12 determined ~~forthwith~~ promptly.

13 (2) When a request to revoke bail pursuant to section 7575 of this title is
14 denied, a prosecutor may appeal the court's order in accordance with the
15 procedure outlined in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

16 (d) A person held without bail under section 7553a of this title prior to trial
17 shall be entitled to an independent, second evidentiary hearing on the merits of
18 the denial of bail, which shall be a hearing de novo by a single Justice of the
19 Supreme Court forthwith. Pursuant to 4 V.S.A. § 22 the Chief Justice may
20 appoint and assign a retired justice or judge with ~~his or her~~ the retired justice's
21 or judge's consent or a Superior judge or District judge to a special assignment

1 on the Supreme Court to conduct that de novo hearing. Such hearing de novo
2 shall be an entirely new evidentiary hearing without regard to the record
3 compiled before the trial court; except, the parties may stipulate to the
4 admission of portions of the trial court record.

5 (e) A person held without bail prior to trial shall be entitled to review of
6 that determination by a panel of three Supreme Court Justices within seven
7 business days after bail is denied.

8 Sec. 30. 28 V.S.A. § 818 is amended to read:

9 § 818. EARNED TIME; REDUCTION OF TERM

10 * * *

11 (b) The earned time program implemented pursuant to this section shall
12 comply with the following standards:

13 * * *

14 (4) The Department shall:

15 (A) ensure that all victims of record are notified of the earned time
16 program at its outset and made aware of the option to receive notifications
17 from the Department pursuant to this subdivision;

18 (B) provide timely notice not less frequently than every 90 days to the
19 offender, and to any victim who opts to receive the notice, any time the
20 offender receives a reduction in ~~his or her~~ the offender's term of supervision
21 pursuant to this section;

1 (C) maintain a system that documents and records all such reductions
2 in each offender's permanent record; and

3 (D) record any reduction in an offender's term of supervision
4 pursuant to this section on a monthly basis and ensure that victims who want
5 information regarding changes in ~~scheduled~~ an offender's minimum release
6 ~~dates~~ date have access to such information.

7 * * *

8 Sec. 31. VICTIM NOTIFICATION SYSTEM TASK FORCE; REPORT

9 (a) Creation. There is created the Victim Notification System Task Force
10 to review and improve the responsiveness of Vermont's victim notification
11 system.

12 (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following
13 members:

14 (1) the Commissioner of Corrections or designee;

15 (2) the Executive Director of the Center for Crime Victim Services or
16 designee;

17 (3) the Executive Director of the Department of State's Attorneys and
18 Sheriffs or designee;

19 (4) a member, appointed by the Vermont Network Against Domestic
20 and Sexual Violence;

21 (5) the Victims Service Director of the Vermont State Police;

1 (6) two persons who are either victims or survivors of crimes, appointed
2 by the Center for Crime Victim Services; and

3 (7) a member, appointed by the Commissioner of Corrections, who is
4 familiar with the capability and technical operations of the VINE system.

5 (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall study the current state of
6 Vermont's victim notification system, including:

7 (1) improving victims' accessibility to information;

8 (2) ensuring that the entire notification process is trauma-informed,
9 including all notifications, communications, and informational materials;

10 (3) expanding the use of automated notification systems in order to
11 increase options and maximize communication choices for victims and
12 survivors; and

13 (4) recommendations for necessary training and resources.

14 (d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical,
15 and legal assistance of the Department of Corrections.

16 (e) Report. On or before November 15, 2025, the Task Force shall submit
17 its findings and recommendations as a written report in the form of proposed
18 legislation to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee, the House
19 Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on Judiciary, and the Senate
20 Committees on Institutions and on Judiciary.

21 (f) Meetings.

1 (1) The Commissioner of Corrections or designee shall call the first
2 meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before August 1, 2025.

3 (2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at the
4 first meeting.

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

6 (4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on February 15, 2026.

7 Sec. 32. ADULT INVOLUNTARY GUARDIANSHIP WORKING

8 GROUP; REPORT

9 (a) Creation. There is created the Adult Involuntary Guardianship
10 Working Group to study jurisdiction of proceedings involving the involuntary
11 guardianship of adults. The Working Group shall examine the advisability of
12 consolidating adult involuntary guardianships under Title 14, Chapter 111,
13 Subchapter 12 (“Title 14 Involuntary Guardianships”) with guardianships for
14 persons with developmental disabilities under Title 18, Chapter 215 (“Title 18
15 Guardianships”), or otherwise amending the statutes to ensure that respondents
16 under Title 18 guardianships have access to voluntary guardianships that is
17 equal to the access to voluntary guardianships available under Title 14.

18 (b) Membership. The Adult Involuntary Guardianship Working Group
19 shall be composed of the following members:

20 (1) the Commissioner of Aging and Independent Living or designee;

21 (2) the Chief Superior Court Judge or designee;

1 (3) the Court Administrator or designee;

2 (4) a superior judge with experience in Title 18 guardianships,

3 appointed by the Chief Justice;

4 (5) a probate judge appointed by the Chief Justice;

5 (6) a guardian ad litem, appointed by the Court Administrator;

6 (7) an attorney with experience in adult guardianships, appointed by the

7 Vermont Bar Association;

8 (8) an attorney with experience in adult guardianships, appointed by

9 Vermont Legal Aid;

10 (9) an independent mental health evaluator appointed by the

11 Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living; and

12 (10) a member appointed by the Vermont Center for Independent

13 Living.

14 (c) Meetings.

15 (1) The Commissioner of Aging and Independent Living shall call the

16 first meeting of the Working Group to occur on or before August 1, 2025.

17 (2) The Working Group shall select a chair from among its members at

18 the first meeting.

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

20 (d) Report.

1 (1)(A) On or before December 15, 2025, the Working Group shall report
2 its recommendations, including any proposed legislative changes, to the House
3 and Senate Committees on Judiciary, the House Committee on Human
4 Services, and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.

5 (B) The report shall recommend whether:

6 (i) Title 14 Involuntary Guardianship proceedings and Title 18
7 Guardianship proceedings should be consolidated in one division of the
8 superior court; or

9 (ii) Title 14 Involuntary Guardianship proceedings and Title 18
10 Guardianship proceedings should remain in separate divisions of the superior
11 court as provided for in existing law.

12 (2) With respect to subdivisions (c)(1)(B)(i) and (ii) of this section, the
13 report shall address:

14 (A) the judicial resources and oversight that would be required;

15 (B) whether, notwithstanding 12 V.S.A. §2553 or 2555, the Vermont
16 Supreme Court should have appellate jurisdiction over guardianship
17 proceedings;

18 (C) the relationship between guardianships under subdivisions
19 (c)(1)(B)(i) and (ii) of this section and voluntary guardianships under 14
20 V.S.A. § 2671;

1 (D) any legislative changes that would need to be made under either
2 recommendation to ensure that respondents under Title 18 guardianships have
3 access to voluntary guardianships that is equal to the access to voluntary
4 guardianships available under Title 14; and

5 (E) any other matters deemed relevant by the Working Group,
6 including any matters not currently under the jurisdiction of Title 14
7 Guardianships or Title 18 Guardianships.

8 Sec. 33. 4 V.S.A. § 39 is amended to read:

9 § 39. CAPITAL BUDGET REQUESTS; COUNTY COURTHOUSES

10 (a) On or before October 1 each year, any county requesting capital funds
11 for its courthouse, or court operations, shall submit a request to the Court
12 Administrator. As used in this subsection, “court operations” does not include
13 operating expenses.

14 (b) The Court Administrator shall evaluate requests based on the following
15 criteria:

16 (1) whether the funding request is consistent with a capital program
17 developed pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 133(e)(3);

18 (2) whether the project that is the subject of the request has been
19 included in the list of capital projects in the county’s budget pursuant to 24
20 V.S.A. § 133(e)(1), and, if so, the description of the project included in the
21 budget;

1 ~~(3)~~ whether the county has established a capital reserve fund pursuant to
2 24 V.S.A. § 133(e)(3), and, if so, the amount of annual contributions the
3 county has made to the fund;

4 ~~(4)~~ whether the funding request relates to an emergency that will affect
5 the court operations and the administration of justice;

6 ~~(2)~~~~(5)~~ whether there is a State-owned courthouse in the county that
7 could absorb court activities in lieu of this capital investment;

8 ~~(3)~~~~(6)~~ whether the county consistently has invested in major
9 maintenance in the courthouse;

10 ~~(4)~~~~(7)~~ whether the request relates to a State-mandated function;

11 ~~(5)~~~~(8)~~ whether the request diverts resources of other current Judiciary
12 capital priorities;

13 ~~(6)~~~~(9)~~ whether the request is consistent with the long-term capital needs
14 of the Judiciary, including providing court services adapted to modern needs
15 and requirements; and

16 ~~(7)~~~~(10)~~ any other criteria as deemed appropriate by the Court
17 Administrator.

18 (c) Based on the criteria described in subsection (b) of this section, the
19 Court Administrator shall make a recommendation to the Commissioner of
20 Buildings and General Services regarding whether the county's request should

1 be included as part of the Judiciary's request for capital funding in the
2 Governor's annual proposed capital budget request.

3 (d) On or before January 15 of each year, the Court Administrator shall
4 advise the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate
5 Committee on Institutions of all county requests received and the Court
6 Administrator's recommendations for the proposed capital budget request.

7 Sec. 34. REPORT

8 On or before January 15, 2026, the Court Administrator and a representative
9 of the Association of County Judges appointed by the President of that
10 Association shall jointly report to the House Committee on Corrections and
11 Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions on the progress made to
12 implement the provisions of Sec. 33 of this act. The report shall include a
13 description of the steps taken and processes considered, and any proposed
14 legislative changes necessary, to ensure that capital budget requests for county
15 courthouses include the information required by Sec. 33 of this act.

16 Sec. 35. 23 V.S.A. § 1210(c) is amended to read:

17 (c) Second offense. A person convicted of violating section 1201 of this
18 title who has been convicted of another violation of that section within the last
19 20 years shall be fined not more than \$1,500.00 or imprisoned not more than
20 two years, or both. At least ~~200~~ 80 hours of community service shall be
21 performed, or 60 consecutive hours of the sentence of imprisonment shall be

1 served and may not be suspended or deferred or served as a supervised
2 sentence, except that credit for a sentence of imprisonment may be received for
3 time served in a residential alcohol facility pursuant to sentence if the program
4 is successfully completed.

5 Sec. 36. REPEAL

6 Sec. 35 of this act shall be repealed on July 1, 2028.

7 Sec. 37. FAMILY FORENSIC EVALUATOR RECOMMENDATIONS

8 (a) The General Assembly requests that the Chief Superior Judge, the
9 Director of the Office of Professional Regulation, and the Executive Director
10 of the Vermont Psychological Association work collaboratively to examine the
11 following:

12 (1) the extent of the need for and geographic distribution of family
13 forensic evaluators in complex parental rights and responsibilities cases heard
14 in the Family Division;

15 (2) barriers to increasing the availability of family forensic evaluators in
16 Vermont and whether protections regarding ethical complaints are warranted;
17 and

18 (3) strategies for increasing the number of family forensic evaluators in
19 Vermont.

1 (b) The General Assembly requests that the parties listed in subsection
2 (b) of this section submit their recommendations to the General Assembly on
3 or before November 1, 2025.

4 Sec. 38. CHILD AND PARENT LEGAL REPRESENTATION; TASK
5 FORCE; REPORT

6 (a) Creation. There is created the Child and Parent Legal Representation
7 Task Force to study the need and viability of an improved legal
8 representation system for children and families who are involved in judicial
9 or administrative proceedings concerning Children in Need of Care or
10 Supervision (CHINS) or substantiations of abuse or neglect.

11 (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following
12 members:

13 (1) the Chief Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court or designee, who
14 shall be the chair;

15 (2) the Court Administrator or designee;

16 (3) the Commissioner for Children and Families or designee;

17 (4) the Defender General or designee;

18 (5) the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate or designee;

19 (6) the Executive Director of Voices for Vermont's Children or
20 designee;

1 (7) the Executive Director of the Vermont Parent Representation
2 Center, Inc.;

3 (8) the Attorney General or designee; and

4 (9) the Executive Director of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs or
5 designee.

6 (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall assess and determine whether
7 reform of Vermont's legal representation for children and families is necessary
8 by exploring the following topics:

9 (1) standards recommended by the American Bar Association, U.S.
10 Children's Bureau, and the *Study of CHINS Case Processing in Vermont*
11 authored by the National Center for State Courts and published in May of
12 2021;

13 (2) compliance with funding and reporting requirements in order for
14 Vermont to leverage funding under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act;

15 (3) identifying the processes and amounts of Title IV-E funds and other
16 funding sources to support any reformed system;

17 (4) using an interdisciplinary model of representation, including pay
18 scales, performance measures, supervision and evaluation processes, and
19 recommended caseloads for attorneys, social workers, and other child and
20 family representatives; and

1 (5) other topics relevant to creating a reformed child and parent
2 representation system.

3 (d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have administrative, technical, and
4 legal assistance of the Court Administrator's Office.

5 (e) Report. On or before December 15, 2025, the Task Force shall submit a
6 report that proposes any necessary reforms to the legal representation system
7 for children and families who are involved in CHINS proceedings or
8 substantiations of abuse or neglect, along with proposed legislation to
9 implement such reforms to the Senate Committees on Judiciary and on Health
10 and Welfare and the House Committees on Judiciary and on Human Services.

11 (f) Meetings.

12 (1) The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court or designee shall call the
13 first meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before August 1, 2025.

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

15 (3) The Task Force shall cease to exist on May 15, 2026.

16 Sec. 39. EFFECTIVE DATES

17 This act shall take effect on passage, except that Sec. 1 shall take effect on
18 July 2, 2025 and Sec. 33 shall take effect on July 1, 2026.