

Journal of the House

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

At one o'clock in the afternoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Deborah Velto and the Kurn Hattin School singers of Westminster.

Committee Bill Introduced; Referred to Committee on Appropriations

H. 494

By the Committee on Corrections and Institutions,

House bill, entitled

An act relating to capital construction and State bonding

Was read the first time and, pursuant to House Rule 35(a), carrying an appropriation, was referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

House Resolution Placed on Calendar

H.R. 7

Offered by Representatives Graning of Jericho, Arsenault of Williston, Berbeco of Winooski, Bishop of Colchester, Bos-Lun of Westminster, Bosch of Clarendon, Boutin of Barre City, Brady of Williston, Carris-Duncan of Whitingham, Coffin of Cavendish, Conlon of Cornwall, Cooper of Pownal, Dodge of Essex, Dolan of Essex Junction, Duke of Burlington, Garofano of Essex, Goldman of Rockingham, Greer of Bennington, Gregoire of Fairfield, Hango of Berkshire, Harrison of Chittenden, Holcombe of Norwich, Houghton of Essex Junction, Howard of Rutland City, Krowinski of Burlington, Lalley of Shelburne, Lipsky of Stowe, Marcotte of Coventry, Masland of Thetford, McCann of Montpelier, Micklus of Milton, Morris of Springfield, Morrow of Weston, Olson of Starksboro, Page of Newport City, Pouech of Hinesburg, Priestley of Bradford, Quimby of Lyndon, Rachelson of Burlington, Sibilia of Dover, Stone of Burlington, Sweeney of Shelburne, Waters Evans of Charlotte, Wells of Brownington, and White of Bethel

House resolution reaffirming the friendship between the State of Vermont and Taiwan and supporting enhanced Vermont-Taiwan bilateral relations and Taiwan's participation in international organizations

Whereas, the United States and the Republic of China (Taiwan) share a vibrant, mutually beneficial bilateral relationship based on our common values of freedom and a free-market economy, and the relationship is as strong as it has ever been, and

Whereas, the January 2024 election of Dr. Lai Ching-te as the President of Taiwan demonstrates the vibrancy of Taiwan's democracy, and

Whereas, the United States is Taiwan's second-largest trading partner and Taiwan is the United States' seventh-largest trading partner; in 2024, the two-way trade in goods between the United States and Taiwan totaled in excess of \$157 billion; and the United States is also the largest supplier of agricultural products to Taiwan, and

Whereas, in 2022, the United States and Taiwan launched, and in 2023 signed, the U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade, which, in part, "is intended to develop concrete ways to deepen the economic and trade relationship," and the first agreement under the Initiative became effective in December 2024, and

Whereas, Taiwan is the second-largest export destination for Vermont goods, worth approximately \$254 million, and Vermont imported an estimated \$55.3 million in goods from Taiwan, and

Whereas, the Government of Taiwan has expressed a desire to reach an avoidance of double taxation agreement with the United States, which could increase Vermont's exports to Taiwan, bilateral investment, and jobs in Vermont, and

Whereas, Vermont and Taiwan have enjoyed a long history of productive bilateral relations, including entering into a driver's license reciprocity agreement in 2020, and the Government of Taiwan desires to establish a memorandum of understanding with the State of Vermont to further increase educational exchanges and cooperation, and

Whereas, United States policy toward Taiwan is not based on United Nations Resolution 2758 of 1971, but rather the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, which "provides for the continued membership of the people on Taiwan in any international financial institution or any other international organization," and

Whereas, Taiwan's participation and contributions in international organizations, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would greatly benefit both the United States and the international community, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the House of Representatives:

That this legislative body reaffirms the friendship between the State of Vermont and Taiwan and supports enhanced Vermont-Taiwan bilateral relations and Taiwan's participation in international organizations, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Clerk of the House be directed to send a copy of this resolution to President Donald J. Trump, President Lai Ching-te of the Republic of China (Taiwan), Director-General Charles Liao of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Boston, Governor Philip B. Scott, and the Vermont Congressional Delegation.

Was read by title and placed on the Action Calendar on the next legislative day pursuant to House Rule 52.

Joint Senate Resolution Adopted in Concurrence**J.R.S. 19**

By Senator Baruth,

J.R.S. 19. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on March 28, 2025.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, March 28, 2025, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, April 1, 2025.

Was taken up, read, and adopted in concurrence.

Ceremonial Reading**H.C.R. 61**

Offered by Representatives Hango of Berkshire, Boyden of Cambridge, Branagan of Georgia, Cina of Burlington, Coffin of Cavendish, Demar of Enosburgh, Dobrovich of Williamstown, Donahue of Northfield, Galfetti of Barre Town, Goslant of Northfield, Higley of Lowell, Kascenska of Burke, Krasnow of South Burlington, Labor of Morgan, Lipsky of Stowe, Maguire of Rutland City, Malay of Pittsford, McFaun of Barre Town, Morgan, M. of Milton, Nelson of Derby, Noyes of Wolcott, Oliver of Sheldon, Page of Newport City, Pinsonault of Dorset, Powers of Waterford, Sibia of Dover, Tagliavia of Corinth, Taylor of Milton, Toof of St. Albans Town, Walker of Swanton, and Wells of Brownington

Offered by Senators Collamore, Ingalls, Mattos, Norris, and Vyhovsky

House concurrent resolution recognizing March 2025 as National Athletic Training Month in Vermont

Whereas, the general public might narrowly perceive athletic trainers to be individuals who rush onto a sports field or indoor playing arena when a team member, be it high school, college, or professional, is injured during the course of a game, and

Whereas, although that is their most visible role, in reality, athletic trainers have a long history of providing professional quality health care for athletes and other individuals who are engaged in regular physical activity, and

Whereas, athletic trainers are health care professionals “who specialize in immediate, acute, and emergency care; examination, assessment, and diagnosis; injury prevention; risk management; therapeutic intervention; and rehabilitation of injury and illness,” and

Whereas, professional, collegiate, and high school teams; private industries; physician offices; rehabilitation clinics; and every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces employ athletic trainers, and they work collaboratively to promote and practice the profession of athletic training, nationally and within the State of Vermont, and

Whereas, in 1982, these health care professionals, who in 2025 number over 135 in our State, organized as the Vermont Association of Athletic Trainers (VAAT), which is dedicated to the education of its members and the enhancement of the profession of athletic training, for the healthcare benefit of all Vermonters, and

Whereas, VAAT is affiliated with the National Athletic Trainers’ Association (NATA), which represents and supports more than 45,000 members nationwide, and NATA has established March as National Athletic Training Month, and

Whereas, the General Assembly has recognized the role of athletic trainers as health care professionals, and it enacted 1998 Acts and Resolves No. 108 as amended (codified as 26 V.S.A. chapter 83) providing for the licensure of athletic trainers, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly recognizes March 2025 as National Athletic Training Month in Vermont, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Association of Athletic Trainers.

Having been adopted in concurrence on Friday, March 21, 2025 in accord with Joint Rule 16b, was read.

Recess for House Caucus of the Whole

At one o'clock and twenty-five minutes in the afternoon, the Speaker declared a recess until the fall of the gavel in order for the House to hold a Caucus of the Whole on the Budget and Education.

Called to Order

At two o'clock and twenty-seven minutes in the afternoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered**H. 244**

Rep. Waters Evans of Charlotte, for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, to which had been referred House bill, entitled

An act relating to State contracting standards for advertising

Reported in favor of its passage when amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 29 V.S.A. § 902(a) is amended to read:

(a) The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall contract for and make all purchases, including all fuel, supplies, materials, and equipment, for all departments, offices, institutions, and other agencies of the State and counties. However, ~~he or she~~ the Commissioner may delegate authority to those governmental agencies to purchase directly individually approved types and classes of items when the interests of the State are best served thereby, provided that any such delegated authority shall be subject to the same limitations set forth in subsections 910(a)–(c) of this subchapter as apply to the Commissioner. ~~He or she~~ The Commissioner shall also contract for and purchase materials for the repair and for the construction and equipment of new buildings to be erected by the State, unless otherwise provided. ~~He or she~~ The Commissioner may purchase such supplies, materials, and equipment as are requisitioned by the supervisors of the natural resources conservation districts. ~~He or she~~ The Commissioner may also cooperate with and advise officials of any political subdivision of the State or any institution of higher education chartered in Vermont and accredited or holding a certificate of approval from the State Board of Education in their purchase of any of the supplies, materials, and equipment needed by the political subdivision or institution of higher education, and may act as the agent of the political subdivision at the request of the authorized officials or agent thereof in the purchase of supplies, materials, and equipment.

Sec. 2. 29 V.S.A. § 910 is added to read:

§ 910. STATE CONTRACTS FOR ADVERTISING

(a) When contracting for print or digital advertising services for the State or its agencies, departments, instrumentalities, or institutions, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall contract with local news organizations for not less than 70 percent of the total annual value of the print or digital advertising services.

(b) When contracting for radio or television advertising services for the State or its agencies, departments, instrumentalities, or institutions, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall contract with local broadcast organizations for not less than 70 percent of the total annual value of the radio or television advertising services.

(c) Notwithstanding subsections (a) and (b) of this section, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services may exclude from the total annual value of advertising services any advertisement focused on tourism and any employment search or job posting.

(d) The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall maintain a list of local news organizations and local broadcast organizations.

(e) As used in this section:

(1) “Local broadcast organization” means an organization licensed to broadcast in the State by the Federal Communications Commission.

(2) “Local news organization” means an organization that:

(A) engages professionals to create, edit, produce, and distribute original content concerning matters of public interest through reporting activities;

(B) employs a full-time employee who dedicates at least 30 hours a week to providing coverage of an area of the State for dissemination to the local or State community and lives within 50 miles of the coverage area;

(C)(i) has published at least one print publication per month over the previous 12 months and either holds a valid U. S. Postal Service periodical permit or dedicates at least 25 percent of its content to local news; or

(ii) on average over the previous 12 months, has published online at least one piece per week about the local or State community and has at least 33 percent of its online audience in Vermont;

(D) has disclosed in its print publication or on its website its beneficial ownership or, in the case of a nonprofit entity, its board of directors;

(E) in the case of an organization that is exempt from taxation under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3), declares as its stated mission in its filings with the Internal Revenue Service the coverage of local or State news; and

(F) over the previous calendar year did not receive more than 50 percent of its gross receipts from political action committees, other entities described in 26 U.S.C. § 527, or from organizations exempt from taxation under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(4), (c)(5), or (c)(6).

Sec. 3. 29 V.S.A. § 911 is added to read:

§ 911. CONTRACTS FOR ADVERTISING; REPORTING

Annually, on or before June 30, the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services shall submit to the General Assembly a report summarizing any advertising services purchased by the State and its agencies, departments, instrumentalities, or institutions during the preceding fiscal year, including a summary of the amounts spent by entity on advertising services and where those funds were spent.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, the report of the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs agreed to, and third reading ordered.

Third Reading; Bills Passed

House bills of the following titles were severally taken up, read the third time, and passed:

H. 401

House bill, entitled

An act relating to exemptions for food manufacturing establishments

H. 474

House bill, entitled

An act relating to miscellaneous changes to election law

H. 481

House bill, entitled

An act relating to stormwater management

Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered**H. 167**

Rep. Bos-Lun of Westminster, for the Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry, to which had been referred House bill, entitled

An act relating to establishing the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant at the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Reported in favor of its passage when amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) Food insecurity in Vermont, and across the country, has increased in recent years after a decrease during the COVID-19 pandemic.

(2) Increased access to produce improves health outcomes for individuals.

(3) For local food purchased from Vermont farms, every dollar spent contributes an additional \$0.60 to the local economy.

(4) Vermont Foodbank has been administering the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Program since 2018, injecting \$9.5 million dollars into the Vermont agricultural economy since 2018 by purchasing over 5.7 million pounds of local food and supporting 299 farms in 2024.

(5) The General Assembly should ensure the continued operation of the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Program by Vermont Foodbank by establishing a grant program at the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to provide ongoing, annual appropriations to the Program.

Sec. 2. 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, subchapter 4 is added to read:

Subchapter 4. Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program

§ 4631. VERMONTERS FEEDING VERMONTERS GRANT PROGRAM

(a) As used in this section, “local food” has the same meaning as “local” in 9 V.S.A. § 2465a(b).

(b) There is created in the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program to provide grants to Vermont Foodbank to:

(1) purchase local food directly from Vermont farms to distribute through Vermont Foodbank’s distribution channels; and

(2) offer subgrants to:

(A) Vermont Foodbank's network partners to buy directly from local farms of all sizes a variety of agricultural commodities and products; and

(B) Vermont Foodbank's partners that buy directly from local farms of all sizes with a focus on providing culturally preferred foods or local relationships.

(c)(1) The Vermont Foodbank, after consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, shall report annually on or before March 1 to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Agriculture regarding implementation and administration of the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program. The report shall include:

(A) the total amount of food purchased with grants from the Program;

(B) the total number of farms purchased from;

(C) the total number of sites where food purchased under the Program was distributed; and

(D) if grants from the Program are used to purchase farm shares, the total number of shares.

(2) When the Vermont Foodbank reports under this section, information regarding persons receiving food under the Program shall be provided in a form that does not disclose the identity of the individual persons, households, or businesses from whom the information was obtained or whose characteristics, activities, or products the information is about.

Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

In addition to other funds appropriated in fiscal year 2026, \$2,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to implement the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program established pursuant to 6 V.S.A. § 4631. The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets may use up to \$67,500.00 of the appropriation under this section for the purposes of administering the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

Rep. Stevens of Waterbury, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the report of the Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry be amended by striking out Sec. 3, appropriation, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 3 to read as follows:

Sec. 3. CONTINGENCY ON FUNDING

The duty of the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets to implement Sec. 2 of this act, Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program, is contingent upon an appropriation in fiscal year 2026 from the General Fund for the specific purposes described in Sec. 2 of this act.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry was amended as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations. Thereupon, the report of the Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry, as amended, was agreed to and third reading ordered.

Action on Bill Postponed

H. 218

House bill, entitled

An act relating to fiscal year 2026 appropriations from the Opioid Abatement Special Fund

Was taken up and, pending second reading, on motion of **Rep. Wood of Waterbury**, action on the bill was postponed until March 27, 2025.

Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered

H. 397

Rep. Birong of Vergennes, for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, to which had been referred House bill, entitled

An act relating to miscellaneous amendments to the statutes governing emergency management and flood response

Reported in favor of its passage when amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

* * * Division of Emergency Management; Plans and Reports * * *

Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 3a is amended to read:

§ 3a. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION; DUTIES; BUDGET

(a) In addition to other duties required by law, the Division of Emergency Management shall:

* * *

(3) Annually on or before the last legislative day in January, provide an update and presentation to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations concerning all action items in the all-hazards mitigation plan required by subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(4) Provide assistance to municipalities to develop and implement the components of the Statewide Emergency Management Plan described in subdivision 41(4) of this chapter.

* * *

Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 41 is amended to read:

§ 41. STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Department of Public Safety's Vermont Emergency Management Division, in collaboration with the Chief Recovery Officer and in consultation with regional planning commissions, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and Vermont's long-term recovery groups, shall create, and republish as needed, but not less than every five years, a comprehensive State Emergency Management Plan. The Plan shall:

(1) detail response systems during all-hazards events, including communications, coordination among State, local, private, and volunteer entities, and the deployment of State and federal resources. ~~The Plan shall also;~~

(2) detail the State's emergency preparedness measures and goals, including those for the prevention of, protection against, mitigation of, and recovery from all-hazards events. ~~The Plan shall;~~

(3) include templates and guidance for regional emergency management and for local emergency plans that support municipalities in their respective emergency management planning; and

(4) provide a framework for municipalities to develop and implement:

(A) emergency parking plans for areas within a municipality affected by an all-hazard event;

(B) municipal plans and systems to ensure that vulnerable populations, including aging populations and individuals with disabilities, within the municipality are contacted and visited to ensure their safety and wellness during an all-hazard event;

(C) emergency notification systems to provide real-time alerts to residents, which shall utilize multichannel communication systems; and

(D) training to support the officers and staff that municipalities are required to maintain following an all-hazard event, including individual assistance coordinators and disaster waste coordinators.

* * * Voluntary Buyout Program and Voluntary Buyout Reimbursement Program * * *

Sec. 3. 20 V.S.A. § 51 is added to read:

§ 51. FLOOD-PRONE PROPERTIES; VOLUNTARY BUYOUT PROGRAM

The Division of Emergency Management and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall establish and maintain the Voluntary Buyout Program for flood-prone properties. The Program shall allow a municipality, at the request of the owner of a flood-prone property, to apply for funding to cover the purchase price of the property. The purchase price shall be the full fair market value of the flood-prone property. The municipality shall maintain the acquired property as open space with a deed restriction or covenant prohibiting development of the property.

Sec. 4. 32 V.S.A. § 3710 is added to read:

§ 3710. VOLUNTARY BUYOUT REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

(a) There is established the Voluntary Buyout Reimbursement Program to reimburse municipalities for the value of municipal property taxes associated with the flood-prone properties acquired by a municipality pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 51 and preserved as public open space with a deed restriction or covenant prohibiting development of the property.

(b) On or before September 1 of each year, the Commissioner of Public Safety shall certify the properties eligible for the Program to the Commissioner of Taxes along with any other information required by the Commissioner of Taxes. To be eligible for reimbursement under the Program, a municipality must have acquired an eligible property on or after July 1, 2023 and preserved the property as public open space with a deed restriction or covenant prohibiting development of the property. The Commissioner of Public Safety shall first certify properties to the Commissioner of Taxes pursuant to this subsection on or before September 1, 2025.

(c) The Commissioner of Taxes shall certify the Program payment amounts to the Secretary of Administration. The Secretary shall make an annual payment to each municipality for each eligible property to compensate for the

loss of municipal property tax. The payment shall be calculated using the grand list value of the acquired property for the year during which the property was either damaged by flooding or identified as flood-prone by the Commissioner of Public Safety, multiplied by the municipal tax rate, including any submunicipal tax rates, in effect each year. This payment shall be made on or before January 1 of each year for five years.

(d) If a municipality has received payment for any acquired property under subsection (c) of this section for five consecutive years, it shall be eligible for payment for ensuing five year periods in an amount equal to one-half of the initial annual payment calculated under subsection (c).

(e) Payments made pursuant to this section shall be paid from the PILOT Special Fund established under section 3709 of this subchapter. Payments shall be disbursed only after all other requirements of subchapter 4 of this chapter are met. If the PILOT Special Fund balance is insufficient to pay the full amount of all payments authorized under this subchapter, then payments calculated under this section and due to each eligible municipality for each property shall be reduced proportionately.

Sec. 5. VOLUNTARY BUYOUT REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM;

TRANSFERS FROM PILOT SPECIAL FUND

Notwithstanding any provision of 32 V.S.A. § 3709 to the contrary, in fiscal year 2026 the Commissioner of Finance and Management shall transfer from the PILOT Special Fund to the Voluntary Buyout Reimbursement Program \$1,000,000.00 for purposes of the administration of the Program.

* * * Division of Emergency Management; Assistance to Municipalities * * *

Sec. 6. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; POSITIONS;

APPROPRIATION

(a) The following positions are created in the Division of Emergency Management:

- (1) one full-time, exempt Municipal Grant Liaison; and
- (2) one full-time, exempt All-Hazard Mitigation Technician.

(b) The Municipal Grant Liaison shall be dedicated to grant research, grant applications support, coordination between municipal corporations and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and direct assistance to municipal corporations for the acquisition of grants and other funding sources for all-hazard relief and recovery efforts. The Flood Mitigation Technician shall be dedicated to providing or supporting engineering analyses for all-hazard mitigation projects, oversight of municipal remediation and recovery projects,

and managing technical assistance to municipal corporations for all-hazard recovery.

Sec. 7. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; ALL-HAZARD
AND WEATHER ALERT SYSTEMS FOR MUNICIPAL
CORPORATIONS

Upon request of a municipal corporation, the Division of Emergency Management, in collaboration with regional planning commissions and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, shall assist the municipal corporation with access to and development of the following:

(1) surface water flood monitoring devices, which shall automatically trigger notification systems for emergency services providers and residents;

(2) alert systems that are integrated with a statewide weather alert system for real-time updates during severe weather events; and

(3) connection to a statewide enhanced weather alert system that:

(A) predicts local and regional conditions using advanced modeling;
and

(B) issues real-time warnings for flooding, blizzards, and ice storms through multiple communication channels.

* * * Needs Assessment Report * * *

Sec. 8. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; STATE
STAKEHOLDERS; NEEDS ASSESSMENT; REPORT

The Division of Emergency Management, Chief Recovery Officer, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Agency of Natural Resources, and Agency of Transportation shall conduct a needs assessment to identify any additional staffing, resources, technical needs, or authority needed to carry out the provisions of this act. On or before November 15, 2025, the Division shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Government Operations containing the needs assessments conducted by the State agencies and departments identified in this section.

* * * Vermont Community Radio Program * * *

Sec. 9. VERMONT COMMUNITY RADIO GRANT PROGRAM

(a) Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

(1) Vermont's seven active community radio stations currently serve over 200,000 Vermonters, many in rural and underserved areas.

(2) Community radio stations have consistently provided critical information during emergencies, including Tropical Storm Irene, recent severe flooding, and other natural disasters.

(3) These stations operate with small budgets, primarily relying on volunteer staff and listener donations, and are ineligible for federal funding through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting due to their size.

(4) Upcoming FCC-approved stations in Bristol, Richmond-Underhill-Jericho, and Ludlow will expand coverage to nearly all Vermont counties, increasing statewide accessibility to vital community radio services.

(5) Investment in these stations strengthens Vermont's public safety network and promotes civic engagement by providing local, hyper-focused content that commercial and statewide media cannot replicate.

(b) Intent. The intent of this section is to ensure Vermont's community radio stations remain resilient and prepared to serve as lifelines during emergencies while fostering local engagement and preserving Vermont's unique community fabric.

(c) Grant program.

(1) The Vermont Community Radio Grant Program is established to provide one-time funding to community radio stations for the purpose of:

(A) upgrading equipment and infrastructure necessary for reliable emergency broadcasting;

(B) procuring and installing backup generators; and

(C) enhancing operational sustainability through software improvements and technical training.

(2) The Program shall be administered by the Commissioner of Public Safety or designee in collaboration with the Vermont Association of Broadcasters.

(3) Grants shall be allocated as follows:

(A) up to \$25,000.00 per station for seven active community radio stations; and

(B) up to \$10,000.00 per station for three upcoming stations currently under construction.

(4) To be eligible for a grant under the Program, an applicant shall:

(A) be a nonprofit, noncommercial community radio station licensed in Vermont;

(B) demonstrate a history of providing emergency broadcasting services or show the capacity to provide those services upon funding; and

(C) submit a detailed implementation plan for the proposed use of grant funding.

(d) Report. On or before June 30, 2026, a community radio station that receives a grant under the Program shall provide to the Commissioner of Public Safety a report detailing the:

(1) use of grant funds, including itemized expenses;

(2) improvements achieved in emergency readiness and operational capacity; and

(3) impact on community service and engagement.

* * * Municipal Finances and Indebtedness * * *

Sec. 10. 24 V.S.A. 1585 is added to read:

§ 1585. UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE

Monies from a budget approved by the voters at an annual or special meeting that are not expended by the end of a municipality's fiscal year shall be under the control and direction of the legislative body of the municipality and may be carried forward from year to year as an unassigned fund balance. Unassigned fund balances may be invested and reinvested as are other monies received by a town treasurer and may be expended for any public purpose as established by the legislative body of the municipality.

Sec. 11. 24 V.S.A. § 1790 is added to read:

§ 1790. EMERGENCY BORROWING; ALL-HAZARD EVENT OR STATE OF EMERGENCY

The legislative body of a municipality may borrow money, in the name of the municipal corporation, by issuance of its notes or orders for the purpose of paying expenses of the municipal corporation or for public improvements associated with an all-hazards event or a declared state of emergency pursuant to 20 V.S.A. chapter 1. The notes or orders shall be for a period of not more than five years or a term not to exceed the reasonably anticipated useful life of the improvements or assets financed by the notes or orders.

Sec. 12. 24 V.S.A. § 1759 is amended to read:

§ 1759. DENOMINATIONS; PAYMENTS; INTEREST

(a)(1) Any bond issued under this subchapter shall draw interest at a rate not to exceed the rate approved by the voters of the municipal corporation in accordance with section 1758 of this title, or if no rate is specified in the vote under that section, at a rate approved by the legislative ~~branch~~ body of the municipal corporation, ~~such~~ the interest to be payable ~~semiannually~~ as determined by the legislative body of the municipal corporation. ~~Such~~ The bonds or bond shall be payable serially, the first payment to be deferred not later than from one to five years after the issuance of the bonds and subsequent principal payments or debt service payments, which include both principal and interest payments, to be continued annually in equal substantially level or diminishing declining amounts, as determined by the legislative body of the municipality, so that the entire debt will be paid in not more than 20 years from the date of issue.

(2) In the case of bonds issued for the purchase or development of a municipal forest, the first payment may be deferred not more than 30 years from the date of issuance ~~thereof of the bond~~. ~~Thereafter such~~ After any deferral period, the bonds or bond shall be payable annually in equal substantially level or diminishing amounts declining annual debt service as the legislative body of the municipal corporation may determine, so that the entire debt will be paid in not more than 60 years from the date of issue.

* * *

(b) General obligation bonds authorized under this subchapter for the purpose of financing the improvement, construction, acquisition, repair, renovation, and replacement of a municipal plant as defined in 30 V.S.A. § 2901 shall be paid serially, the first payment to be deferred not later than from one to five years after the issuance of the bonds, and subsequent principal payments or debt service payments, which include both principal and interest payments, to be continued annually in substantially level or declining amounts, as determined by the legislative body of the municipal corporation, so that the entire debt will be paid ~~over a term equal to the useful life of the financed improvements, but~~ not more than 40 years from the date of issue, ~~and may be so arranged that beginning with the first year in which principal is payable, the amount of principal and interest in any year shall be as nearly equal as is practicable according to the denomination in which such bonds are issued,~~ notwithstanding other permissible payment schedules authorized by this section.

* * * Dam Drawdown During Emergency Flood Events * * *

Sec. 13. 20 V.S.A. § 9 is amended to read:

§ 9. EMERGENCY POWERS OF GOVERNOR

Subject to the provisions of this chapter, in the event of an all-hazards event in or directed upon the United States or Canada that causes or may cause substantial damage or injury to persons or property within the State in any manner, the Governor may declare a state of emergency within the entire State or any portion or portions of the State. Thereafter, the Governor shall have and may exercise for as long as the Governor determines the emergency to exist the following additional powers within ~~such~~ the area or areas:

* * *

(12) In consultation with the Secretary of Natural Resources or designee, to authorize the Agency to waive applicable permits and restrictions under 10 V.S.A. chapter 47 or the Vermont Water Quality Standards to allow dams within the State to draw down water levels in anticipation of a flood event that is likely to cause substantial damage or injury to persons or property. Waivers may only be issued if the Governor, in consultation with the Secretary of Natural Resources or designee, has significant reason to believe doing so will decrease the risk of substantial damage to persons or property within the State. Dam operators operating under a waiver shall be required to make every effort to minimize the environmental impact of a water level drawdown under the authorized waiver.

* * * Appropriations * * *

Sec. 14. APPROPRIATIONS

(a) In fiscal year 2026, the following sums are appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Safety:

(1) \$275,000.00 to support the two positions created in Sec. 6 of this act;

(2) \$950,000.00 to support the Urban Search and Rescue Team created pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 50; and

(3) \$205,000.00 for the purpose of funding the Vermont Community Radio Grant Program.

(b) In fiscal year 2026, the sum of \$275,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Natural Resources for purposes of procuring a fire apparatus.

(c) Any unexpended monies from the appropriation under subdivision (a)(3) of this section shall revert to the General Fund on or before July 1, 2026.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 15. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

Rep. Waszazak of Barre City, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommended that the report of the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs be amended as follows:

First: In Sec. 3, 20 V.S.A. § 51, in the fourth sentence, by striking out “The municipality shall maintain the acquired property as open space with a deed restriction or covenant prohibiting development of the property” and inserting in lieu thereof “A municipality may transfer or redevelop the acquired property for purposes of constructing flood-resilient housing” before the period.

Second: By striking out Secs. 4 and 5 in their entireties and inserting in lieu thereof new Secs. 4 and 5 to read as follows:

Sec. 4. 32 V.S.A. § 3709 is amended to read:

§ 3709. PILOT SPECIAL FUND

(a) There is hereby established a PILOT Special Fund consisting of local option tax revenues paid to the Treasurer pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 138. This Fund shall be managed by the Commissioner of Taxes pursuant to chapter 7, subchapter 5 of this title. Notwithstanding subdivision 588(3) of this title, all interest earned on the Fund shall be retained in the Fund for use in meeting future obligations. The Fund shall be exclusively for payments required under chapter 123, ~~subchapter~~ subchapters 4 and 4C of this title, and for any additional State payments in lieu of taxes for correctional facilities ~~and to the City of Montpelier~~. The Commissioner of Finance and Management may draw warrants for disbursements from this Fund in anticipation of receipts.

* * *

Sec. 5. 32 V.S.A. chapter 123, subchapter 4C is added to read:

Subchapter 4C. Municipal Grand List Stabilization Program

§ 3710. MUNICIPAL GRAND LIST STABILIZATION PROGRAM

(a) There is established the Municipal Grand List Stabilization Program within the Department of Taxes to reimburse municipalities for municipal property taxes assessed under chapter 133 of this title for flood-prone

properties acquired by a municipality pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 51 or a prior voluntary buyout program operated by the Division of Emergency Management.

(b) On or before September 1 of each year, the Commissioner of Public Safety shall certify to the Commissioner of Taxes the properties eligible for the Municipal Grand List Stabilization Program and shall submit any other information required by the Commissioner of Taxes. To be eligible for

the Program under this subchapter, a municipality must have acquired an eligible property on or after July 1, 2023 and preserved the property as open space with a deed restriction or covenant prohibiting development of the property. The Commissioner of Public Safety shall first certify properties to the Commissioner of Taxes pursuant to this subsection on or before September 1, 2025.

(c) Upon notification by the Commissioner of Public Safety, the Commissioner of Taxes shall certify the payment amounts and make an annual payment to each municipality for each eligible property to compensate for the loss of municipal property tax. The payment shall be calculated using the grand list value of the acquired property for the year during which the property was either damaged by flooding or identified as flood-prone by the Commissioner of Public Safety, multiplied by the municipal tax rate, including any submunicipal tax rates, in effect each year. This payment shall be made on or before January 1 of each year for five years.

(d) A property shall not be eligible for reimbursement payments for more than 10 years. The Commissioner shall make an annual payment for the full amount calculated under subsection (c) of this section for five years. After a municipality has received payments for an eligible property for five consecutive years, the Commissioner shall make an annual payment to the municipality for any subsequent year of eligibility in an amount equal to one-half of the amount calculated under subsection (c) of this section.

(e) Payment under this section shall be calculated and issued from the PILOT Special Fund under section 3709 of this title only after all other grants under subchapter 4 of this chapter are calculated and issued. If the PILOT Special Fund balance is insufficient to pay the full amount of all payments authorized under this subchapter, then payments calculated under this section and due to each municipality for each property shall be reduced proportionately.

Third: In Sec. 6, Division of Emergency Management; positions; appropriation, in the section heading, by striking out the semicolon and the word “APPROPRIATION” following “POSITIONS” and in subsection (b), in

the second sentence, following the word “The” by striking out the word “Flood” and inserting in lieu thereof “All-Hazard” preceding “Mitigation Technician”

Fourth: By striking out Sec. 12, 24 V.S.A. § 1759, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 12. [Deleted.]

Fifth: By adding two new sections to be Secs. 13a and 13b and their reader assistance headings to read as follows:

* * * Local Option Tax; Amount Paid to Municipality * * *

Sec. 13a. 24 V.S.A. § 138 is amended to read:

§ 138. LOCAL OPTION TAXES

* * *

(c)(1) Any tax imposed under the authority of this section shall be collected and administered by the Department of Taxes, in accordance with State law governing such State tax or taxes and subdivision (2) of this subsection; provided, however, that a sales tax imposed under this section shall be collected on each sale that is subject to the Vermont sales tax using a destination basis for taxation. Except with respect to taxes collected on the sale of aviation jet fuel, a per-return fee of \$5.96 shall be assessed, ~~70~~ 75 percent of which shall be borne by the municipality, and ~~30~~ 25 percent of which shall be borne by the State to be paid from the PILOT Special Fund. Notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 603 or any other provision of law or municipal charter to the contrary, revenue from the fee shall be used to compensate the Department for the costs of administering and collecting the local option tax and of administering the State appraisal and litigation program established in 32 V.S.A. § 5413. The fee shall be subject to the provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 605.

* * *

(d)(1) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section and subdivision (2) of this subsection with respect to taxes collected on the sale of aviation jet fuel, of the taxes collected under this section, ~~70~~ 75 percent of the taxes shall be paid on a quarterly basis to the municipality in which they were collected, after reduction for the costs of administration and collection under subsection (c) of this section. Revenues received by a municipality may be expended for municipal services only, and not for education expenditures. Any remaining revenue shall be deposited into the PILOT Special Fund established by 32 V.S.A. § 3709.

* * *

* * * Flooding Abatement Program * * *

Sec. 13b. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 82, Sec. 1, as amended by 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 108, Sec. 3, is further amended to read:

Sec. 1. REIMBURSEMENT TO MUNICIPALITIES OF STATE

EDUCATION PROPERTY TAXES THAT WERE ABATED DUE
TO FLOODING

(a)(1) The Commissioner of Taxes may approve an application by a municipality for reimbursement of State education property tax payments owed under 32 V.S.A. § 5402(c) and 16 V.S.A. § 426. To be eligible for reimbursement under this section, prior to November 15, ~~2024~~ 2025, a municipality must have abated, in proportion to the abated municipal tax, under 24 V.S.A. § 1535 the State education property taxes that were assessed on eligible property, after application of any property tax credit allowed under 32 V.S.A. chapter 154.

(2) As used in this subsection, “eligible property” means property lost or destroyed due directly or indirectly to severe storms and flooding in an area that was declared a federal disaster between July 1, 2023 and ~~October 15, 2023~~ December 31, 2024, provided the loss or destruction resulted in one or more of the following:

(A) a 50 percent or greater loss in value to the primary structure on the property;

(B) loss of use by the property owner of the primary structure on the property for 60 days or more;

(C) loss of access by the property owner to utilities for the primary structure on the property for 60 days or more; or

(D) condemnation of the primary structure on the property under federal, State, or municipal law, as applicable.

(b) If a municipality demonstrates that, due to disruption to tax collections resulting from flooding in an area that was declared a federal disaster between July 1, 2023 and ~~October 15, 2023~~ December 31, 2024, the municipality incurred unanticipated interest expenses on funds borrowed to make State education property tax payments owed under 32 V.S.A. § 5402(c) and 16 V.S.A. § 426, the municipality may be reimbursed by an amount equal to its reasonable interest expenses under this subsection, provided the amount of reimbursed interest expenses shall not exceed eight percent.

* * *

Sixth: By striking out Sec. 15, effective date, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new reader assistance heading and Sec. 15 to read as follows:

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 15. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section shall take effect on passage.

(b) Notwithstanding 1 V.S.A. § 214, Sec. 13b (flooding abatement reimbursement program) shall take effect retroactively on November 15, 2024.

(c) All other sections shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

Rep. Harrison of Chittenden, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the bill ought to pass when amended as recommended by the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, when further amended as recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means, and when further amended as follows:

First: By striking Sec. 6, Division of Emergency Management; positions; appropriation, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 6 to read as follows:

Sec. 6. [Deleted.]

Second: By striking out Sec. 9, Vermont Community Radio Program, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 9 to read as follows:

Sec. 9. [Deleted.]

Third: By striking out Sec. 14, appropriations, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 14 to read as follows:

Sec. 14. [Deleted.]

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up and read the second time.

Pending the question, Shall the report of the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs be amended as recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means?, **Rep. Kornheiser of Brattleboro** moved to amend the report of the Committee on Ways and Means by striking out the first instance of amendment, amending the fourth sentence in Sec. 3, 20 V.S.A. § 51, in its entirety, and by renumbering the remaining instances of amendment to be numerically correct.

Which was agreed to.

Thereupon, the report of the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs was amended as recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means, as amended, and then further amended as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations. Thereafter, the report of the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, as amended, was agreed to, and third reading ordered.

Message from the Senate No. 31

A message was received from the Senate by Ms. Gradel, its Assistant Secretary, as follows:

Madam Speaker:

I am directed to inform the House that:

The Senate has on its part passed Senate bills of the following titles:

S. 12. An act relating to sealing criminal history records.

S. 36. An act relating to the Medicaid payment model for residential substance use disorder treatment services.

S. 53. An act relating to certification of community-based perinatal doulas and Medicaid coverage for doula services.

S. 56. An act relating to creating an Office of New Americans.

S. 63. An act relating to modifying the regulatory duties of the Green Mountain Care Board.

S. 117. An act relating to rulemaking on safety and health standards and technical corrections on employment practices and unemployment compensation.

In the passage of which the concurrence of the House is requested.

The Senate has considered a bill originating in the House of the following title:

H. 2. An act relating to increasing the minimum age for delinquency proceedings.

And has passed the same in concurrence.

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

J.R.H. 3. Joint resolution authorizing the Green Mountain Boys State and Green Mountain Girls State educational programs to use the State House facilities on June 26, 2025.

And has adopted the same in concurrence.

**Committee Bill; Second Reading; Bill Amended;
Third Reading Ordered**

H. 479

Rep. Mihaly of Calais spoke for the Committee on General and Housing.

House bill, entitled

An act relating to housing

Rep. Houghton of Essex Junction presiding.

Rep. Waszazak of Barre City, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommended that the bill ought to pass when amended as follows:

First: By striking out Sec. 6, 32 V.S.A. § 5930u, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 6 to read as follows:

Sec. 6. 32 V.S.A. § 5930u is amended to read:

§ 5930u. TAX CREDIT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

* * *

(11) “First-generation homebuyer” means a homebuyer who self-attests that the homebuyer is an individual:

(A) whose parents or legal guardians:

(i) do not have and during the homebuyer’s lifetime have not had any residential ownership interest in any state; or

(ii) lost ownership of a home due to foreclosure, short sale, or deed-in-lieu of foreclosure and have not owned a home since that loss; or

(B) who has at any time been placed in foster care.

* * *

(g) Credit allocation.

(1) In any fiscal year, the allocating agency may award up to:

(A) \$400,000.00 in total first-year credit allocations to all applicants for rental housing projects, for an aggregate limit of \$2,000,000.00 over any given five-year period that credits are available under this subdivision (A).

(B) \$675,000.00 in total first-year credit allocations for loans or grants for owner-occupied unit financing or down payment loans as provided in subdivision (b)(2) of this section consistent with the allocation plan, including for new construction and manufactured housing, for an aggregate limit of \$3,375,000.00 over any given five-year period that credits are available under this subdivision (B). Of the total first-year credit allocations made under this subdivision (B), \$250,000.00 shall be used each fiscal year for manufactured home purchase and replacement.

(C) \$250,000.00 in total first-year credit allocations for grants to first-time homebuyers who are also first-generation homebuyers as provided in subdivision (b)(3)(D) of this section, for an aggregate limit of \$1,250,000.00 over any given five-year period that credits are available under this subdivision (C).

(2) If the full amount of first-year credits authorized by an award are not allocated to a taxpayer, the Agency may reclaim the amount not allocated and re-award such allocations to other applicants, and such re-awards shall not be subject to the limits set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(h) Credit allocation; Down Payment Assistance Program.

(1) In fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2019, the allocating agency may award up to \$125,000.00 in total first-year credit allocations for loans through the Down Payment Assistance Program created in subdivision (b)(2) of this section.

(2) In fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year ~~2026~~ 2031, the allocating agency may award up to \$250,000.00 in total first-year credit allocations for loans through the Down Payment Assistance Program created in subdivision (b)(3) of this section.

Second: By adding a new section to be Sec. 6A to read as follows:

Sec. 6A. 32 V.S.A. § 5930u is amended to read:

§ 5930u. TAX CREDIT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

* * *

(11) ~~“First-generation homebuyer” means a homebuyer who self-attests that the homebuyer is an individual:~~

~~(A) whose parents or legal guardians:~~

~~(i) do not have and during the homebuyer’s lifetime have not had any residential ownership interest in any state; or~~

~~(ii) lost ownership of a home due to foreclosure, short sale, or deed-in-lieu of foreclosure and have not owned a home since that loss; or~~

~~(B) who has at any time been placed in foster care. [Repealed.]~~

* * *

(g) Credit allocation.

(1) In any fiscal year, the allocating agency may award up to:

(A) \$400,000.00 in total first-year credit allocations to all applicants for rental housing projects, for an aggregate limit of \$2,000,000.00 over any given five-year period that credits are available under this subdivision (A).

(B) \$675,000.00 in total first-year credit allocations for loans or grants for owner-occupied unit financing or down payment loans as provided in subdivision (b)(2) of this section consistent with the allocation plan, including for new construction and manufactured housing, for an aggregate limit of \$3,375,000.00 over any given five-year period that credits are available under this subdivision (B). Of the total first-year credit allocations made under this subdivision (B), \$250,000.00 shall be used each fiscal year for manufactured home purchase and replacement.

~~(C) \$250,000.00 in total in total first-year credit allocations for grants to first-time homebuyers who are also first-generation homebuyers as provided in subdivision (b)(3)(D) of this section, for an aggregate limit of \$1,250,000.00 over any given five-year period that credits are available under this subdivision (C). [Repealed.]~~

* * *

Third: By striking out Sec. 16, 24 V.S.A. § 1539, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 16 to read as follows:

Sec. 16. [Deleted.]

Fourth: By striking out Sec. 22, effective dates, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 22 to read as follows:

Sec. 22. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025, except that:

(1) Secs. 4 (Universal Design Study Committee) and 17 (repeal; Act 181 prospective landlord certificate changes) and this section shall take effect on passage; and

(2) Sec. 6A (repeal; First-Generation Homebuyer tax credits) shall take effect on July 1, 2030.

Rep. Bluemle of Burlington, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended to substitute an amendment for the report of the Committee on Ways and Means, to amend the bill as follows:

First: In Sec. 4, universal design study committee, by striking out subsection (h) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (h) to read as follows:

(h) Intent to appropriate. Notwithstanding subsection (g) of this section, per diems for the cost of attending meetings shall only be available in the event an appropriation is made in fiscal year 2026 from the General Fund to the Department of Housing and Community Development for that purpose.

Second: By striking out Sec. 6, 32 V.S.A. § 5930u, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 6 to read as follows:

Sec. 6. [Deleted.]

Third: By striking out Sec. 16, 24 V.S.A. § 1539, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 16 to read as follows:

Sec. 16. [Deleted.]

Fourth: In Sec. 19, VHFA off-site construction report, in subsection (a), by striking out the following: “The sum of \$250,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund in fiscal year 2026 to the Department of Housing and Community Development granted to the Vermont Housing Finance Agency to further develop recommendations from the 2025 “Opportunities to Utilize Off-Site Construction to Meet Vermont’s Housing, Workforce and Climate Goals” report.”

Fifth: By adding a new section to be Sec. 19a to read as follows:

Sec. 19a. VHFA OFF-SITE CONSTRUCTION REPORT;

IMPLEMENTATION

The duty to implement Sec. 19 of this act is contingent upon an appropriation of funds in fiscal year 2026 from the General Fund to the Department of Housing and Community Development for a grant to the

Vermont Housing Finance Agency for the development and issuance of the report required in that section.

Sixth: By striking out Secs. 20, DHCD positions, and 21, appropriations, and their corresponding reader assistance heading in their entirety and by renumbering the remaining section to be numerically correct.

Speaker presiding.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Ways and Means was substituted as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations. Thereupon, the report of the Committee on Ways and Means, as substituted, was agreed to, and third reading ordered.

**Committee Bill; Favorable Report; Second Reading; Bill Amended;
Amendment Offered and Withdrawn; Third Reading Ordered**

H. 488

Rep. Walker of Swanton spoke for the Committee on Transportation.

House bill, entitled

An act relating to the fiscal year 2026 Transportation Program and miscellaneous changes to laws related to transportation

Rep. Canfield of Fair Haven, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommended the bill ought to pass.

Rep. Kascenska of Burke, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended the bill be amended by striking out Sec. 13, EVSE, one-time appropriation, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 13. [Deleted.]

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Appropriations agreed to.

Pending the question, Shall the bill be read a third time?, **Rep. Donahue of Northfield** moved to amend the bill by striking out Sec. 15, effective date, and its reader assistance heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 15 and two new sections to be Secs. 16 and 17 and their associated reader assistance headings to read as follows:

* * * State Highway Bridges * * *

Sec. 15. STATE HIGHWAY BRIDGES; PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES;
AGREEMENTS; REQUIREMENTS; MODIFICATIONS

(a) For projects in the Agency of Transportation's Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Transportation Program for State Highway Bridges for which construction has not commenced, the Agency of Transportation shall, to the extent practicable, review any applicable agreements with and requirements for the municipality in which each project is located to determine if modifications to the applicable agreements or requirements, or both, can be made to support the construction of sidewalks or other pedestrian infrastructure on the bridge, consistent with the State's complete streets policy set forth in 19 V.S.A. § 2402.

(b) In each instance in which the Agency identifies modifications to the applicable agreements or requirements, or both, that can be made to support the construction of sidewalks or other pedestrian infrastructure on a bridge pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the Agency shall, to the extent reasonably feasible and consistent with all applicable State and federal laws and requirements, seek to modify provisions of agreements or modify requirements, or both, as necessary to support the construction of sidewalks or other pedestrian infrastructure in a manner that is consistent with the State's complete streets policy set forth in 19 V.S.A. § 2402.

Sec. 16. STATE HIGHWAY BRIDGES; REVIEW OF
REQUIREMENTS; REPORT

(a) On or before January 15, 2026, the Secretary of Transportation shall submit a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Transportation that:

(1) examines requirements for municipalities in relation to State highway bridge projects, including related Agency of Transportation procedures and the terms of required agreements with municipalities; and

(2) identifies any changes to those requirements that are necessary to facilitate and encourage the construction of sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure in a manner that is consistent with the State's complete streets policy set forth in 19 V.S.A. § 2402.

(b) The report shall include:

(1) a summary of the different funding streams and programs under which the State replaces, rehabilitates, or maintains bridges located on State highways;

(2) requirements under State and federal law for the funding streams and programs identified pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection;

(3) agreements that municipalities are required to enter into with the State in relation to the replacement, rehabilitation, or maintenance of bridges on State highways within the municipality;

(4) potential modifications to the requirements and agreements identified pursuant to subdivisions (2) and (3) of this subsection, and any related Agency procedures or rules, that could facilitate and encourage the construction of sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure on bridges located on State highways in a manner that is consistent with the State's complete streets policy set forth in 19 V.S.A. § 2402; and

(5) any legislative action that is necessary to facilitate and encourage the construction of sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure on bridges located on State highways in a manner that is consistent with the State's complete streets policy set forth in 19 V.S.A. § 2402.

* * * Effective Dates * * *

Sec. 17. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and Sec. 15 shall take effect on passage.

(b) The remaining sections shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

Thereupon, **Rep. Donahue of Northfield** asked and was granted leave of the House to withdraw the amendment.

Thereafter, third reading was ordered.

Favorable Report; Second Reading; Third Reading Ordered

H. 17

Rep. Coffin of Cavendish, for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, to which had been referred House bill, entitled

An act relating to approval of the adoption of the charter of the Town of Morristown

Reported in favor of its passage. The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, and third reading ordered.

Committee Bill; Favorable Reports; Second Reading; Third Reading Ordered

H. 472

Rep. Nugent of South Burlington spoke for the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

House bill, entitled

An act relating to professions and occupations regulated by the Office of Professional Regulation

Rep. Branagan of Georgia, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommended the bill ought to pass.

Rep. Mrowicki of Putney, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended the bill ought to pass.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, and third reading ordered.

Second Reading; Bill Amended; Third Reading Ordered

H. 237

Rep. McFaun of Barre Town, for the Committee on Health Care, to which had been referred House bill, entitled

An act relating to prescribing by doctoral-level psychologists

Reported in favor of its passage when amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 26 V.S.A. § 3001 is amended to read:

§ 3001. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

(1) “Practice of psychology” means rendering or offering to render to individuals, groups, or organizations, for a consideration, any service involving the application of principles, methods, and procedures of understanding, predicting, and influencing behavior that are primarily drawn from the science of psychology. The science of psychology includes assessment, diagnosis, prevention, and amelioration of adjustment problems and emotional and mental disorders of individuals and groups.

(2) “Psychologist” or “practicing psychologist” means a person who is licensed to practice psychology under this chapter.

(3) “Psychologist-doctorate” means a person who is so licensed under this chapter.

(4) “Psychologist-master” means a person who is so licensed under this chapter.

(5) “Board” means the Board of Psychological Examiners established under this chapter.

* * *

(12) “Collaborating practitioner” means a physician licensed to practice medicine pursuant to chapter 23 or 33 with a specialty in psychiatry.

(13) “DSM” means the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders current at the time of practice.

(14) “Drug” has the same meaning as section 2022 of this title.

(15) “Prescribing psychologist” means a licensed, doctoral-level psychologist who has undergone specialized training, has passed an examination as determined by rule, and has received a current prescribing specialty under section 3019 of this title that has not been revoked or suspended by the Board.

(16) “Prescription drug” has the same meaning as in section 2022 of this title.

(17) “Prescriptive authority” means the authority to prescribe or discontinue prescription drugs solely for the purpose of diagnosing, treating, or managing a condition recognized in the DSM. “Prescriptive authority” excludes the authority to:

(A) dispense, administer, or distribute prescription drugs; and

(B) prescribe or discontinue prescription drugs for patients who are less than 18 years of age, over 80 years of age, or pregnant.

Sec. 2. 26 V.S.A. § 3009a is amended to read:

§ 3009a. POWERS AND DUTIES OF BOARD

(a) The Board shall adopt rules necessary to perform its duties under this chapter, including rules that:

(1) specify educational and other prerequisites for obtaining licensure;

(2) ~~explain complaint and appeal procedures to licensees, applicants, and the public;~~

(3) explain continuing education requirements; ~~and~~

(3) regulate prescribing psychologist licensees pursuant to section 3019 of this title, including:

(A) the settings of clinical rotations; and

(B) prescriptive authority, including designation of conditions and drugs excluded from that authority, as well as requirements for the prescribing of particular drugs; and

(4) explain how the Board shall investigate suspected unprofessional conduct regulate collaborative practice agreements pursuant to section 3019 of this title, including collaborating practitioner qualifications and annual competency evaluations.

* * *

Sec. 3. 26 V.S.A. § 3019 is added to read:

§ 3019. PRESCRIBING BY DOCTORAL-LEVEL PSYCHOLOGISTS

SPECIALITY

(a) Prescribing psychologist specialty. A psychologist-doctorate may apply to the Board for a prescribing psychologist specialty. The application shall be made in a manner approved by the Board and include the payment of any required fees.

(b) Specialty by examination. A psychologist-doctorate shall be eligible for the prescribing specialty if the psychologist-doctorate:

(1) holds a current license to practice psychology at the doctoral level in the State;

(2) has successfully completed a postdoctoral training program in psychopharmacology designated by the American Psychological Association or its successor;

(3) has completed clinical rotations over a total of not less than 14 months in not less than nine practice settings, to include psychiatry, pediatrics, geriatrics, family medicine, internal medicine, emergency medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, and one elective;

(4) has completed a national certifying exam, as determined by rule; and

(5) meets all other requirements for obtaining a prescribing psychologist specialty, as determined by rule.

(c) Criteria for prescribing medication.

(1) A written collaborative agreement is required for all prescribing psychologists practicing under a prescribing psychologist specialty issued pursuant to this section.

(2) The issuance of prescriptive authority by a collaborating practitioner to a prescribing psychologist shall only include prescription drugs for the treatment of mental health conditions that the collaborating practitioner generally provides to patients in the normal course of practice.

(3) The collaborating practitioner shall file the collaborative agreement with the Board and notice of any termination of the agreement.

(4) Issuance of prescribing authority for Schedule II through V controlled substances shall identify the specific controlled substance by brand name or generic name. Prescription or administration of a controlled substance by injection shall not be allowed.

(d) Specialty by endorsement. The Director of the Board may, upon payment of the required fee, grant a prescribing specialty without examination if:

(1) the applicant holds active psychologist prescribing authority in another U.S. or Canadian jurisdiction; and

(2) the requirements for psychologist prescribing authority in that jurisdiction are, in the judgement of the Director, substantially equivalent to the requirements of this section.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATES

(a) This section and Sec. 2 (power and duties of the Board) shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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

Rep. Branagan of Georgia, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommended that the report of the Committee on Health Care be amended in Sec. 3, 26 V.S.A. § 3019, in subsection (d), by striking out the word “the” before “required fee” and inserting in lieu thereof “any”

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Health Care was amended as recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means. Thereupon, the report of the Committee on Health Care, as amended, was agreed to and third reading ordered.

Adjournment

At six o'clock and nine minutes in the evening, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until tomorrow at one o'clock in the afternoon.