2024 Veto Session Update

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A special legislative session was held on June 17, 2024, in which legislators attempted to override all seven of Governor Scott's vetoes(opens in a new tab) from this past session. They were successful on all but one, H.121(opens in a new tab), a data privacy and age-appropriate design code bill. Many Vermont businesses and more than half of the Senate expressed concerns about the unintended consequences, lack of understanding, and fear of expensive lawsuits if H.121 were to become law.

The day's only other drama came when H.72(opens in a new tab), the "safe injection site" bill for Burlington, appeared to fall one vote short (opens in a new tab)of an override. However, Senator Richard Westman of Lamoille County changed his vote later in the day, explaining that he had gotten mixed up on what he was voting for.

The legislature also passed several bills that didn't make it to the finish line during the regular legislative session. Of most interest to municipalities is H.55(opens in a new tab), which we highlighted in the 2024 Legislative Wrap-Up(opens in a new tab). Changes approved in this bill include offering new grants for screening firefighters for cancer, extending the period individuals can collect unemployment insurance, and updating illness definitions for qualifying unpaid leave to include "medical condition".

After reading this page, if you have questions or want to discuss any of this and/or stay involved, please join us on Monday June 24, 2024, for the last Advocacy Chat of the year.(opens in a new tab)

H.687 – Transitioning to Location-Based Act 250 Jurisdiction and Municipal Zoning Preemption.

H.687 (opens in a new tab)*Amends multiple sections of Title 10, Title 24, Title 3, Title 32, Title 27, Title 9, and Title 20.*

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Effective on passage, with several exceptions.

Both the House and Senate easily overrode the governor's veto of perhaps the signature bill of the session. At the highest level, H.687 will:

1. Extend and significantly expand temporary Act 250 exemptions created in last year's Act 47 – a welcome path to building housing now.

2. Create new location-based jurisdiction for Act 250 that preliminarily relies on future land use maps and regional plans to exempt certain areas from Act 250 and increase Act 250 scrutiny in others by 2027.

3. Enact new municipal land use preemptions and clarify others established in 2023's Act 47.

4. Establish, amend, and repeal various housing and community development tools, including transitioning the state's designation program to the State Community Investment Program.

See the 2024 Legislative Wrap-Up(opens in a new tab) for a detailed review of the previsions of the bill and its anticipated effects on municipalities.

H.887 – Property Tax Yield Bill

H.887 *Amends 32 V.S.A. § 5401, § 5402, § 4016, § 4026, § 4028, §9701, 32 V.S.A. chapter 225, subchapter 4 added, § 5414 added, 16 V.S.A. § 4025, § 563.*

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Effective July 1, 2024, except property tax rates and yields upon passage.

With a few votes to spare in both the House and Senate, they successfully overrode the Governor's Veto of the Property Tax Yield Bill, perhaps the most widely disliked but must pass piece of legislation this session. Legislative leaders felt they had no good alternatives presented by the Governor or his administration(opens in a new tab) and must have property tax rates set for the start of the next state fiscal year which begins July 1, 2024.

The "Yield Bill" sets the homestead property tax yields and non-homestead rates and makes other policy changes to education finance and taxation. See the 2024 Legislative Wrap-Up(opens in a new tab) for more information on the previsions of the bill.

H.645 – Expansion of Approaches to Restorative Justice

H.645(opens in a new tab) *Amends 3 V.S.A. Chapter 7, 7 V.S.A. § 656, and 18 V.S.A. § 4230b.*
Effective July 1, 2024 except Sec 1 and 8.

The House voted overwhelmingly to override the Governor, while the Senate succeeded with just one vote to spare. As detailed in the 2024 Legislative Session Wrap-up (opens in a new tab), this bill includes creating a pre- and post-charge diversion for certain eligible first-time and low-level offenses.

H.72 – Safe Injection Site in Burlington

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H.72(opens in a new tab) *Amends 18 V.S.A. § 4256, § 4475(a)(2), § 4478, adds § 9435(g), redesignates § 4254.*

Effective on passage.

As described above, the veto override attempt first failed in the Senate by one vote and was later sustained when Senator Westman switched his vote due to a misunderstanding of what he was voting for. H.72 will grant $1.1 million in Opioid Settlement funds to the City of Burlington to establish and operate an overdose prevention center. See more in our 2024 Legislative Wrap-Up(opens in a new tab).

The Other 2024 Veto Overrides

H.706(opens in a new tab), a bill that bans seeds treated with neonicotinoids.

H.289(opens in a new tab), a bill establishing a new renewable energy standard for Vermont.

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