



Weekly Legislative Report

Inside this issue

- 1 The Second Half Commences
- 1 Natural Resources Priorities in 2020
- 2 Recreational Cannabis
- 5 Housing Issues
- 7 Wetlands
- 7 EMS in Crisis
- 8 New Bills

The Second Half Commences

The gavel fell with a bang this week, signaling the beginning of the second half of the legislative biennium. Legislators returning to the State House dove right into work on all kinds of issues. On Wednesday, Governor Phil Scott delivered his State of the State address to the legislature, despite a lengthy and spirited protest in the House Chamber from activists sounding the alarm on climate change. A session shorter than last year's is likely because 2020 will likely be a raucous election year, and the many candidates in the legislature may not raise money until the session is over. Therefore, legislators will try to accomplish a lot of work very quickly.

One indication of the work ahead is the long list of reports provided to the General Assembly in the last several weeks. They include a fascinating assessment of the way that Vermont weights students for the purpose of counting them (there is no rational basis for the current system), a report on forest carbon sequestration (keep those trees growing!), the Agency of Transportation's Fact Book 2020 (a perennially useful compilation of transportation data), and provider compliance with 911 Backup Power, to name a few. (See the link to the 106 reports issued in this fiscal year below.)

A second indication of the vast amount of work to come is the fact that 400 new House bills and more than 70 new Senate bills will be introduced this session. And S.37, the medical monitoring legislation vetoed by the governor last spring, is already back on the Senate calendar.

Buckle up. It will likely be an intense session where the effort to maintain civility and rise above partisanship to find consensus will be severely tested.

Resources

- [List of Legislative Reports](#)

Senate and House Natural Resources 2020 Priorities

Act 250. No matter the 2020 session is still in its early days, both the House Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife and Senate Natural Resources and Energy committees are already hard at work. On the first day of the session Peter Walke, Deputy Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources, and Brian Shupe, Executive Director of the Vermont Natural Resources Council, presented a joint testimony to the House committee that suggested possible compromises on a draft bill (DR 19-0040) to modernize Act 250.

This is an interesting partnership: the administration of Governor Phil Scott and one of the state's prominent environmental groups met throughout the summer and fall to reach consensus on updating and reforming the law.

Act 250 was passed in 1970 in response to the state's then growing population and unfettered development (a problem we might wish for, given today's demographics). The law requires certain categories of projects to be evaluated under 10 broad environmental criteria with the ostensible goal of promoting development that protects Vermont's rural character and natural resources. The House committee is picking up where it left off last year: fine-tuning Act 250 to better reflect contemporary issues 50 years after the law was enacted.

The proposal would establish permit exemptions for development in designated downtowns and neighborhood development areas and trigger permit jurisdiction for development in and around interstate interchanges. It would protect forest blocks and update criteria to address climate change. One of the proposal's most controversial shifts is to eliminate the district commissions and replace them with an Enhanced Natural Resource Board, a three-member professional board with two citizen members from the district or region of the proposed project. Appeals of these permits would go directly to the Vermont Supreme Court instead of to the environmental court, thereby eliminating a step in the appeal process. District coordinators would continue to review minor permit applications and administrative amendments.

The Senate committee, which heard initial testimony on Thursday, anticipates seeing the House version of the bill in February.

Single Use Products. Act 69 of 2019 created the Single-Use Products Working Group (which included a municipal representative) to evaluate current state and municipal requirements to manage unwanted single-use products. The group was also charged with recommending how to divert single-use products from landfills and prevent contamination by discarded single-use products. The issue of banning single use plastic products (such as grocery bags) was first raised by several municipalities who prohibited them, leading to the act's passage.

On Wednesday, the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee received the working group's draft report outlining six proposals that try to satisfy these goals:

- product bans (plastic eating utensils, toxic additives, single-use personal care products)
- product standards (such as reducing single use products by a certain date);
- eco-modulated fees (fees on packaging);
- extended producer responsibility (producer of the product finances management);
- expanded bottle bill (include other products, increase deposit);
- consumer focused measures (education, stakeholders).

At least one bill on the committee's wall, [S.227](#), addresses single-use products by prohibiting lodging establishments from providing personal use products in small plastic bottles.

Resources

- [Testimonies of Peter Walke and Brian Shupe](#)
- [House Natural Resources Act 250 Committee bill current Chart of Changes](#)
- [Single-Use Products Working Group Draft Report](#)

Recreational Cannabis

As anticipated, the legislature got back to work on S.54, the retail cannabis bill, soon after the session was gaveled open. The House Government Operations Committee reviewed changes they made last year, and the House Natural Resources Committee began reviewing the land use sections of the bill. House leadership aims to have the bill on the floor very soon – possibly within a few weeks. Therefore, municipal officials have little time to tell their

legislators how a commercial cannabis marketplace would affect their communities. VLCT Advocacy staff has spoken at length about our concerns with the bill, and we increasingly fear that many of these problems will not be resolved unless legislative committees take more testimony from municipal officials who will most be affected: land use planners, zoning administrators, city and town managers, and selectpersons.

Municipalities cannot be left scrambling to find funding out of the property tax because they are not permitted access to local fees or local option taxes. They should not have to write – and then *rewrite* – ordinances and zoning bylaws because poorly drafted legislation and rulemaking processes do not provide adequate time or clear direction to communities to prepare for the new retail market. The state *must* ensure that local governments are properly prepared by furnishing the necessary resources to ensure a smooth roll-out of a taxed and regulated cannabis marketplace. Local officials and residents need to engage with local legislators now to advocate for the needs of their communities. VLCT has received more than 20 municipal cannabis resolutions so far. There is still time for your selectboard or city council to adopt the resolution! (See link at end of article.) If you do so, please forward copies to your local legislators and to VLCT Advocacy staff.

VLCT has identified four major problems with S.54, problems that we are asking our local officials to convey to their legislators:

1. Meaningless Local Cannabis Control Board Review. S.54 permits local governments to create cannabis control commissions, which would administer licenses and permits for cannabis establishments. The local cannabis control commissions are loosely modeled after local control commissions that license and permit establishments that furnish alcohol in municipalities. But these commissions as proposed are a meaningless bureaucratic step in the process that provide no added benefit to municipalities that want to regulate cannabis establishments in any manner. Municipalities have no say in the regulations they must use to review and approve licenses and permits, and they are prohibited from adopting local regulations, bylaws or ordinances to regulate cannabis establishments. The only say municipalities have is with conditions they attach to permits and licenses – which are also meaningless and of no added value to communities.

In S.54, the cannabis control commissions are only permitted to condition local approvals with ordinances regulating signage, nuisances, and 24 V.S.A. § 4414, the Municipal and Regional Planning and Development statute. To be clear, municipalities can already regulate signage and nuisances. Merely conditioning permits and licenses for those types of violations adds no new power if municipalities already have stand-alone ordinances. The “conditioning” language is perhaps well-meaning, but is still useless. Further, 24 V.S.A. § 4414 outlines the types of zoning regulations that may be adopted at the local level, such as zoning districts, conditional uses, parking, performance standards, renewable energy resources, affordable housing, and solar and wireless facilities and plants. Under this law, very few provisions are relevant to potential cannabis establishments, and it is unclear why this one provision of Chapter 117 was singled out for conditioning cannabis establishment licenses, while more relevant provisions of local planning and zoning criteria were ignored.

If the local cannabis control commissions really are just rubberstamping local permits and licenses based on state regulations in which they have no say, it makes no sense to even have these local commissions for applicants, businesses or municipalities.

2. Unclear Language, Unintended Consequences. Under S.54, municipalities may not prohibit “the operation of a cannabis establishment within the municipality through an ordinance adopted pursuant to [24 V.S.A. § 2291](#) [enumeration of regulatory powers] or a bylaw adopted pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4414.” VLCT understood this language was meant to prevent municipal zoning bylaws and ordinances from banning cannabis establishments after a community votes to allow them. Unfortunately, this language can easily be interpreted very differently, with a very different result. It can be read to mean that *all* communities that vote to allow a cannabis establishment must also accommodate cannabis establishments within zoning regulations, regardless of whether related operations – such as laboratories, manufacturers, industrial facilities, or retail operations – are permitted. Think about current

alcohol laws: Towns and cities can vote to allow the sale of alcohol in their community, but that does not therefore mean they have to change zoning to accommodate bars, restaurants, or liquor stores. The current language can be used to challenge a town's zoning that doesn't accommodate the types of establishments authorized by an opt-in or opt-out vote (see below) of the voters. Clarification is needed to ensure cannabis establishments are treated the same as similarly situated uses and not given special accommodation within local land use regulations.

A better solution is to authorize municipalities to regulate cannabis establishments under 24 V.S.A. § 2291 (local ordinance authority). This would allow a town whose voters voted to allow a cannabis establishment to adopt an ordinance that includes the time, plan, and manner a cannabis establishment is regulated. The enabling language in section 2291 could further stipulate that cannabis ordinances not conflict with regulations promulgated by the state Cannabis Control Board. Once a municipality adopts a cannabis ordinance, the local control board would use the ordinance and the rules promulgated by the state Cannabis Control Board as the standards for local permits and licenses. This would alleviate municipalities from having to update local bylaws and ordinances to address cannabis. In communities that lack zoning, stand-alone ordinance will be the only tool they have to address cannabis establishments locally if voters authorize their permitting within a municipality.

3. Opting in or out, Taxation, and Revenue. Municipalities receive revenues from retail sales of cannabis. The Senate version of S.54 proposes a two-percent local option tax, and a proposal in the House Ways and Means Committee would prohibit a local option or cannabis tax but implement a one-percent "share" of the retail sales revenue remitted to the community hosting the retail establishment (minus the cost of administration by the Department of Taxes.)

Early last session, the VLCT Board of Directors supported a local cannabis tax of five percent. Thirty percent of the revenues derived from the local cannabis tax would be pooled and redistributed to municipalities that host non-retail cannabis establishments that don't generate tax revenues, such as cultivators, wholesalers, product manufacturers and testing laboratories. Municipalities that host retail establishments would retain the remaining 70 percent. In light of continuing legislative discussions regarding taxing a retail cannabis market, the board recently modified its position by calling for a local cannabis tax to be set at one-third of the state's taxation amount, whatever that amount is. If that tax is established, the board will in turn support an opt-out provision for towns. The modified proposal would set a local cannabis tax at one-third of the state tax, regardless of what state tax rate the legislature eventually passes.

4. Cannabis Control Board and Fees. S.54 also addresses the use and assessment of fees. But instead of setting the exact fees, it gives that authority to the Cannabis Control Board. The fees would then be deposited in the state's new Cannabis Regulation Fund. The bill gives municipalities no representation on the Cannabis Control Board. There is no mandate that municipal fees be included or even considered by the Board. Under Title 7 (Alcoholic Beverages), municipalities share some of the fees from licensing establishments that furnish alcohol, which is appropriate, given the role of local commissioners in permitting and licensing. There is no provision in S.54 that either guarantees fee sharing or allows local governments to create fees on their own. This is a glaring oversight in the legislation.

Finally, the fact the Cannabis Control Board does not have any municipal representation is deeply troubling to us. Although the bill creates an advisory board to help the Cannabis Control Board with a host of discrete matters with one municipal official as a member, an advisory role is not a guarantee that municipal needs will be appropriately or adequately addressed the any Cannabis Control Board recommendation to the legislature or by rule. That board will be promulgating rules that significantly affect how – and if – local governments regulate cannabis establishments and corresponding cannabis matters. For example, the board's executive director will report to the legislature on how local land use regulations should address cannabis, whether certain cannabis establishments should be regulated by the secretary of Agriculture as "farming," what solid waste and water quality requirements should apply to establishments, and even whether the legislature should add cannabis licenses for delivery services and special events.

Every marijuana establishment will be located in a city or town and local economies and community culture will inevitably be impacted. The issues highlighted here are huge for municipal governments. Input from land use planners, zoning officials, wastewater system operators, and local governing bodies in the development of both the statute and rules – and not just in the form of public comment – is crucial. Rules written wholly from the state perspective by officials who have little-to-no local government experience often lead to legislation and regulatory frameworks that are confusing and unworkable at the local level.

Resources

- [Summary of House Government Operations Committee redraft of S.54.](#)
- [Commercial Marijuana Marketplace Resolution](#)

Housing Issues

On Wednesday, the Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee took up [S.237](#), a new bill that represents the administration’s efforts to address impediments to affordable housing development in downtowns and other designated areas. “Affordable housing” has very specific definitions in the local and regional planning statute, Chapter 117 of Title 24:

- Owner-occupied housing for which the total cost of ownership does not exceed 30 percent of gross annual income for a household at 120 percent of statewide, standard metropolitan statistical area or county median income –whichever is highest; and
- Rental housing for which the total cost of rent does not exceed 30 percent of the gross annual income of a household at 80 percent of certain median income measures.

Zoning. Working on the state’s assumption that zoning restrictions are among the most substantial impediments to housing development in Vermont, the bill amends Chapter 117 by adding statewide zoning mandates. Local planning commissions are well aware that if a town opts to adopt a municipal plan, the plan should be consistent with seventeen planning goals and must include twelve planning elements as well as a number of maps.

S.237 would require a utility and facility element to show water supply and wastewater lines, facilities, and service areas on a map. The housing element would stipulate that no bylaw or condition could prohibit buildings of four or fewer units in any zoning district allowing multi-unit dwellings.

An accessory unit is a permitted use in any zoning district under current law if (1) the unit is an efficiency or one-bedroom comprising not more than 30 percent of the habitable floor area of the primary unit, (2) has sufficient wastewater capacity, and (3) meets applicable setback coverage and parking requirements. A town may adopt a bylaw for accessory units that is more permissive than statutory limitations. As introduced, S. 237 would allow an accessory unit to be any size, even potentially larger than the primary unit, as long as it met bylaw requirements for single-family residences. It would not need to meet applicable setback, coverage, or parking requirements. Accessory units could no longer be reviewed as conditional uses.

A bylaw could regulate short-term rental units distinctly from residential rental units.

The draft bill as written would not allow a municipality to prohibit lots of one-quarter acre in residential districts if the lot could be connected to a public water supply. Nor could a municipality prohibit lots of one-eighth acre in residential districts served by water and wastewater systems. Duplexes would be allowed in all residential districts. Parking requirements would also be reduced on the premise that land would be available for housing that now might be dedicated to parking. (In light of changing parking requirements and proposed sharing economies, more walkable communities, or municipal parking garages, it may be time to rethink what bylaws generally require for parking.)

Although mandatory inclusionary zoning provisions are included in the bill, the administration is not supporting them, which is good news for local governments who want assistance rewriting bylaws to encourage more housing but do not need more mandates loaded on their already groaning plates.

Substantial Municipal Constraints. A municipality would not have to allow small size lots or multi-units in flood hazard or fluvial erosion areas and could file a “Substantial Municipal Constraints Report” that documents constraints on municipal infrastructure or services with the Department of Housing and Community Development – which would have repercussions for the municipality because it would be sent to all funding programs.

Zoning for Great Neighborhoods. Last year, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development published “Zoning for Great Neighborhoods” a study in six volunteer towns (Middlesex, Ludlow, Vergennes, Fairfax, Castleton, Brattleboro) whose goal was to find and eliminate regulatory barriers to providing housing close to town and activity centers. The [Congress for the New Urbanism](#), an international non-profit that champions “walkable urbanism,” and the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) are leading that study, the results of which will provide cities and towns with additional models for amending their bylaws to accommodate housing – models that will be welcomed by towns seeking to address the issue of housing where it is in severe short supply.

Incentives. Municipalities that comply with S. 237’s zoning mandates would be authorized to allow land development that is restricted by covenants, conditions, or restrictions that conflict with housing generation goals (such as those adopted by homeowner associations). It would reduce redundant state permitting for connections to municipal water and wastewater systems.

The legislature also hopes that expanded tax credits would be available to rehabilitate income-producing buildings within neighborhood development areas. Before July 1, 2021, a municipality requesting technical assistance from the regional planning commission to update bylaws providing for more dense development would receive priority technical assistance through additional funding made available to the regional commission (*not* municipality) or through Municipal Planning Grants. The municipality may also use resources developed by DHCD – but aren’t they public resources that *anyone* may use? Cities and towns adopting revised bylaws would receive priority consideration for water supply and wastewater funding, Municipal Planning and Community Development grants, and Neighborhood Development Area Historic Tax Credits, all of which have pre-existing priorities embedded in the statutes creating them.

A new housing bond would be made available to construct additional housing for very low to middle income housing up to 120 percent of area median (per affordable housing definition above) in areas targeted for growth and reinvestment. The legislation would allocate an additional \$4 million to the currently authorized \$2.5 million off the top of the property transfer tax for paying principal and interest due on that new housing debt. (The property transfer tax pays for Municipal and Regional Planning grants, Clean Water funding, Housing and Conservation Trust, General Fund and more.)

Act 250. Development in designated downtowns, designated village centers, or neighborhood development areas that meet certain density criteria, would be exempt from Act 250.

Tax Increment Financing. S.237 would extend the list of towns that are authorized to use education tax increment financing for a tax increment financing district to Bennington and Montpelier.

The Senate committee will focus on this comprehensive bill during the first part of the session. Local officials need to describe to their senators any helpful tools that would encourage housing, as passage of S.237 will have profound implications for municipal planning.

Wetlands

Last year the House and Senate agriculture committees took extensive testimony from numerous witnesses on amendments proposed by the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) regarding the regulation of farming in wetlands. Tensions between ANR and the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (AAFM) stem from conflicts over the so-called “farming exclusion” under the definition of wetlands in statute. That law excludes from ANR’s wetlands jurisdiction “areas that grow food or crops in connection with farming activities.” ANR and AAFM – as well as many conservation, farming, and other interested groups – disagree on what activities amount to “farming” and are therefore excluded for ANR’s jurisdiction.

Last session, the legislature established a Legislative Study Committee on Wetlands to recommend to the General Assembly how to update and clarify the requirements for wetlands regulation under state statute, and (hopefully) resolve the tension between the agencies. After the committee held six meetings held around the state – including in Bradford, where VLCT testified regarding municipal issues with wetland regulations –it was still unable to reach consensus on how to clarify the wetland statutes with regard to farming or any other activity in wetlands. Instead, the committee recommended that the ANR Wetlands Stakeholder Group include members of the agricultural community and be given additional time to address the legal and technical questions that are baffling the stakeholders.

Resources

- [Report of the Legislative Study Committee on Wetlands](#) – letter to Senate Pro Tem Tim Ashe and Speaker of the House Mitzi Johnson

Emergency Medical Services in Crisis

As we wrote in our [Legislative Preview](#), fire, police, and emergency medical services (EMS) agencies across the country are struggling. First responders continue to risk their mental and physical well-being every day to help keep us safe. Vermonters expect first responders will be available to them, yet often take those services for granted. We can no longer ignore the problems that our public safety agencies and personnel face. The legislature needs to address the long-term viability of the entire public safety community, as the demands put on them become more complicated and expensive every year. Comprehensive support for emergency services must be written into law.

On Wednesday, the Senate Government Operations Committee received the Emergency Medical Service Advisory Committee 2019 [Report](#) and heard testimony from the advisory committee chair, Drew Hazelton, Chief of Operations of Rescue, Inc. in Brattleboro. The report highlighted several systemic problems brewing in the EMS system:

- Calls for services increased 5.8 percent between 2017 and 2018
- 80 percent of EMS providers reported difficulty recruiting and retaining personnel
- Access to education and testing in Vermont was lacking and inconvenient
- Increased reliance on mutual aid put additional strain on already fragile system
- State funding for education and training was practically non-existent – local EMS agencies must fundraise, pay out-of-pocket expenses, and rely on municipal budgets to pay for education, training, and licensure
- Mental health issues and suicide rates of EMS personnel continued to rise, with little to no support services to contact for help
- Reimbursement rates did not cover the service delivery costs, thereby increasing the cost-shift to other areas such as municipal budgets
- One-half of EMS service providers reported increased operational burdens to staff and budgets due to new statewide credentialing requirements; 30 percent of them reported loss of personnel as a direct result of a 2017 rule change.

There is no easy solution to these complex problems, but changes to the system must be explored in 2020. The Senate Government Operations Committee has promised to address the EMS crisis this year and will continue to solicit testimony over the coming weeks.

Therefore, if you are affiliated with a local service provider and are willing to contribute to this vital ongoing discussion through written or in-person testimony to the legislature, please contact gzakov@vlct.org.

New Bills

BILL NUMBER	SUMMARY OF NEW BILLS	CURRENT LOCATION
H.561	Would extend by one year the date by which any person who generates food residuals must separate food residuals from solid waste and manage the food residuals on his or her or its property or arrange for the transfer of the food residuals to a facility that manages food residuals.	House Nat. Resources, Fish, and Wildlife
H.562	Would clarify that land underlying a solar array that is 0.1 of an acre or less can remain in current use as agricultural land, assuming it already meets all other requirements.	House Agriculture and Forestry
H.566	Would provide that in any arbitration of a dispute related to employment substantially located in Vermont employers shall bear the burden of proof for all contested issues of law or of fact.	House Gen., Housing, and Military Affairs
H.567	Would allow municipalities to adopt ordinances regulating short-term rentals.	House Gen., Housing, and Military Affairs
H.570	Would require the Commissioner of Public Service to create an online database for residential and commercial buildings and certifications of compliance with energy standards.	House Energy and Technology
H.571	Would enable a health care provider to order a bloodborne pathogen test if a person assisting during an emergency is exposed to another person's blood or bodily fluids.	House Human Services
H.572	Would allow the Health Commissioner to appoint additional members to the Maternal Mortality Review Panel, enable the Department of Health to enter into reciprocal agreements with other states that have maternal mortality review panels, and enable the panel to acquire necessary public safety or police records related to a maternal death.	House Human Services
H.574	Would exempt a wrecker towing a disabled vehicle from the state's gross weight limits on highways in certain instances.	House Transportation
H.577	Would amend the definition of "livable wage" so that it is based on a family with two adult wage earners, two children, and no employer-sponsored health insurance.	House Gen., Housing, and Military Affairs
H.583	Would increase the handling fee paid to persons who redeem beverage containers to five cents per container redeemed for brands that are not part of a commingling program.	House Nat. Resources, Fish, and Wildlife
H.584	Would require the seller of real property to disclose to the buyer prior to the conveyance whether water within a five-mile radius of the property tested positive for cyanobacteria in the five years prior to the conveyance.	House Nat. Resources, Fish, and Wildlife
H.586	Would allow Vermonters to choose their manner of electricity generation by owning solar generation as supported by the continuation and stability of net metering.	House Energy and Technology
H.590	Would require the Agency of Transportation to issue a FY2020 Town Highway Structures grant to the Town of Pittsford.	House Transportation
H.591	Would further restrict the release of personal information by state agencies and departments, including the Department of Motor Vehicles, and municipalities.	House Judiciary
H.597	Would expedite the process for a municipality to conduct a tax sale of a mobile home.	House Gen., Housing, and Military Affairs
H.599	Would permit law enforcement officers to use drones for criminal justice purposes, provided that the use is subject to the same rules and regulations that apply to law enforcement's use of other technologies.	House Government Operations

BILL NUMBER	SUMMARY OF NEW BILLS	CURRENT LOCATION
H.600	Would require that under certain circumstances firearms dealers file Suspicious Activity Reports with the Commissioner of Public Safety regarding persons who have purchased, attempted to purchase, or inquired about purchasing firearms.	House Judiciary
H.602	Would require a law enforcement officer to obtain a warrant before acquiring information from a home surveillance system unless the homeowner consents.	House Judiciary
H.604	Would support Vermont renewable energy companies and local generation through an expansion of incentives.	House Energy and Technology
H.606	Would amend the laws governing storage units in Vermont.	House Commerce and Econ. Development
H.608	Would allow a school director or spouse of a school director to also hold office as an assistant town treasurer if the school district budgets independently from the town and the school district is audited by an independent public accountant.	House Government Operations
H.609	Would authorize a newly formed district under Act 46 to amend its articles of agreement to equalize homestead property tax rates and household income percentage based on the level of capital debt contributed to the district by each town associated with a district that merged into the newly formed district.	House Ways and Means
H.610	Would eliminate the “default proceed” process created in federal firearms background check law by prohibiting the transfer of a firearm unless the National Instant Criminal Background Check System has affirmatively determined that the transferee is not prohibited from possessing firearms; and require that relief from abuse orders include provisions requiring the defendant to relinquish his or her firearms until the order expires, prohibiting the defendant from residing at a residence where firearms are present, and informing the defendant that he or she is prohibited from possessing firearms until the order expires.	House Judiciary
H.612	Would create a Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program within the departments of Labor and of Taxes that would be funded by contributions from employers and employees. Would amend Vermont’s existing Parental and Family Leave Act to make it applicable to additional employers and provide up to eight weeks of leave from employment for a victim of domestic or sexual violence.	House Gen., Housing, and Military Affairs
H.615	Would require a unified union school district to post the time, place, and purpose of a regular or special meeting of the district’s board in each town associated with the school districts that merged to create the unified union school district at least 24 hours before the meeting.	House Education
H.631	Would specify when an employer may require an employee who has been medically cleared to return to work to engage in a work search and clarify the requirements for providing dependency benefits and cost of living adjustments to compensation paid to an employee with a temporary partial disability.	House Commerce and Econ. Development
H.633	Would give Act 250 jurisdiction over development and subdivision above the elevation of 1,500 feet.	House Nat. Resources, Fish, and Wildlife
H.634	Would amend the membership of the State Ethics Commission and its authority as it relates to staffing, guidance, and advisory opinions, and require it to propose to the General Assembly a State Code of Ethics that could be enacted into law.	House Government Operations
H.637	Would permit a school board to, without authorization from the voters, create a stabilization fund from surplus that would be available for uses as determined by the board in its discretion.	House Education
H.640	Would require the disclosure of certain information concerning applications and incentives under the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive program.	House Commerce and Econ. Development
H.641	Would authorize an incentive award under the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive program to be made as a forgivable loan.	House Commerce and Econ. Development
H.642	Would allow a municipality to use tax increment financing to develop a project.	House Commerce and Econ. Development
H.645	Would make technical changes to Vermont’s wage and hour laws in order to modernize the statutory language and to repeal or amend obsolete provisions.	House Gen., Housing, and Military Affairs

BILL NUMBER	SUMMARY OF NEW BILLS	CURRENT LOCATION
H.646	Would require a study of altering or eliminating the tipped wage and the subminimum wage for students and a study of the wage and hour laws for agricultural workers. Would also make technical changes to Vermont's wage and hour laws in order to modernize the statutory language and to repeal or amend obsolete provisions.	House Gen., Housing, and Military Affairs
H.649	Would require the state and members of the Vermont Employees' Retirement System, and the state and members of the State Teachers' Retirement System of Vermont, to share equally the costs of operating both systems. Would also require that member contribution rates in the Vermont Employees' Retirement System and the State Teachers' Retirement System of Vermont be adjusted biennially to pay for members' 50% share of operating expenses.	House Government Operations
S.179	Would increase parity between employees and self-employed persons in terms of how contributions to tax-deferred retirement programs affect eligibility for the homestead property tax income sensitivity adjustment or renter rebate.	Senate Finance
S.182	Would require the Commissioner of Public Safety to propose a plan to elevate the Department of Public Safety to the Agency of Public Safety in accordance with a potential structure for the agency specified in this bill.	Senate Government Operations
S.185	Would require the Department of Health to develop and adopt a statewide climate change response plan. Would require regional planning commissions to develop a communications plan for the purpose of mitigating and responding to climate change related public health risks.	Senate Health and Welfare
S.189	Would provide the same monetary benefit available to survivors of firefighters and emergency personnel to survivors of any public employee killed in the line of duty.	Senate Government Operations
S.191	Would clarify the requirements of a tax increment financing district.	Senate Finance
S.193	Would impose an administrative penalty on telecommunications providers who violate outage reporting rules adopted by the Enhanced 911 Board.	Senate Finance
S.198	Would require the State Ethics Commission to propose to the General Assembly a State Code of Ethics enforceable by the Commission.	Senate Government Operations
S.199	Would allow for the permanent disposition of human remains by natural organic reduction. Would give operators of natural organic reduction facilities the same rights and responsibilities as the operators of crematory establishments.	Senate Health and Welfare
S.200	Would expand the definition of housesite to allow the Director of Property Valuation and Review to permit multiple dwelling housesites without requiring a two acres lot for each dwelling.	Senate Finance
S.201	Would require that Vermonters be personally responsible for their greenhouse gas emissions.	Senate Natural Resources and Energy
S.214	Would establish a State Cannabis Program at the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to regulate the cultivation, processing, and sale of cannabis and cannabis products in Vermont.	Senate Agriculture
S.216	Would allow municipal employers of any size to provide health insurance to their employees through the Vermont Health Benefit Exchange or through a reflective health benefit plan.	Senate Finance
S.219	Would impose additional review on the approval of state grant funding to law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance with race data reporting requirements.	Senate Appropriations
S.220	Would require specified professionals to obtain education on the state's energy goals as a condition of initial licensure and license renewal.	Senate Government Operations
S.221	Would transfer regulatory jurisdiction over the state aquatic nuisance control program from the Department of Environmental Conservation to the Department of Fish and Wildlife.	Senate Natural Resources and Energy
S.222	Would require the Commissioner of Health to adopt by rule a procedure that a town health officer and other town officials must adhere to when a person is bitten by an unimmunized dog.	Senate Health and Welfare
S.229	Would require the Tax Department to report on the aggregated amount of revenue raised from the transfer of controlling interests under the property transfer tax.	Senate Finance

BILL NUMBER	SUMMARY OF NEW BILLS	CURRENT LOCATION
S.230	Would establish a working group to propose to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee a statewide policy on law enforcement confiscation of personal property.	Senate Judiciary
S.237	Would adopt miscellaneous provisions to promote access to affordable housing.	Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
S.254	Would require public employers to provide employee contact information in relation to an effort to organize a collective bargaining unit; provide for the automatic deduction of public employee union dues from members' paychecks; and permit unions to meet with new public employees to provide them with information regarding union membership.	Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

Please note! VLCT's *Weekly Legislative Report* is now an all-digital publication with this exception: Readers without reliable internet service can continue to receive paper copies **if they notify us at mailings@vlct.org**. Thanks for reading!