

MARCH 1, 2022

TOWN MEETING REPORT 2022

State Representative Tanya Vyhovsky Chittenden 8-1

Town Meeting Update

This session has continued to be unpredictable. We began the session unexpectedly remote because of the Omicron variant ravaging Vermont. Sky rocketing case counts, hospitalizations and deaths led the legislature to pivot to remote and a slow, data informed move towards more in person work as numbers fell. This was not only to protect legislators but also our communities. We are now in a hybrid format that has been working better than I would have expected.

I was able to head to the Statehouse to work a couple of weeks ago just in time to present the 73 page Springfield charter change on the floor. It has been really wonderful to finally meet some of my colleagues in 3 dimensions. Even Laika got to explore the Statehouse!

Town meeting voting in Essex was again be done by universal mail balloting. Towns who use an Australian ballot were granted the authority to mail ballots permanently when the legislature updated voting rules last year.

There is a lot of work still to be done. I am finding this second year of the biennium to be moving much faster and with a much higher level of intensity.



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Government Operations Update

Government Operations oversees a lot of legislation; from policing and elections, to municipal charters and pensions. We have moved the following bills:

- **Act 79 (S.223) an act relating to authorizing temporary elections procedures for annual meetings in the year 2022**

Fast tracked so municipalities could change town meeting day in light of the ongoing pandemic

- **Act 78 (S.222) an act relating to authorizing temporary Open Meeting Law procedures in response to COVID-19**

Granted allowances for all virtual town meetings and clarified open meeting law if no physical location is provided.

- **H.708 an act relating to the approval of an amendment to the charter of the City of Burlington**

This widely supported Burlington charter change prevents tenants from being evicted for no cause.

- **Act 80 (H. 589) an act relating to reapportioning the initial districts of the House of Representatives**

This was the first step of the process of house redistricting. This proposed the initial district plans for BCAs to respond to.

- **H.491 an act relating to the creation of the City of Essex Junction and the adoption of the City charter**

Essex charter change that will allow the village of Essex Junction to become the City of Essex Junction, its own stand alone municipality.

- **H.448 an act relating to the approval of amendment to the charter of Burlington.**

Burlington voted on four charter amendments in March of 2021 and they were split into four separate bills. This amendment is enabling language to allow the city of Burlington to incentivize sustainable thermal energy.



- **H.447 an act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Springfield**

This 87 page charter amendment and update was my first in person bill report. Much of it consisted of updates to language and modernization of policy - like the requirement to put information on the town website, as this charter had not been updated since 1985. The biggest substantive change was to allow Springfield to draft ordinances to deal with blighted and abandoned properties.

- **H.680 an act relating to obtaining a marriage license in any town in Vermont**

Grants Vermonters the ability to get a marriage license at any town clerk's office.

- **H.572 An act relating to the retirement allowance for interim educators**

Allows retired educators to return to the workforce to fill critical vacancies without losing their pension.

We have also looked at several other committees bills that had aspects important to Government Operations. We heard from House Judiciary on H.546 An act relating to racial justice statistics, that would create a division to take a deeper dive into the statistics collected in the state. We worked with House Natural Resources to work on H.492 An act relating to the structure of the Natural Resources Board.

AFTER THE RECESS

Committee Work

General Assembly

H. 697 an act related to eligibility of reserve forestland for enrollment in the Use Value Appraisal Program

H. 517 an act relating to the Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program

H. 679 An act relating to fiscal year 2022 budget adjustments.

Transportation modernization

Telehealth updates, moving forward

Redistricting

We will complete our work on the redistricting map and bill after the recess to get it on the Governor's desk in April to allow for people to begin preparing for the 2022 election cycle.

H. 661 an act relating to licensure of mental health professionals

makes some small changes in mental health licensure law to allow for synchronous online CEU credits, to carve out 3 anti oppressive practice CEUs, and sets up a study to identify and rectify the barriers to mental health practice for underrepresented people in the mental health professions.

S.171 an act relating to adoption of a State code of ethics developing a statewide ethics policy for elected officials.

State Employees and Teachers Pensions

Continuing on the work done in the summer task force we will make investments in the teacher and state employee pension funds as well as some structural changes to secure these systems.

Policing

A small subset of Government Operations committee members are working on a project around policing data.

And more after crossover depending on what comes from the senate!





PRIORITIES, ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

Ongoing Priorities

COVID Recovery - COVID has made so many issues in our state worse. I am committed to investing federal and state dollars in those who need it most to build a stronger and more resilient Vermont.

Public Safety - in order to achieve true public safety we need to change the way we view this to be ensuring that all of our community members have their needs met and know that they are welcome and safe in our community. I will be working with stakeholders over the summer and fall to build towards investments in housing, mental health, education and in police accountability.

Transforming Systems - H.388 and act relating to education funding not reliant on property taxes, H.364 an act relating to privatization contracts. S.148/H.651 an act relating to environmental justice in Vermont

Medical Access - this pandemic has made it quite clear that our current systems cannot continue. I have proposed H.658 to create a single payer system in Vermont and H.659 to allow non-surgical gender affirming care for trans youth that cannot get parental consent.

2021 Community Conversations

Please join us on Zoom during the legislative session for monthly updates on bills, committee work, caucus activities & more. We welcome your concerns, questions and a spirit of open, respectful dialogue. A link will be provided before the meeting.

Sat. March 19th from 9:00 AM

Wed. April 13, 7:00 PM

Sun. May 15, 2:00 PM

Sat. June 11, 9:00 AM

I am always happy to hear from you, it is really my favorite part of this work.
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You can sign up for my email list at
tanyavforvt.com