

# MARCH 2025 MID-SESSION REPORT

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# SENATE MID-SESSION UPDATE

These past few months in Montpelier have been largely focused on tackling education affordability and funding, while also making sure that we are making headway on the pressing issues under each Senate committee's jurisdiction. While waiting for the Governor to release the details of his plan to transform public education in Vermont, which unfortunately did not get released in detail until Thursday, 2/27, my colleagues and I worked to move forward evidence-based solutions that address the property tax crisis without completely deconstructing the current public education system.

In order to give immediate property tax relief to moderate and middle income Vermonters, I have put forward bill S.104 that would increase the income sensitivity guidelines for property tax relief for the next fiscal year and then move to an income-based education tax in fiscal year 2027. After decades of regressive taxes that have middle income earners paying the highest percentage of their income to school taxes and the highest income earners paying the lowest, it's long past time to flip that on its head and make sure those with the most capacity to pay are asked to pay their fair share.

At a time when public education is under attack, I am so grateful for all of the advocacy from my constituents to keep the "public" in public education. While the recent confirmation of Zoie Saunders as the Secretary of Education was disappointing after I voted against it twice, the fight continues.

## CALL FOR ACTION

With the Governor's recent veto of the mid-year budget adjustment passed by the House and Senate, roughly 1600 families, including over 400 children, and hundreds of seniors and people with disabilities, are set to lose their shelter in motels by April 1. I'm urging everyone to reach out to their Senators and Representatives and tell them to overturn the veto! Stay tuned for more ways to advocate for their safety.



# COMMITTEE UPDATES

## **Judiciary:**

In Judiciary, we have passed some good bills out of committee, including S.7 that would provide the full amount of auto insurance protection that people pay for when they are involved in an accident; S.9 that expands access to after-hours orders of protection for sexual assault victims, and S.44 that requires individual state entities to get the approval of the Governor and Attorney General before entering into federal immigration contracts. In the later half of the session, we will need to continue to organize against the Governor's war on crime bill beginning Tuesday, 3/18 with the push to repeal "Raise the Age". This is a common sense public safety policy that was passed in 2018 to provide emerging adults with the care they need to become safe and productive members of our society. I will be speaking at a press conference about keeping this important policy on Wednesday at 11 am.

## **Government Operations:**

In Government Operations we have passed out S.56 to begin the work of establishing the Office of New Americans to support our New American community members more comprehensively and cohesively, S.59 to make small tweaks and updates to open meeting law, and S.23 to put some minor guardrails on the use of deepfakes in elections. While I advocated for stronger protections, this is a start in a better direction. In the next half of the session we will be looking at state worker survivor benefits, state advertising, and the charters Vermont towns have sent our way.

# UPCOMING APRIL EVENT

## **Community Town Hall: Protecting Personal Data**

When: Wednesday, April 2nd 6:30pm – 8:00pm

Where: Essex High School Auditorium, 2 Educational Dr, Essex Junction VT

Or join us online at [tinyurl.com/TownHallVT](https://tinyurl.com/TownHallVT)

As our lives become increasingly intertwined with technology, the need to protect our personal data is more urgent than ever, especially for vulnerable kids and teens whose lives are exposed online. With the recent concerns about data mismanagement at the federal level, we invite you to come together and tackle this issue as a community.

Join your neighbors and elected officials for a Community Town Hall where we'll discuss concerns about data privacy, answer questions, and discuss how we can work together to advocate for better data protection policies.

# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## My legislative priorities continue to be:

- **Equitable and Sustainable Education:** providing a progressively-funded, high-quality public education for all Vermont families
- **Economic Justice:** making Vermont a place people can afford to live through safe affordable housing, a livable fair minimum wage, fair labor practices, paid family and medical leave, and universal single-payer healthcare
- **Protecting the Most Vulnerable Vermonters:** centering the people with the least resources and access to power, fighting to ensure their basic needs are met and safety and civil rights are protected
- **Lowering the Cost of Living through Progressive Taxation:** making sure the burden for funding community needs does not disproportionately fall on low and middle income Vermonters.



## BILLS SPONSORED BY SEN. VYHOVSKY

### **S.1 Dr. Dynasaur Health Insurance for All**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

*Summary:* This bill proposes to implement universal healthcare by increasing access for all Vermonters to Dr. Dynasaur, the state's health insurance that is currently available to children and teenagers under age 19.

### **S.8 Dr. Dynasaur age expansion (19-26)**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Finance

*Summary:* This bill proposes to increase the age of eligibility for Dr. Dynasaur from under 19 years old to 26 years old and under.

### **S.25 Hospital Staffing and Compensation**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

*Summary:* This bill requires that the ratio of

hospital administrative staff to direct services staff matches national averages and that executive compensation is no more than 10 times more than that of the lowest-paid direct service employees.

### **S.54 Decriminalization of Voluntary Sex Work**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Judiciary

*Summary:* This bill proposes to repeal the over 100 year old laws that criminalize consensual sex work while retaining the laws that prohibit human sex trafficking.

### **S.62 Accountability for Privatized Gov. Contracts**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Government Operations

*Summary:* This bill increases the restrictions that allow the executive branch to sign contracts with private contractors in order to protect the work of state employees.



# BILLS – CONTINUED

## **S.81 Prohibition on Municipal Mask Bans**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Government Operations

*Summary:* This bill proposes to prohibit any municipality from adopting an ordinance, resolution, rule, or other regulation that would limit or prohibit the use of hygienic face masks.

## **S.83 Protections from Medical Debt**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Judiciary

*Summary:* This bill proposes to prohibit medical debt from being reported to credit agencies, credit agencies from using medical debt to determine credit scores, and courts from ordering the usage of personal property and wages to pay off medical debt.

## **S.89 Expansion of State Survivor Benefits**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Government Operations

*Summary:* This bill proposes to extend survivors' benefits to survivors of law enforcement officers, Department of Corrections employees, Family Services Division employees, and employees in State-operated therapeutic community residences or inpatient psychiatric units who die while in the line of duty or from occupation-related illness.

## **S.90 Protection from Unnecessary Background and Credit Checks from Prospective Employers**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

*Summary:* This bill will prohibit employers from conducting criminal history checks, credit checks, and drug testing in relation to employees and prospective employees unless there is a direct relationship to the job.

## **S.91 Expansion of Tenants Rights**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

*Summary:* This bill proposes to increase the rights of tenants in Vermont and to create the Office of Tenant's Rights Advocate.

## **S.94 Duties of the Attorney General's Office**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Judiciary

*Summary:* This bill proposes to designate the Attorney General as the primary enforcement authority for certain criminal offenses.

## **S.97 Law Enforcement Oversight**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Government Operations

*Summary:* This bill proposes to create municipal and regional civilian oversight bodies to receive, investigate, and address complaints against a law enforcement agency or officer within their jurisdiction.

## **S.98 Changes to Election Law**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Government Operations

*Summary:* This bill proposes to expand voter registration, amend the threshold for campaign finance reporting, and establish the Democracy Certificate Program.

## **S.104 Income-Based Education Funding**

*Committee:* Senate Committee on Finance

*Summary:* This bill proposes to increase the thresholds for income sensitivity for property tax relief in fy26 and move to an income-based tax system to fund public education in fy27.