

FEBRUARY 26, 2026

TOWN MEETING REPORT 2026

Senator Tanya Vyhovsky, Chittenden Central District



Town Meeting Update

The first half of this session has been a whirlwind; there is a lot of chaos and unknowns that we are working with as we try to make Vermont more affordable, protect the most vulnerable, and build a sustainable economy. In the unprecedented time we are experiencing in politics, it is more important than ever to be engaged and to vote. With town meeting coming up, our local elections and ballot initiatives will be up for a vote, and these decisions have the most impact on our daily lives. No matter how you vote, I strongly urge you to participate in your local elections. Municipal elections have some of the lowest turnouts of any election. It is too late to request a ballot online, but you can vote at your town clerk's office or at the polls on Tuesday. When the legislature returns to the statehouse on March 10th, it will be crossover week, which is the deadline for all policy bills to be on their way to the other chamber. If there are bills or issues of particular importance to you, please reach out and let me know.

Chittenden Central District Polling Locations:
<https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/voters/polling-places/>



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Senate Judiciary Committee

Senate Judiciary is a busy committee that navigates all things criminal justice-related. We were tasked with holding hearings for the Vermont Supreme Court nominees. It was historic to have two Supreme Court spots open to fill at the same time. The Supreme Court can shape the legal landscape for generations, and the committee spent the time and diligence that was needed to interview and hear from the appointees and those who had worked with them. We have been grappling with complex and difficult issues and, most importantly, the ways the state can protect people from Federal Overreach.

We have passed 3 bills out of committee, and are continuing our work to pass more bills out before the crossover deadline.

- **S.208 - An act relating to standards for law enforcement identification**

This bill requires all law enforcement operating in the state of Vermont to identify themselves with the name of their agency and their badge number or officer's name. It also prohibits the use of masks when a law enforcement officer is working with the public. There are some allowances made because we understand that there are legitimate reasons to wear a mask while policing in Vermont. The intention is to prohibit masks for the purpose of disguising themselves and to ensure that people in Vermont know when they are interacting with legitimate law enforcement. This bill is now in the House Judiciary Committee.

- **S.209 - An act relating to prohibiting civil arrest in sensitive locations**

This prohibits warrant-less civil arrest in sensitive locations. The list was determined as those places where people must go to carry out their daily lives - schools, childcare facilities, medical facilities, social service organizations, and churches. Unfortunately, the majority of the Senate Judiciary Committee chose to remove government buildings from this list despite having held up to court challenge in other states nearly a decade ago.



- **S.183 - An act relating to home improvement and land improvement fraud**

This seeks to make the laws surrounding home improvement fraud clearer and responds to a Supreme Court ruling that disallowed certain aspects of a previous Vermont Law. In testimony, what became clear is that Vermont's complete lack of rules and regulations for contractors is a challenge for both contractors and people seeking their services.

- **S.193 - An act relating to establishing a forensic facility for certain criminal justice-involved persons**

S.193 seeks to close a gap in our treatment system for certain people who have been deemed incompetent to stand trial or not guilty by reason of insanity. This is an important gap to close; however, as S.193 is drafted, I have serious constitutional concerns. We will continue our work on this after the recess.

- **PR 4 - Declaration of rights; government for the people; equality of rights**

Prop 4 is known as the Equal Rights Amendment to the Vermont Constitution. It has passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee for the second time and will be up for action on the Senate floor on Wednesday, March 11. Constitutional amendments must pass in two subsequent biennia before being placed on the November Ballot for the voters to approve.

Senate Government Operations

Government Operations oversees everything that has to do with state government, from policing and elections to municipal charters and pensions. This is a lively and very active committee.

We began with a refresh of the many agencies and departments that this committee works with to help bring our new committee member up to speed.

- **S.324 - An act relating to legislative operations and government accountability**

Based on the work from 2023 in the summer government accountability committee, S.324 is a committee bill to ensure that the state government is effective, efficient, and accountable. We will begin our in depth work on this bill after crossover.

- **S.23 - An act relating to the use of synthetic media in elections**

This was a tricky bill as we are balancing the state's interest in protecting elections from fraudulent AI-generated media and First Amendment rights. This bill went through many iterations and a conference committee before passing. The bill does not ban the use of fraudulent AI-generated media in elections, but in a narrow set of instances, it would require a disclosure indicating that the media is fraudulent and AI-generated. This is a small step towards reining in the harms done to the trust in elections due to the use of AI.

- **S.291 - An act relating to travel disclosures for legislators and certain executive officers**

Vermont has been making small strides forward in the area of Government Ethics. We have a lot more work to do. S.291 proposes to require that elected officials and departmental leadership disclose when they travel in their official capacity, and it is not paid for by the state or federal government. It is not a prohibition on this, but is a move towards greater transparency. Many other states already require these disclosures, and this will be one more small step towards greater transparency and ethics.



- **S.89 - An act relating to expanding survivor benefits**

Vermont currently has a very limited survivor death benefit program for when someone in a dangerous public service role dies on the job. S.89 would expand this benefit to be more fair and equitable and acknowledge the many dangerous public service jobs, and provide a small benefit to the public servant's family should they be killed on the job.

- **S.298 - An act relating to the Voting Rights Act**

Generally we do not work on election policy in an election year. We are taking up this bill to protect Vermont elections as they are currently administered, should there be major voting rule changes at the federal level. This codifies into Vermont State Law aspects of the Federal Voting Rights Act to ensure people's right to vote if those laws are repealed federally.

OTHER SENATE WORK

Upcoming Events

Essex Town Showcase and Soup Night
March 2, 5:00pm
Essex Middle School

Winooski Historical Society Presentation
March 8, 3:00 - 4:00pm
Winooski Senior Center

Know Your Rights and De-escalation
March 24, 5:30-7:00pm
Crossett Brook Middle School, Duxbury
[https://www.mobilize.us/
indivisiblechamplainislands/
event/910096/](https://www.mobilize.us/indivisiblechamplainislands/event/910096/)



Priority Work

Fair Taxation

S.282 and S.104

Protecting Tenants

S.91

Fair Elections and Corporate Regulation

S.322

Protecting Vermonters

S.302, S.227, S.285, S.239, S.91

Protecting Public Education

S.244, S.271

BUDGETING

CALL TO ACTION

The speaker's office and the Governor need to hear from you to get protections against warrantless arrest in government buildings back into S.209

If there are issues of particular concern to you, please reach out,
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