



Week 4 - January 31, 2020

THE VERMONT **STATEHOUSE INSIDER**

Weekly politics & analysis
of the issues in Montpelier



LICENSE TO KILL

Week four of the 2020 legislative session brought the second annual NEK (Northeast Kingdom) Day to the statehouse. More than 100 NEK residents, business owners, artists and entrepreneurs came to Montpelier to talk to legislators about the opportunities and challenges facing the region and to encourage a variety of rural economic development strategies. The top issues that were highlighted included broadband, Act 250, the creative economy and outdoor recreation.

Two major bills passed the legislature and made their way to the governor's desk

this week. On Monday, H.107, the paid family leave bill, was delivered to the governor. On Friday Governor Scott, as expected, vetoed the bill. It is unclear whether the House has enough votes to override his veto. On Wednesday the Senate gave final approval to S.23, a bill that would raise the minimum wage to \$11.75 next year and \$12.55 in 2022. The bill is headed to the governor's desk. During his first weekly press conference of the session on Thursday, Governor Scott expressed concerns about the impact of the bill on employers, especially those in rural parts of the state. If the governor vetoes S.23 there do not appear to be enough votes in the House to override his veto.

On Friday afternoon the House Government Operations Committee advanced the newest version of S.54, the bill that establishes a regulated market for cannabis. S.54 now heads to the House Ways and Means Committee, where it is expected to receive approval before moving on to a vote on the House floor. It appears the bill has enough support in the House to pass. The House and Senate would then work to hash out their respective versions of the bill in a committee of conference.

The House Judiciary Committee continued taking testimony on H.610, a bill that would require subjects of a restraining order to surrender their firearms. While there was an activist presence in the building from both sides of the gun debate, it was notably minimal compared to past sessions. The committee will continue hearing from witnesses and stakeholders next week.

Mental Health Advocacy Day, held on Wednesday, highlighted the need for more investment in the state's mental healthcare system. Vermonters from around the state came to the statehouse to meet with their lawmakers, share experiences and advocate for solutions. Lawmakers and the administration continue to grapple with how to increase the number of mental health beds and services throughout the continuum of care and ensure patients are receiving the appropriate level of care in the appropriate setting.

S.135 - DEALER FINANCING

VADA member Mitchell Jay and VADA lobbyist Clare Buckley testified on Friday in the Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee regarding S.135, the dealer financing bill. Chair Michael Sirotkin, D-Chittenden, has made it clear he wants to pass a bill that requires a dealer to give a consumer a copy of his or her credit application at the time a sales contract or lease agreement is signed. Chair Sirotkin asked VADA to work with Vermont Legal Aid on a draft that accomplished this or he would come up with one. That draft was presented to the committee along with the areas that VADA and Vermont Legal Aid could not agree. Mitchell fielded questions about the mechanics of dealer financing and the credit application process. Mitchell also made the case that the requirement to give a consumer a copy of their credit application will open up consumers to identity theft but the committee dismissed that argument saying consumers should be responsible for themselves. It is likely that the committee will take the draft and make it their own. It seems probable that the committee will want this new requirement to apply to motor vehicle dealers only and not all creditors. The committee will likely take the bill up again but no hearing has been scheduled as of this writing.

H.903 - DEALER FINANCING

[H.903](#) is the House version of S.135 and is co-sponsored by Rep. Bill Lippert, D-Hinesburg, and Rep. Brian Smith, R-Derby, who has been an auto dealer for decades. H.903 proposes to require a dealer to give consumers a copy of their credit application at the time a motor vehicle is sold, limit a dealer's ability to markup a wholesale interest rate, put a cap on doc fees and impose enhanced penalties if the provisions of the bill are violated. The bill is up for an introductory hearing in the House Transportation Committee on Thursday, February 6.