

Week 12 - April 2, 2021

THE VERMONT **STATEHOUSE INSIDER**

Weekly politics & analysis
of the issues in Montpelier



ZOOMED OUT

House Speaker Jill Krowinski, D-Burlington, announced on Friday the decision to table a proposal to address the unfunded liability in the state pension system. The proposal, which was being considered in the House Government Operations committee, included a one-time state investment of \$150 million and reduced benefits and raised costs for teachers and public employees paying into the fund.

The pension system is estimated to have an unfunded liability of about \$3 billion and pressure has been mounting for the state to address the shortfall. But the House proposal was met with stiff opposition from teachers, public employees and unions, and legislators of all parties have been receiving increasingly high volumes of communication from constituents opposing the plan.

With increasing concern among Democratic lawmakers in the House, and signals the Senate would not support the draft plan, Krowinski opted to shelve the proposal and create a task force of stakeholders to develop options for a path forward. Krowinski said on Friday the House would still consider legislation to revamp the pension system's governance structure to better oversee the fund and improve returns.

On Thursday, the Vermont House unanimously supported [J.R.H.2](#), a joint resolution with the Senate apologizing and expressing regret to individual Vermonters, their families and descendants who were harmed as a result of state-sanctioned eugenics policies and practices. The resolution calls out state-sanctioned eugenics policies which were implemented and practiced in Vermont throughout the 19th century. These practices targeted Vermonters of Native American Indian heritage, including French-Indian and Abenaki families, persons of mixed ethnicity and French-Canadian heritage, as well as persons with disabilities, among others.

On Tuesday the Senate Rules Committee voted out Proposition 2, which would remove references to slavery from the Vermont constitution and Proposition 5, which would enshrine people's personal reproductive rights in the constitution. Both constitutional amendments will sit on the Senate Calendar until April 9, when the body is expected to approve them. Once approved by the Senate, they will go to the House and if passed, to the voters for a referendum. Prop 2 and Prop 5 were introduced and passed by the Vermont legislature in 2019. Amending the constitution is a four-year process.

House committees spent the bulk of the week working on Senate bills and Senate committees did the same with House bills. The House Appropriations Committee finalized a strike-all amendment to H.315, the expedited COVID-19 relief bill, and if it is approved by the House, the Senate is expected to concur early next week in hopes of getting it to the governor's desk as quickly as possible. The Senate Appropriations Committee spent the week taking testimony on H.439, the FY2022 budget. The Scott administration is expected to unveil its updated budget proposal in the near future. The late-session budget proposal will address federal funds that were made available as a result of the American Rescue Plan Act, which passed Congress in the middle of March.

DIRECT TO CONSUMER MOTOR VEHICLE SALES (S.47)

This week the House Transportation Committee took testimony on [S.47](#), the bill that proposes to allow a “non-franchised zero emissions motor vehicle manufacturer” to be a registered dealer with the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles to sell vehicles directly to Vermonters and directly own and operate a warranty and service center in Vermont. The committee heard from DMV Commissioner Wanda Minoli who said the department is willing to license non-franchised zero emissions motor vehicle manufacturers as dealers and DMV supports the Senate-passed bill. Costa Pappis at AOT provided a [summary of the Direct to Consumer Motor Vehicle Sales report](#) that the agency completed last summer. During committee discussion of the bill, one committee member from Burlington commented that 20 constituents contacted her in support of the bill because they want to get their Teslas serviced in Vermont. The committee discussed adding S.47 to the DMV Miscellaneous Bill (S.86) that already passed the Senate. VADA has been asked to testify on S.47 on Tuesday, 4/6.

TRANSPORTATION BILL

This week the Senate Transportation Committee started taking testimony on H.433, An act relating to the Transportation Program and miscellaneous changes to laws related to transportation. [Click here](#) to see the full text of H.433. The committee received proposed amendments from the Agency of Transportation regarding the new PEV incentive program and a new requirement that AOT perform a “Transportation Equity Framework” analysis and report back to lawmakers, among other things. [Click here](#) to see the AOT amendments.

NEW AND USED CAR AND TRUCK "DEALER" BILL

[H.291](#), An act relating to dealers in new or used cars or motor trucks, proposes to amend the definition of “dealer” in new or used cars or trucks to include dealers that engage in total retail sales of \$75,000 or more in the last year or \$150,000 or more in the last two years. Rep. Curt McCormack, D-Burlington, sponsored the bill at the request of a constituent who doesn’t sell the 12 or more vehicles per year

required to be a dealer in the existing statute. This person sells only a few, very expensive vehicles. Rep. McCormack reported to the committee this week that his constituent no longer wanted to pursue this option of getting dealer plates so Rep. McCormack is no longer pursuing the bill.