

Week 18 - May 13, 2022

THE VERMONT STATEHOUSE INSIDER

Weekly politics & analysis
of the issues in Montpelier



SINE DIE

The Vermont legislature adjourned *sine die* on Thursday evening after a whirlwind final week. It was the first time in years that legislators convened and adjourned neatly within the allotted 18-week timeframe. But the first partially in-person session since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic was full of starts and stops that gave it a rocky and turbulent cadence. The final week was no different.

The week started with the FY2023 budget being approved by the committee of conference. This is usually one of the last things to happen in a normal legislative session, but to be fair there hasn't been one of those in years. This time around the conference committee budget report included placeholders for spending provisions that were included in other bills that had yet to be worked out as of the beginning of this week.

Workforce development, education spending, tax policy, housing, the bottle bill and Act 250 reform were among the major issues still being ironed out at the beginning of week 18. There was a feeling in the statehouse that lawmakers would be able to wrap up by the end of the week, but

it was unclear whether the session would drag on or there would be a subsequent veto session because of continuous veto warnings from Governor Phil Scott over many of the legislative spending and policy priorities.

Two bills Governor Scott had already vetoed came up for override votes in the House this week. One bill would have created a clean heat standard and the other would have approved a Burlington charter change to restrict a landlord's ability to evict tenants. In what was probably the dramatic climax for the 2022 legislative session, the House failed to override vetoes on both bills by one vote. After this happened the tenor of the legislative session changed and both the governor and Democratic leaders in the legislature appeared to take a more compromising tone on the outstanding issues.

The administration signaled the governor would likely allow the budget to become law, which was reinforced by most Republican lawmakers ultimately voting for the bill. Democratic leaders in the legislature recognized their limitations in being able to override vetoes and amended bills to remove provisions opposed by the governor. A bill that would have expanded the bottle bill did not make it across the finish line and is dead for the session, and the non-controversial provisions in the Act 250 bill were added onto the housing bill, which itself had been amended to remove the provisions opposed by the governor. The Act 250 bill passed but will face an almost certain veto.

The House and Senate were able to reach a deal on a tax package that provides millions of dollars for child tax credits and a decrease in education property tax rates. It remains to be seen if the governor will approve the tax package as it does not include everything he wanted.

By Thursday evening, with the outdoor temperature lingering in the 80s, legislators powered through floor proceedings in a race to adjourn *sine die*. Republican lawmakers suspended rules to allow bills they (and presumably the governor) were ok moving forward with and it was still light out when Governor Scott finished his adjournment speeches to the House and Senate.

Adjournment marks the unofficial beginning of campaign season, and a dramatic number of legislators and statewide office holders are not running for reelection. A third of the Vermont Senate have announced they are not seeking reelection and at least half of House committee chairs have done the same. This, along with the departure of Lieutenant Governor Molly Gray, Senate President pro-tem Becca Balint and Senator Kesha Ram, who are all running for Congress, and at least four of the six statewide office incumbents, signals a massive turnover in tenure in state government.

It will be fascinating to watch the campaigns unfold. This election cycle promises to be as dramatic and dynamic as the legislative session was.

This will be the last Leonine newsletter of the session although we may be back with an election special edition later in the year. Thanks to everyone for following us this session. We hope you have a great summer and we look forward to reconnecting soon.

TRANSPORTATION BILL

[H.736](#), An act relating to the Transportation Program and miscellaneous changes to laws related to transportation, the so-called “T-bill” passed. This bill contains the FY23 transportation budget including significant investments to help electrify Vermont’s transportation sector.

DMV MISCELLANEOUS BILL

[S.280](#), An act relating to miscellaneous changes to laws related to vehicles, passed the House and Senate but then died. The House added a number of provisions that the Senate didn’t support including an education outreach program for idling of vehicles and a report on distracted driving. The House refused to remove them so the bill died. The Department of Motor Vehicles didn’t urgently need any of the provisions in the bill so they will have to wait until next year. There isn’t anything VADA requested or needed in this bill.

HYDROFLUOROCARBONS EMISSIONS

[H.523](#), an act relating to reducing hydrofluorocarbons emissions, passed the House and Senate. VADA supports the bill.

MERCURY LAMPS

[H.500](#), An act relating to prohibiting the sale of mercury lamps in the State, passed the House and Senate.