



**Week 18 - May 17, 2019**

# THE VERMONT **STATEHOUSE INSIDER**

Weekly politics & analysis  
of the issues in Montpelier



## **COLD MOUNTAIN**

The regularly scheduled 18-week legislative session came to an end this week. The legislature will be going into overtime with a number of policy bills not quite ready for the finish line. Conference committees will meet on Monday and Tuesday of next week and the House will hold token sessions on Monday and Tuesday to advance the calendar. The Senate will return on Tuesday and the House will return on Wednesday, which should allow the legislature to adjourn by the end of next week.

The end-of-session jockeying between the House, Senate and Governor Phil Scott is heating up, although it is far from approaching the level of the previous two years. The governor stated this week that he is deliberately taking a different approach to previous years and trying to work more collaboratively with lawmakers. Some Democrats have criticized him for being too vague on

where he draws the line on key issues, whether it be the budget or taxes or minimum wage. One joke floating around compared the governor's posturing to the Goldilocks fairy tale - he was too hot last year, too cold this year so next year should be just right. The governor on Friday morning paid for the entire oatmeal (porridge) supply in the cafeteria, leaving a note above the vat that said "it's just right." (See the tweets of the week below for a photo of the note Governor Scott left)

While that whole back and forth was fun, the delay in adjournment highlights some ongoing disagreements between the House and Senate and between the legislature and the governor. On Monday a \$50 million surplus in projected revenue was announced, which prompted the governor to state that the legislature should adjourn without raising taxes. Money differences have not been as front and center as they were in the previous biennium, and the one big remaining revenue question is how to raise the money needed for clean water funding. The Senate was considering raising the rooms and meals tax to cover it but they have abandoned that solution a day after proposing it, while the House had proposed a tax on cloud services. It's clear this could be a sticking point between the two chambers and the governor.

The money discussions aside, it seems like the biggest hold up on adjournment is the determination of which policy bills will make it to the governor's desk. Of the big four initiatives Democratic lawmakers were expected to champion this year none have yet reached that stage in the process. A bill to require a 24-hour waiting period on handgun sales will be sent to the governor shortly but it is unclear if he will sign it and appears unlikely that it could be overridden. The House and Senate have yet to agree on bills that would increase minimum wage and create a mandatory paid family leave program, while the bill that would allow tax and regulate cannabis in Vermont is stalled out for the year.

Many other policy bills have yet to be resolved as well, and the aggregate of outstanding conference committees has ultimately led to an extended legislative session. It will be interesting to see how things shake out. The pressure will certainly be on to wrap up by the end of next week.

Below is a list of outstanding conference committees that are working to get bills to the finish line.

- [H.0039 - An act relating to the extension of the deadline of school district mergers required by the State Board of Education](#)
- [H.0132 - An act relating to adopting protections against housing discrimination for victims of domestic and sexual violence](#)
- [H.0514 - An act relating to miscellaneous tax provisions](#)

- [H.0525 - An act relating to miscellaneous agricultural subjects](#)
- [H.0527 - An act relating to Executive Branch and Judicial](#)
- [H.0529 - An act relating to the Transportation Program and miscellaneous changes to laws related to transportation](#)
- [H.0530 - An act relating to the qualifications and election of the Adjutant and Inspector General](#)
- [H.0533 - An act relating to workforce development](#)
- [H.0536 - An act relating to education finance](#)
- [H.0541 - An act relating to changes that affect the revenue of the State](#)
- [H.0542 - An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government](#)
- [S.0018 - An act relating to consumer justice enforcement](#)
- [S.0108 - An act relating to employee misclassification](#)
- [S.0110 - An act relating to data privacy and consumer protection](#)
- [S.0134 - An act relating to background investigations for State employees with access to federal tax information](#)
- [S.0149 - An act relating to miscellaneous changes to laws related to vehicles and the Department of Motor Vehicles](#)
- [S.0160 - An act relating to agricultural development](#)