

Week 4 - January 28, 2022

# THE VERMONT **STATEHOUSE INSIDER**

Weekly politics & analysis  
of the issues in Montpelier



## **DIVING INTO SUBSTANCE**

Legislative priorities are beginning to take shape as policy committees have moved beyond the introduction and review phase which generally marks the first few weeks of the session. The Joint Rules Committee set March 11 and March 18 as crossover deadlines for policy and money bills respectively, setting the time frame for committees to finish work on their priority bills. The crossover deadline is the date by which a bill needs to pass out of its committee of origin and be on the way to passing the floor in order to be taken up by the opposing legislative body without clearing additional hurdles.

Governor Scott included a number of initiatives in his budget proposal to enhance workforce training and development in response to workforce shortages. The House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development, Health Care, Education, Transportation, Ways and Means, and Appropriations are already considering a number of proposals around workforce development, as are their counterparts in the Senate.

Climate change is another high profile issue and the House Committees on Energy and Technology, Transportation as well as the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy, and Transportation are developing legislation as a result of the recently released Climate Action Plan that was created by the Climate Action Council.

The House and Senate Committees on Education are working on bills to address the state's education funding formulas, updating the state rules on special education and the restructuring of school districts and supervisory unions.

The House Committee on Health Care and Senate Committee on Health and Welfare are working on legislation to continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including bills that expand telehealth and community health care services. Discussions about increasing reimbursement for primary care providers, expanding mental health services and health care reform are also underway.

Housing continues to be a major issue and the House Committee on General, Housing and Military affairs as well as the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs are working on bills to expand affordable housing and make it easier for middle-income families to purchase homes. Those committees along with the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations will also be focusing on investing hundreds of millions of dollars to expand housing in the state.

Redistricting is a major focus of the House and Senate Committees on

Government Operations this year, with the redrawing of the state's political boundaries due by the end of the legislative session.

This week the money committees dug into the governor's proposed budget with the House Committee on Appropriations hearing from departments and agencies on their respective portions of the FY2023 "big bill." The House Committee on Ways and Means reviewed tax policy for the retail cannabis industry which goes online this year, and the House Committee on Institutions reviewed the proposed capital budget while the House Committee on Transportation reviewed the proposed transportation budget.

In the Senate, Committee on Appropriations worked on the FY2022 budget adjustment act.

On Friday the House voted to extend the current hybrid meeting protocols through February 15.

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## **HOSPITAL GUN BILL ADVANCES**

On Friday the House gave final approval to S.30, a bill banning guns from hospitals and closing the so-called "Charleston Loophole". The Charleston Loophole allows a person to purchase a gun regardless of whether or not they pass a background check if the background check takes more than three days to complete. S.30 would increase the maximum background check waiting period to 30 days.

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## **PROP 5**

On Thursday the House Committee on Human Services advanced Proposition 5, which would enshrine Vermonters' right to access reproductive care in the Vermont Constitution. The vote was 9-2. Lawmakers are not technically voting

on the content of the amendment itself, but whether or not the proposed constitutional amendment should be put on the ballot for Vermonters to approve or reject. Prop 5 now heads to the House floor. If approved by the full House, the question will be placed on the ballot his November.

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## **DEALER FRANCHISE LAW**

On Monday, VADA Board Members Bob Cody, Jack Castellaneta and John DuBrul met via Zoom with the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs chair Michael Sirotkin to outline our franchise law proposal, much of which would typically be taken up in his Committee. Given that Committee's current workload, Senator Sirotkin will talk with Senator Mazza about having Senate Transportation (STC) take the bill up. On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Transportation's attorney began presenting a section by section overview of most of the franchise language we submitted.

## **USED CAR SALE INSPECTION REQUIREMENT BEING CONSIDERED**

As we reported a few months back, there is interest by the Attorney General's and CAP Office in having Vermont adopt a requirement like one in Maine (which the dealers were a part of helping to write and continue to support). In Maine, the dealership must conduct the inspection, use a prescribed checklist to say which items pass inspection and which DO NOT, and post the sticker on the vehicle when it's made available for sale. A vehicle can be sold "as is" as long as the affixed sticker with the checklist indicates it does NOT pass inspection.

Additionally, if sold “as is,” the vehicle cannot be driven off the lot and must be removed from the dealership on a flatbed.

We will reach out to members and several used car non-members to be sure we solicit input from all parties in working on this issue with DMV and the AG’s Office to be sure that, if enacted, it is an efficient and simple process.