

Week 7 - February 18, 2022

THE VERMONT **STATEHOUSE** **INSIDER**

Weekly politics & analysis
of the issues in Montpelier



CRUNCH TIME

It is officially crunch time in the Vermont legislature as committees begin the final push to pass legislation in time for crossover. The last two weeks in February can be the most dynamic of the entire legislative session with the crossover crunch, in part because everything is still in play. The last few weeks of the session - usually in May or June - are the most critical because that is usually when legislation either passes or dies. However, by that point the bills still in play have been winnowed down significantly, and from a pure volume standpoint things are simpler. February is when most everything is still on the table for every legislator, administration official, lobbyist or other stakeholder, and the rush to meet crossover leads to some exciting and chaotic days in the run up to Town Meeting.

The legislature has one more week before Town Meeting break, and crossover dates for policy and money bills are March 11 and March 18 respectively. In

the House, policy committees are scrambling to finalize their budget recommendations, which are due to be submitted to the House Appropriations committee on February 23.

The House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and House Committee on Health Care have been working to develop budget recommendations to help grow the workforce in Vermont. Key focus areas for these committees are growing the nursing workforce, the trades and continuing education. Governor Phil Scott put a serious emphasis on workforce development in his budget proposal and the issue is shaping up to be a major theme of the 2022 legislative session.

The House committees are looking at investing more in scholarships and student loan forgiveness for both nursing and the trades as well as enhancing incentives and providing more flexibility for nurse educators. There is also an emphasis on providing more opportunity for professionals to receive training in a different field, the hope being to better match trained employees with jobs throughout the state.

The House committees on Transportation and Corrections and Institutions are working to finalize their respective budget bills for crossover and the House Committee on Appropriations is preparing to consider the budget requests from the policy committees next week.

On Friday, the Vermont House gave preliminary approval to H.708, a charter change for the city of Burlington that would ban no-cause evictions. Currently, Vermont law allows for a landlord to evict a tenant for no reason. H.708 would require landlords to have a legitimate reason for evicting their tenants. The bill passed second reading in the House with a 98-49 vote, and must be given final approval on Tuesday before heading to the Senate for consideration.

MOTOR VEHICLE FRANCHISE BILL

On Friday afternoon, Senator Dick Mazza, Chair of the Senate Committee on Transportation, sent a letter to VADA and the Alliance of Automotive Innovation asking the parties to meet and try to work through their

disagreements on the motor vehicle franchise bill. The letter further states that if the parties believe changes to the motor vehicle franchise law are necessary, the parties must submit one version of draft legislation or documentation of agreement on sections of the draft franchise bill that both parties agree to by Monday, February 28, for possible consideration by the committee on March 8. This letter wasn't unexpected as the committee is interested in having VADA and the Alliance narrow the issues down as the committee doesn't have time to take up the whole bill.

EV INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

The House Committee on Transportation continued to take testimony on a draft Transportation Bill this week. They heard testimony from Patrick Murphy of AOT about AOT's third-party administrator, the Center for Sustainable Energy, hired to manage the Incentive Program for New PEVs, Replace Your Ride, and the Electric Bicycle Incentive Program. Click here for a link to Mr. Murphy's [presentation](#).

EXCESSIVE MOTOR VEHICLE NOISE

The Senate Committee on Transportation took more testimony on S.231, a bill that proposes to prohibit the operation of a motor vehicle that was manufactured with an exhaust system from being operated when equipped with an inadequate or modified muffler or exhaust system or with an amplification device. Les Blomberg, Executive Director of the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse, testified in favor of the bill. He recommended the committee adopt a model from California and other cities related to exhaust systems. Mr. Blomberg recommended they put a similar requirement in Vermont's inspection manual. Committee members are concerned about unintended consequences if they enact this bill and will take more testimony.

FEEBATES

The Senate Committee on Transportation heard from Senator Mark MacDonald, D-Orange, the sponsor of S.277, a bill that proposes to implement a self-funded system of pleasure car registration fees and rebates based on vehicle efficiency. Michelle Boomhower of AOT testified that the bill would be complex and difficult for DMV to implement and would disproportionately affect low-income Vermonters and those that live in rural areas. Ms. Boomhower also said there is no evidence feebates work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and she suggested the committee look at alternatives in a [report](#) AOT completed on this subject in 2019.