

**Week 7 - February 19, 2021**

# THE VERMONT **STATEHOUSE INSIDER**

Weekly politics & analysis  
of the issues in Montpelier



## **MONEY MONEY**

Policy committees in the House spent the week finalizing their [budget recommendations](#) for FY2022. Each policy committee submits their recommendations to the House Appropriations Committee for the area of the budget over which they have jurisdiction. The House Appropriations Committee will spend the next three weeks considering the recommendations and crafting the FY2022 budget. The policy committees and House Appropriations Committee heard testimony this week from various state agencies and departments as well as other stakeholders from the private sector and the public. The budget memos all focus heavily on COVID-19 recovery and response and make recommendations on how to appropriate funds.

Governor Phil Scott announced on Friday he will be loosening travel restrictions and restrictions on long-term care communities for people who have been fully vaccinated. Residents of long-term care communities who are fully vaccinated will be able to participate in expanded social activities like communal dining. People who are fully vaccinated will be able to travel to Vermont without having to quarantine so long as they are more than two weeks removed from receiving their second shot. The governor also hinted that he may loosen restrictions on multi-household gatherings in the near future.

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### **FY2021 BUDGET ADJUSTMENT**

On Thursday the legislature gave final approval to H.138, the Budget Adjustment Act, which is the legislature's mid-year adjustment of appropriations for the current fiscal year. The House offered several amendments to the Senate's version of the bill. The House version included an amendment providing an appropriation for body cameras for the Department of Liquor and Lottery, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Fish and Wildlife; an appropriation for use-of-force training; and an amendment to extend the deadline for the Vermont Coronavirus Economic Stimulus Equity Program. The House also offered an amendment to allow the Department of Labor (DOL) limited access to Vermont Tax Department records in order to determine the amount of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance applicants are eligible to receive, and to verify information necessary to issue tax documents to individuals who received benefits through unemployment insurance and related federal and state benefit programs.

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### **EXPEDITED BUDGET**

The House Appropriations Committee is working on a draft bill titled "An act relating to COVID-19 Relief," which is also known as the "expedited budget." The bill contains items that are time sensitive or address immediate public health needs. These items are being expedited into this fast moving bill rather than waiting for the few months it will take to pass the FY2022 budget bill. The bill

includes a proposal from the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee for \$10 million for “gap” economic recovery grants for certain businesses struggling to survive because of COVID. It also includes funding for housing and transportation projects to enable them to start in time for the upcoming construction season. The committee is discussing a broad range of other items to fund. From mental health to ventilation in schools to money for struggling families. The committee plans to vote the bill on Monday so it will be up for action on the House floor next Thursday and Friday.

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### **DIRECT TO CONSUMER SALES**

On Tuesday the Senate Transportation Committee heard from Brian Hoar, Mitchell Jay and lobbyist Clare Buckley all testifying on behalf of VADA regarding S.47, the bill that proposes to allow a direct-to-consumer manufacturer to sell vehicles directly to Vermonters and open a service center in Vermont. Brian outlined the economic impact dealers have in Vermont. Mitchell discussed the work VADA members are doing to sell EVs in the state and all the new EVs from legacy OEMs that will soon be in showrooms. Clare provided an overview of the franchise law and gave three examples of how the franchised motor vehicle model is superior to the factory store direct-to-consumer model. Click [here](#) to review their written testimony. The committee asked good questions. VADA’s board is still reviewing the bill and committed to get back to the committee when that review is complete.

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### **HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

The House Transportation Committee continues to work on a draft transportation bill, which contains the FY022 transportation budget. The bill contains numerous provisions related to EVs. Click [here](#) for the latest draft.

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## **MISCELLANEOUS TRANSPORTATION BILL**

The Senate Transportation Committee advanced a draft bill they have been working on all session and the bill was formally introduced as [S.86, An act relating to miscellaneous changes to laws related to vehicles and vessels](#). The bill makes miscellaneous changes to Vermont's transportation laws including to in-transit plates, registrations, and motorboats, among many others.

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## **GAP FUNDING**

The House Commerce and Economic Development Committee spent most of their time this week working out details to provide economic recovery grants to businesses that were unable to secure assistance from prior rounds of relief funding. The proposal, which was attached to the House Appropriations Committee's COVID-19 Relief Bill appropriates \$10 million from the General Fund to the Agency of Commerce to provide these grants to eligible businesses. To be deemed eligible, a business must be domiciled in Vermont, have suffered an economic loss due to the pandemic and demonstrate that they were ineligible or denied for previous rounds of financial assistance under the Paycheck Protection Program or the Economic Injury Disaster Relief Advance program, or other COVID-19-related business financial assistance programs available since last year. The House Commerce Committee approved the language on an 11-0 vote and made their recommendation to the House Appropriations Committee on Thursday afternoon.

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## **SERGEANT AT ARMS/UVM TRUSTEE VOTES**

On Thursday the House and Senate met together in a joint assembly to elect the Legislature's Sergeant at Arms, the Adjutant General of the Vermont National Guard, and to make nominations for members of UVM's Board of Trustees. The joint assembly re-elected the current Sergeant at Arms, Janet Miller, and the current Adjutant General, Major General Greg McKnight by a voice vote. Four current and former legislators--Rep. Stephanie Jerome D-Brandon, Rep. Lucy

Rogers D-Waterville, Rep. Tristan Toleno D-Brattleboro and former Rep. Kitty Toll D-Danville--were nominated for the three seats on UVM's Board. Legislators had previously been mailed paper ballots for this election and were instructed to return them by noon on February 21. The four nominees will compete for three seats selected by the General Assembly.

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## **BILLS OF INTEREST INTRODUCED THIS WEEK**

[H.291](#), An act relating to dealers in new or used cars or motor trucks - This bill proposes to amend the definition of dealer in new or used cars or motor trucks to include dealers that engage in total retail sales of a certain threshold.

[H.285](#), An act relating to the Revised Uniform Arbitration Act - This bill proposes to adopt the Revised Uniform Arbitration Act.

[H.274](#), An act relating to consumer protection and collection of consumer information (short form) - This bill proposes to provide notification to consumers concerning products that record or collect information and establish minimum security standards for connected devices.

[H.262](#), An act relating to penalties and point assessments for using a portable electronic device while operating a moving motor vehicle - This bill proposes to change the penalties and point assessments for violating laws governing the use of a portable electronic device, including for texting, while operating a moving motor vehicle on a highway.

[S.86](#), An act relating to miscellaneous changes to laws related to vehicles and vessels - This bill proposes to make miscellaneous changes to laws related to vehicles and vessels.