



Week 8 - February 25, 2022

# THE VERMONT **STATEHOUSE INSIDER**

Weekly politics & analysis  
of the issues in Montpelier



The Vermont Legislature is off next week for Town Meeting Day break. The VADA Statehouse Insider will return on Friday, March 4.

## **BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL**

The House policy committees finalized their FY2023 budget recommendations this week, providing the House Committee on

Appropriations with direction on the spending decisions they will need to make over the next few weeks. These recommendations address spending proposals made by the governor in January (in some cases supporting them, in some cases not) and additional priorities added by the policy committees. The House Committee on Appropriations is scheduled to approve the FY2023 budget by March 18. In addition to finalizing budget recommendations, committees worked to refine their priorities in time to meet crossover for policy bills, which is March 11. With the legislature on break next week for Town Meeting Day, the mid-session deadlines are fast approaching.

The Senate will cease conducting business virtually and return to the statehouse in person after the Town Meeting Day break. On Thursday the Senate Rules Committee agreed on the framework for their operations. For the week of March 7 (and potentially the week of March 14) the Senate will hold token floor sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday to allow for more committee time leading up to crossover. The Senate will have full floor sessions on Thursday and Friday of those weeks. Sessions will be held in-person with the ability for Senators to participate remotely if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are quarantining or have refused to comply with the Senate's masking, testing or vaccination policies. Committees will also meet in person, though the Chair of each committee has the discretion to allow committee members to participate remotely during the first two weeks after break.

On Tuesday the House voted to adopt [H.R.18](#), which amends the House Rules to make the customs and traditions of the House more inclusive and non-gendered. Traditionally, as the session runs into the warmer months, men could remove jackets while on the floor of the House, but only after a woman had made the request. Under Mason's Manual of Legislative procedure, traditions become customs and a rule is needed to take precedence over a custom. H.R.18 moves away from the current gendered custom by stating that the dress code is business professional. Since this is a rule, any member can rise to request that the rule be suspended.

Governor Scott issued a veto of S.30 this week, a bill that would have prohibited firearms in hospitals and closed the “Charleston Loophole,” which allows the sale of a firearm to proceed after three business days, even if a background check has not been completed. Governor Scott opposed a provision in S.30 that extended the three day hold to however long it takes for the background check to be completed. The governor indicated he would be willing to sign a bill that extended the hold period from three business days to seven. The legislature will now decide whether to try and override the veto (an unlikely prospect in the House as the vote count on the bill was well shy of the two-thirds needed) or pass another bill with the governor’s recommended changes by the end of the legislative session.



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## MOTOR VEHICLE FRANCHISE LAW

As reported last week, Senator Dick Mazza, Chair of the Senate Committee on Transportation, sent a letter on 2/18 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. VADA gave a proposal to the Alliance on Monday, which the Alliance rejected on Wednesday, and VADA responded to. The Alliance’s lobbyist then said the Alliance wants to clarify the scope of the

committee's letter with Senator Perchlik and doesn't want to meet with VADA until they do so. The Alliance also believes the time to negotiate is too short and, according to a conversation with their lobbyist, wants to have the issue dealt with next year. VADA has an open invitation to meet with the Alliance but without any negotiations taking place it seems unlikely we will reach agreement by Monday's deadline.

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## TRANSPORTATION REVENUE DISCUSSIONS

The House and Senate Transportation Committees held a joint hearing this week on transportation finance issues. Chris Rupe of the Joint Fiscal Office projected a \$41 million gap between needs and estimated revenues in the Transportation Fund in FY24. [Click here](#) for Mr. Rupe's presentation. Later in the week Mr. Rupe testified before the House Transportation Committee and presented slides titled "[Transportation Fund Potential Options](#)" that includes "ideas" for possible transportation revenue increases to fill the gap. Those include increases in fees, motor fuels tax, purchase and use tax, revenue transfers from other funds and registration/charging fees for EVs.

## TRANSPORTATION BILL

The House Transportation Committee continues to build a transportation bill. As part of that discussion this week they heard from a number of people on the effectiveness of transportation investments on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Their lawyer prepared [this chart](#) of the differences between the greenhouse gas related provisions in the draft transportation bill, those in the Climate Action Plan and those in H.552, An act relating to transportation initiatives to reduce carbon emissions. They also

considered language to require AOT to come up with [a proposal](#) to codify in law certain EV vehicle incentive programs. Also of interest is [a proposal](#) to make changes to the Transportation Board, which hears cases related to Vermont's motor vehicle franchise law.