

1 S.229

2 Introduced by Senators Vyhovsky, Hardy and White

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Legislature; Legislative Compensation Commission; General

6 Assembly; health insurance benefits

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the
8 Legislative Compensation Commission, which would undertake an initial
9 comprehensive review of issues involving legislative compensation and
10 benefits, staffing, administrative support, and the length of the legislative
11 session. Thereafter, the Legislative Compensation Commission would make
12 biennial recommendations on the rate of compensation and expense
13 reimbursement for members of the General Assembly, the Speaker of the
14 House, and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. This bill also proposes to
15 make members of the General Assembly eligible to participate in the State
16 employees' health benefit plan on the same terms and at the same cost as
17 employees of the Executive Branch.

18 An act relating to compensation and health insurance for members of the
19 General Assembly

1 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

2 Sec. 1. 2 V.S.A. chapter 32 is added to read:

3 CHAPTER 32. LEGISLATIVE COMPENSATION COMMISSION

4 § 1021. CREATION OF COMMISSION

5 (a) Creation. There is created the Legislative Compensation Commission
6 for the purpose of studying and setting the compensation and expense
7 reimbursement of members of the General Assembly.

8 (b) Members.

9 (1) No individual shall be appointed to the Commission who is a current
10 member of the General Assembly, a current employee of the General
11 Assembly, or a registered lobbyist.

12 (2) The Commission shall be composed of the following members:

13 (A) three individuals, not all from the same party and one of whom is
14 a former member of the General Assembly, who shall be appointed by the
15 Speaker of the House;

16 (B) three individuals, not all from the same party and one of whom is
17 a former member of the General Assembly, who shall be appointed by the
18 Committee on Committees; and

19 (C) one individual, appointed by the Governor in the Governor's sole
20 discretion.

1 (3) Members of the Commission shall be appointed on or before
2 February 1 of the first year of the biennium.

3 (4) Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as for the original
4 appointments for the remainder of the unexpired term.

5 (5) The term of each appointment to the Commission shall be two years.

6 (6) Any member of the Commission shall be eligible for reappointment,
7 provided that the member is not disqualified pursuant to subdivision (1) of this
8 subsection.

9 (c) Chair. The Speaker shall select the first Chair of the Commission, and
10 the Committee on Committees shall select the first Vice Chair of the
11 Commission. The authority to appoint the Chair and Vice Chair shall rotate
12 biennially between the Speaker and the Committee on Committees.

13 (d) Meetings.

14 (1) The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chair, with the first
15 meeting to be held on or before April 1 of the first year of the biennium.

16 (2) The Commission shall elect a clerk from among its members and
17 shall adopt rules of procedure.

18 (3) A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a
19 quorum for the transaction of any business of the Commission.

20 (4) Any action taken by the Commission shall be by majority vote of the
21 members present.

1 (e) Assistance. The Commission shall have administrative and technical
2 assistance from the Legislative Office of Human Resources and the Joint Fiscal
3 Office.

4 (f) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Commission shall
5 be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as
6 permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than eight meetings in the first
7 year of the Commission and not more than three meetings a year in subsequent
8 years. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the
9 Legislative Branch.

10 § 1022. DUTIES; RECOMMENDATION; PROCEDURE

11 (a) In its first year, the Legislative Compensation Commission shall
12 consider and make recommendations on issues involving legislative
13 compensation and benefits, staffing, administrative support, and the length of
14 the legislative session, including:

15 (1) the current composition and benefits offered to members of the
16 General Assembly, including:

17 (A) whether current salaries and benefits are sufficient and, if not,
18 how they should be increased;

19 (B) the impact of current salaries and benefits on recruiting and
20 retaining members from diverse backgrounds and life experiences;

1 (C) whether members should be offered benefits, in addition to
2 participation in the State employees' health plan, such as reimbursement of
3 child, dependent, and elder care expenses;

4 (D) whether members should have the option to receive a prorated
5 salary throughout the calendar year instead of receiving their full salary
6 amount during the months that the General Assembly is in session;

7 (E) whether supplemental compensation should be provided to
8 members who hold leadership positions in addition to the Speaker of the House
9 and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, including caucus leaders and
10 committee chairs;

11 (F) how the salaries, benefits, and compensation structure in the
12 Vermont General Assembly compare to those of other state legislatures; and

13 (G) how the salaries, benefits, and compensation structure in the
14 Vermont General Assembly compare to the mean and median compensation
15 and benefits of Vermont residents;

16 (2) whether changes to staffing are necessary, such as increasing the
17 number of legislative staff in existing staff offices, expanding the types of
18 legislative staff services available to members, adding caucus staff, and adding
19 personal staff or providing members with an allowance to hire their own
20 personal staff;

1 (3) how to increase the administrative support available to members to
2 increase their effectiveness and ability to respond efficiently to the needs of
3 their constituents; and

4 (4) whether changes should be made to the length or structure of the
5 legislative session.

6 (b) Biennially, the Legislative Compensation Commission shall prepare a
7 written recommendation establishing the rate of compensation and expense
8 reimbursement for the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of
9 the Senate, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1051, and the rate of compensation and
10 expense reimbursement for members of the General Assembly, pursuant to 32
11 V.S.A. § 1052.

12 (c) The Commission's recommendations shall be delivered to the General
13 Assembly on or before December 15 of the first year of each biennium.

14 (d) The rates of compensation and expense reimbursement recommended
15 by the Commission shall be the rates for members of the General Assembly
16 effective the following biennium unless the General Assembly rejects the
17 recommended rates.

18 (e) If the General Assembly rejects the rates of compensation and expense
19 reimbursement recommended by the Commission, the General Assembly may
20 require the Commission to meet and develop another set of rates of

1 compensation and expense reimbursement within 30 calendar days for
2 submission to the General Assembly.

3 (f) If the General Assembly rejects the rates of compensation and expense
4 reimbursement in the Commission's second recommendation or the session is
5 adjourned sine die without the General Assembly voting to approve the second
6 recommendation, then the prevailing rates of compensation and expense
7 reimbursement shall remain in effect for the following biennium.

8 Sec. 2. 32 V.S.A. § 1010 is amended to read:

9 § 1010. MEMBERS OF CERTAIN BOARDS

10 (a) Except for those members serving ex officio or otherwise regularly
11 employed by the State, the members of the following boards shall be entitled to
12 receive per diem compensation:

13 (1) Board of Bar Examiners

14 * * *

15 (22) Legislative Compensation Commission

16 * * *

17 Sec. 3. 3 V.S.A. § 631 is amended to read:

18 § 631. GROUP INSURANCE FOR STATE EMPLOYEES; SALARY
19 DEDUCTIONS FOR INSURANCE, SAVINGS PLANS, AND
20 CREDIT UNIONS

1 (a)(1) The Secretary of Administration may contract on behalf of the State
2 with any insurance company or nonprofit association doing business in this
3 State to secure the benefits of franchise or group insurance. The terms of
4 coverage under the policy shall be determined under section 904 of this title,
5 but it may include:

6 (A) life, disability, health, and accident insurance and benefits for
7 any class or classes of State employees; and

8 (B) hospital, surgical, and medical benefits for any class or classes of
9 State employees or for those employees and any class or classes of their
10 dependents.

11 (2)(A)(i) As used in this section, the term “employees” includes any
12 class or classes of elected or appointed officials, State’s Attorneys, sheriffs,
13 employees of State’s Attorneys’ offices whose compensation is administered
14 through the State of Vermont payroll system, except contractual and temporary
15 employees, and deputy sheriffs paid by the State of Vermont pursuant to 24
16 V.S.A. § 290(b). The term “employees” ~~shall~~ does not include ~~members of the~~
17 ~~General Assembly as such,~~ any person rendering service on a retainer or fee
18 basis, members of boards or commissions, or persons ~~other than employees of~~
19 ~~the Vermont Historical Society, the Vermont Film Corporation, the Vermont~~
20 ~~State Employees’ Credit Union, Vermont State Employees’ Association, and~~
21 ~~the Vermont Council on the Arts,~~ whose compensation for service is not paid

1 from the State Treasury, or any elected or appointed official ~~unless the~~ except
2 as specifically provided pursuant to this subdivision (a)(2)(A)(i). The term
3 “employees” includes employees of the Vermont Historical Society, the
4 Vermont State Employees’ Credit Union, the Vermont State Employees’
5 Association, the Vermont Council on the Arts, and any elected or appointed
6 official who is actively engaged in and devoting substantially full-time to the
7 conduct of the business of the official’s public office. The term “employees”
8 also includes members of the General Assembly as set forth in subdivision (iv)
9 of this subdivision (a)(2)(A).

10 * * *

11 (iv) For purposes of group hospital-surgical-medical expense
12 insurance, the term “employees” includes members of the General Assembly.

13 (B)(i) The premiums for extending insurance coverage to employees
14 shall be paid in full by the Vermont Historical Society, the Vermont Film
15 Corporation, the Vermont State Employees’ Association, the Vermont State
16 Employees’ Credit Union, the Vermont Council on the Arts, or their respective
17 retirees. Nothing herein creates a legal obligation on the part of the State of
18 Vermont to pay any portion of the premiums required to extend insurance
19 coverage to this group of employees.

4 * * *

6 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.