

Connecting with Your Legislators

One of the key roles of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council is to advocate for equal employment opportunities for Vermonters with disabilities through its partnership with Vermont's VocRehab agency. One of the ways that individual SRC members can support these efforts is to develop relationships with their local elected officials to make them aware of our work and priorities.

At the request of SRC members, the Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee has created two resources to support members as they call, email, or meet with their legislators in legislative session ahead:

- [SRC 2022 Legislative Priorities](#)
- [H.266 Statement of Support](#)

This guide has been compiled to provide additional information about how to access contact information for your elected officials, communication tips, and an overview of how the legislative process works in Vermont.

Finding Your Elected Officials

[Click here](#) to view an explanatory video of the information listed below.

- To get the contact information for your elected Vermont state representative(s) and senators go to <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>
- In the green box click "legislator", enter your town, and click "search".
- Click on the name of each elected official to get their email address, committee assignments, and to read their biography to learn more about their background (helpful for establishing commonalities during your conversation).
- The 828-2228 phone number listed is for the Sargent-at-Arms office so is not that useful. However, legislators sometimes choose to include home or cell phone numbers. If they do, those numbers are acceptable to call. Between January and May elected officials will be more likely to be available on Mondays, and between 4pm-8pm in the evening.

Status of Bills

[Click here](#) to view an explanatory video of how to track the status of a bill or locate bills related to a particular topic via keyword searches.

Communication Tips

(Adapted from ACLU's [Writing your Elected Representatives](#))

Keep it Brief

- Emails should be short and to the point.

State Who You Are and What You Want

- Share the town you live or work in so they know you are a constituent.
- Let them know that you are contacting them as a member of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council.
- Be clear in your call to action (e.g., Are you contacting them to set up a meeting? Are you asking that they support specific legislation? Are you reaching out to share a helpful resource they should know about for their constituents?)

Personalize Your Message

- Tell your elected official why the topic or legislation matters to their community or their constituents.
- If you have one, include a personal story that shows how this issue affects you and your family. Personal stories are powerful and persuasive!

Create a Connection

- The closer your legislator feels to you, the more impactful your communication will be and the more likely it is that they will respond.
- Have you voted for this individual in the past?
- Are you familiar with them through any organizational relationships?
- Did you find any personal connections with them based on their biography?

You Are the Expert

- Remember that your legislator's job is to represent you.
- You should be courteous and to the point, but don't be afraid to take a firm position.
- It is likely that you know more about a given issue than your elected official does and your outreach serves as an important piece of education for them.

About Legislative Committees

(Source: [Vermont Legislature website](#))

Much of the work of the Legislature is carried out in committees, where issues are studied, policy is formed, and legislation is crafted.

House and Senate Standing Committees

Standing committees generally meet Tuesday through Friday when the Legislature is in session. There are 14 House standing committees and 11 Senate standing committees. The House standing committees meet all day, and each Representative serves on one committee. The Senate committees meet for half a day, and each Senator serves on both a morning and an afternoon committee.

Joint Committees

Senators and Representatives comprise joint committees, which are often, but not always, co-chaired by one member from each Chamber.

Committees of Conference

Committees of Conference, composed of three Representatives and three Senators, are convened toward the end of the session. The goal is for the members to discuss their differences and to agree on a bill that will be presented to both Chambers for a vote.

Study Committees and Commissions

Study committees are created to examine an issue when the Legislature is not in session. Study committees often issue a report and, in many cases, cease to exist after the report is issued. Like study committees, commissions are enabled through legislation to study an issue. However, unlike committees, commissions often meet year-round and may have members who are not legislators.

Created for members of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council, January 2022

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



BILL INTRODUCTION/ FIRST READING

Any legislator from either the House or Senate can sponsor a bill to amend Vermont law. The bill is assigned a number and then introduced on the floor of the sponsor's chamber during first reading.



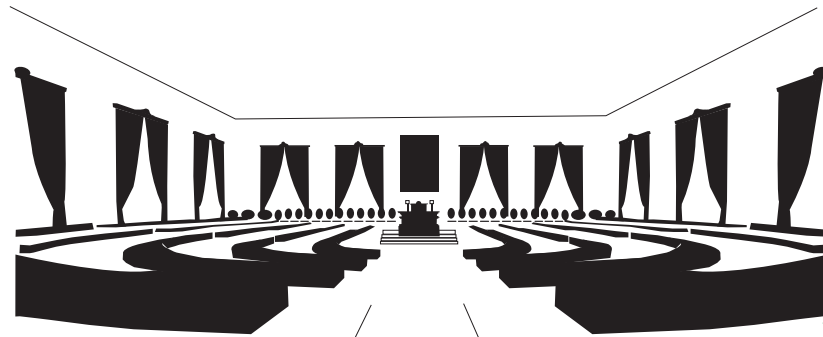
BILL REFERRAL

Upon first reading, the bill is referred to a standing committee of the chamber based on the bill's subject matter. The bill may be subsequently committed to other committees based on its subject matter.



COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

If the committee decides to pursue the bill, the committee may take testimony on and recommend amendments to it. Committee votes on any amendments and whether to pass the bill out of committee are taken by majority vote.



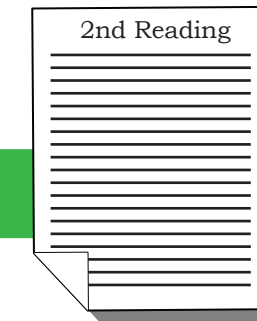
OTHER CHAMBER CONSIDERATION

After passage in one chamber, the bill remains in that chamber for one legislative day and then the bill — as it passed the first chamber — goes through the same process in the other chamber. If the second chamber proposes any amendments, the bill must go back to the first chamber so it can consider those proposed amendments, and the first chamber may agree with those amendments or agree and propose additional amendments.



THIRD READING

Third reading happens the legislative day after second reading and it is another chance for members of the chamber to propose amendments and debate the bill. After voting on any amendments and then reading the bill a third time, the chamber votes by majority vote on whether the bill should pass.



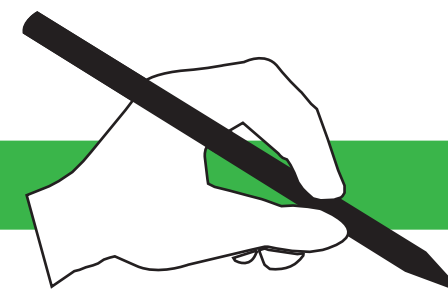
SECOND READING

After it is voted out of committee, the bill is sent to the chamber floor for second reading. A member of a committee to which the bill was referred or committed and considered will report the committee's recommendations; members of the chamber may propose amendments to the bill or to a committee's recommended amendments; and the bill and any amendments are debated. The chamber will take majority votes on any amendments and whether to read the bill a third time.



COMMITTEE OF CONFERENCE

If the two chambers are unable to agree on the bill or the proposed amendments, a committee of conference may be appointed in which three members of each chamber will attempt to reach agreement on a final version — called a committee of conference report — which is then submitted to both chambers for approval. The chambers cannot amend the committee of conference report and will adopt or reject it by majority vote.



GOVERNOR'S CONSIDERATION

If both chambers agree on a final version of the bill, the bill passes and it is sent to the Governor who normally will sign it into law, allow it to become law without his or her signature, or veto it. If the bill is vetoed, the House and Senate may override the veto by a two-thirds vote in each chamber.



BILL ENACTMENT

Once the Governor signs the bill into law or allows it to become law without his or her signature, or if the chambers successfully override the Governor's veto, the bill becomes an official law of Vermont and is assigned an act number.