

Journal of the Senate

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2012

The Senate was called to order by the President.

Devotional Exercises

A moment of silence was observed in lieu of devotions.

Message from the House No. 43

A message was received from the House of Representatives by Ms. H. Gwynn Zakov, its Second Assistant Clerk, as follows:

Mr. President:

I am directed to inform the Senate that:

The House has passed House bills of the following titles:

H. 496. An act relating to preserving Vermont's working landscape.

H. 766. An act relating to the national guard.

In the passage of which the concurrence of the Senate is requested.

Committee Relieved of Further Consideration

On motion of Senator Campbell, the Committee on Rules was relieved of further consideration of Senate bills entitled:

S. 99. An act relating to agricultural economic development,

S. 142. An act relating to pet merchants.

S. 180. An act relating to the universal service fund and establishment of a high-cost program.

Bill Referred to Committee on Finance

S. 28.

Senate bill of the following title, appearing on the Calendar for notice, and affecting the revenue of the state, under the rule was referred to the Committee on Finance:

An act relating to consolidating land use and environmental permit administration, rulemaking, and appeals into a department of environmental quality headed by an environmental council.

Bills Referred

House bills of the following titles were read the first time and referred:

H. 496.

An act relating to preserving Vermont's working landscape.

To the Committee on Agriculture.

H. 766.

An act relating to the national guard.

To the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

Consideration Resumed; Proposal of Amendment Adopted; Third Reading Ordered**H. 21.**

Consideration was resumed on House bill entitled:

An act relating to the mutual benefit enterprise act.

Thereupon, the pending the question, Shall the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill as recommended by the Committee on Finance? was agreed to and third reading ordered.

Bills Passed in Concurrence

House bills of the following titles were severally read the third time and passed in concurrence:

H. 39. An act relating to persons authorized to direct disposition of service members' remains.

H. 378. An act relating to town payments of county taxes.

Bill Passed in Concurrence with Proposal of Amendment**H. 503.**

House bill of the following title was read the third time and passed in concurrence with proposal of amendment:

An act relating to eliminating the ability of the sergeant at arms to employ a traffic control officer and requiring the certification of capitol police officers.

Proposal of Amendment; Third Reading Ordered**H. 413.**

Senator Snelling, for the Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred House bill entitled:

An act relating to creating a civil action against those who abuse, neglect, or exploit a vulnerable adult.

Reported recommending that the Senate propose to the House to amend the bill by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 13 V.S.A. § 1384 is added to read:

§ 1384. CIVIL ACTION; RECOVERY BY ATTORNEY GENERAL

(a) The attorney general may bring an action for damages on behalf of the state against a person or caregiver who, with reckless disregard or with knowledge, violates section 1376 (abuse of a vulnerable adult), 1377 (abuse by unlawful restraint or confinement), 1378 (neglect of a vulnerable adult), 1380 (financial exploitation), or 1381 (exploitation of services) of this title, in addition to any other remedies provided by law, not to exceed the following:

- (1) \$5,000.00 if no bodily injury results;
- (2) \$10,000.00 if bodily injury results;
- (3) \$20,000.00 if serious bodily injury results; and
- (4) \$50,000.00 if death results.

(b) In a civil action brought under this section, the defendant shall have a right to a jury trial.

(c) A good faith report of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or suspicion thereof pursuant to 33 V.S.A. § 6902 or federal law shall not alone be sufficient evidence that a person acted in reckless disregard for purposes of subsection (a) of this section.

Sec. 2. 13 V.S.A. § 1385 is added to read:

§ 1385. CIVIL INVESTIGATION

(a)(1) If the attorney general has reason to believe a person or caregiver has violated section 1376, 1377, 1378, 1380, or 1381 of this title or an administrative rule adopted pursuant to those sections, he or she may:

(A) examine or cause to be examined any books, records, papers, memoranda, and physical objects of whatever nature bearing upon each alleged violation.

(B) demand written responses under oath to questions bearing upon each alleged violation.

(C) require the attendance of such person or of any other person having knowledge on the premises in the county where such person resides or has a place of business or in Washington County if such person is a nonresident or has no place of business within the state.

(D) take testimony and require proof material for his or her information and administer oaths or take acknowledgment in respect of any book, record, paper, or memorandum.

(2) The attorney general shall serve notice of the time, place, and cause of such examination or attendance or notice of the cause of the demand for written responses at least ten days prior to the date of such examination, personally or by certified mail, upon such person at his or her principal place of business or, if such place is not known, to his or her last known address. Any book, record, paper, memorandum, or other information produced by any person pursuant to this section shall not, unless otherwise ordered by a court of this state for good cause shown, be disclosed to any person other than the authorized agent or representative of the attorney general or another law enforcement officer engaged in legitimate law enforcement activities unless with the consent of the person producing the same. This subsection shall not apply to any criminal investigation or prosecution.

(b) A person upon whom a notice is served pursuant to this section shall comply with the terms thereof unless otherwise provided by the court order. Any person who, with intent to avoid, evade, or prevent compliance, in whole or in part, with any civil investigation under this section, removes from any place, conceals, withholds, or destroys, mutilates, alters, or by any other means falsifies any documentary material in the possession, custody, or control of any person subject of any such notice or mistakes or conceals any information shall be subject to a civil fine of not more than \$5,000.00.

(c) If a person fails to comply with a notice served pursuant to subsection (b) of this section or if satisfactory copying or reproduction of any such material cannot be done and such person refuses to surrender such material, the attorney general may file a petition with the superior court for enforcement of this section. Whenever any petition is filed under this section, the court shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine the matter presented and to enter such orders as may be required to effectuate the

provisions of this section. Failure to comply with an order issued pursuant to this section shall be punished as contempt.

Sec. 3. 33 V.S.A. § 6911(a)(1) is amended to read:

(1) The investigative report shall be disclosed only to: the commissioner or person designated to receive such records; persons assigned by the commissioner to investigate reports; the person reported to have abused, neglected, or exploited a vulnerable adult; the vulnerable adult or his or her representative; the office of professional regulation when deemed appropriate by the commissioner; a law enforcement agency, the state's attorney, or the office of the attorney general, when the department believes there may be grounds for criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action, or in the course of a criminal or a civil investigation. When disclosing information pursuant to this subdivision, reasonable efforts shall be made to limit the information to the minimum necessary to accomplish the intended purpose of the disclosure, and no other information, including the identity of the reporter, shall be released absent a court order.

Sec. 4. REPORT

On or before December 1, 2012, the attorney general and the department of disability, aging, and independent living shall jointly provide a report on the status of investigations concerning the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of a vulnerable adult and statistics regarding investigation backlog to the senate committee on judiciary.

Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2012.

And that the bill ought to pass in concurrence with such proposal of amendment.

Thereupon, the bill was read the second time by title only pursuant to Rule 43.

Thereupon, pending the question, Shall the Senate propose to the House that the bill be amended as recommended by the Committee on Judiciary?, Senator Snelling on behalf of the Committee on Judiciary moved to amend the proposal of amendment of the Committee on Judiciary, as follows:

In Sec. 4 after "senate" by striking "committee on judiciary" and inserting in lieu thereof "and house committees on judiciary, the senate committee on health and welfare, and the house committee on human services"

Which was agreed to.

Thereupon, the proposal of amendment, as amended, was agreed to and third reading of the bill was ordered.

Message from the House No. 44

A message was received from the House of Representatives by Ms. H. Gwynn Zakov, its Second Assistant Clerk, as follows:

Mr. President:

I am directed to inform the Senate that:

The House has considered joint resolutions originating in the Senate of the following titles:

J.R.S. 52. Joint resolution relating to the issuance of a commemorative United States postage stamp in honor of former United States Senator George D. Aiken.

J.R.S. 55. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment.

And has adopted the same in concurrence.

The Governor has informed the House that on the April 3, 2012, he approved and signed a bill originating in the House of the following title:

H. 512. An act relating to banking, insurance, securities, and health care administration.

The Governor has informed the House that on the April 4, 2012, he approved and signed a bill originating in the House of the following title:

H. 630. An act relating to reforming Vermont's mental health system.

Adjournment

On motion of Senator Mazza, the Senate adjourned until one o'clock and thirty minutes in the afternoon on Thursday, April 5, 2012.