

LT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

July 2, 2020

Senate Adjourns; Provides Relief to Struggling Vermonters

The Vermont Legislature adjourned for a short summer recess last Friday, after working under unprecedented conditions. In normal years, the legislature adjourns in mid-May; this year it took until June 26th to finish most of their work. Since the Coronavirus pandemic closed the state and the state house in mid-March, legislators have worked remotely, sometimes on Zoom meetings for 9+ hours/day, to pass important legislation to help struggling Vermonters and Vermont businesses that have been hit so hard by the pandemic. Due to statute, a few of us had to physically be present while the Senate was in session. I presided over the “virtual” Senate with the help of John Bloomer, Secretary of the Senate, and Vanessa Davison, Senate Clerk. This took some getting used to as the 30 Senators were attending remotely and appeared on a giant screen.

Legislators and state house staff did a comprehensive and amazing job working with new technology, limited resources, vague federal guidance, and overwhelming need from Vermonters to quickly put together a massive relief program. When taken together with the recent healthcare bill, H. 965 and the suite of other COVID-19 response bills passed in recent months, [lawmakers have appropriated nearly \\$1 billion in Coronavirus relief funds](#)! This was all done ensuring they complied with federal guidelines. From legislative counsels and committee staff, to elected officials, we owe those in the digital state house a massive thank you.

The legislature will reconvene on August 25th to finish up this year's budget, appropriate the last of the Coronavirus Relief Funds, and pass what priority bills remain. Below are highlights of what was passed.

Essential Worker Bill

The Legislature's [health care and human services aid package](#), [H.965](#) passed last week with **\$28,000,000 in hazard pay grants for Vermont's frontline essential workers**, including nurses, assisted living professionals, nursing home workers, and other care providers at high risk of infection--an \$8 million increase from the House proposal.

While the final program is not as expansive as the Senate had originally proposed, legislators received guidance from the

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, July 2, 7 AM

Live on 'The Morning Drive with Kurt and Marcus,' WVMT 93.6 FM or 620 AM

Thursday, July 2, 3-4 PM

Friday, July 3, 8-9 AM

Friday, July 3, 11 AM-12 PM

Economic Recovery

Grants application

webinar -- ACCD and the Department of Taxes [will hold a series of webinars](#)

this week to cover eligibility requirements, grant award calculation information, grant application processes, and what documents businesses will want to have prepared and on-hand when applying for an Economic Recovery Grant. The [webinars listing](#) has full details and log-in/dial instructions.

Wednesday, July 8, 7 PM

Speaking with Governor's Institute Environmental Science and Technology students virtually

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federal government on the use of Coronavirus Relief Funds that said hazard pay could only be made available to a very limited subset of workers, principally those in the healthcare sector. We're disappointed that not all of our essential workers will be fairly compensated for the immense risks they've faced over these last few months but we're happy there will be at least some compensation for deserved workers. Read my commentary about this [here](#).

Global Warming Solutions Act

In the final week, the Senate passed the Global Warming Solutions Act, a bill that would turn our climate pollution goals into requirements, mandating that Vermont takes the measurable steps necessary to hit those targets.

The Global Warming Solutions Act is a good first step, but as I have stated many times, we need to make a major investment in climate crisis mitigation from affordable housing to broadband and weatherization to alternative energy. Addressing the climate crisis strategically will result in creating good-paying jobs for Vermont workers that reduce our carbon emissions while addressing the disproportionate burden rural Vermonters face.

For more information on the Global Warming Solutions Act, click [here](#).

Criminal Justice Training Council

In the last week of the session, the Senate voted to approve an important criminal justice bill, S.124 which increases accountability and citizen oversight of law enforcement. The Criminal Justice Training Council has been extremely lacking in diversity of views and disconnected from community needs and perspective. By shifting the make-up to include the Director of Racial Equity, the Commissioner of Mental Health, a representative familiar with domestic and sexual violence, as well as one from the Human Rights Commission, and three appointees who have no connection to the police or elected office, the Council will have a wider lens to evaluate their work. The diversification and expansion of member perspectives is a meaningful first step and important as this Council manages the training protocol for law enforcement. We need to keep improving how we write these bills to include the voices of those most impacted from the beginning.

The Economic Recovery Grants application process will open on Monday, July 6th.

Beginning on Monday, July 6, Vermont businesses will be able to apply for Economic Recovery Grants, administered by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. \$166 million is available through money appropriated by the legislature from the Federal CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act). Detailed instructions are: <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/economic-recovery-grants>

Our office continues to work with constituents, helping them navigate the unemployment system, the DMV, healthcare issues, etc. Please contact my office if you are in a situation where you need help.

We need to continue to be careful. We still must keep physical distance, wear masks, wash hands and watch out for the vulnerable. Have a wonderful Fourth of July!

Stay safe,

