



WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

January 10, 2014

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The *Weekly Legislative Report*, a publication of the Vermont League of Cities & Towns, is published each Friday during Vermont's legislative session.

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To contact your legislator, call the Sergeant-at-Arms at 800-322-5616, fax 802-828-2424, or access the legislative website at www.leg.state.vt.us for legislators' email addresses. This year, the website also includes all documents provided to every committee.

Off to the Races!

Wasting no time, Vermont legislators returned to their desks this week and got to work. The similarities to a return to school after summer vacation are inescapable – the greeting of colleagues, having high hopes that previous missteps will be avoided and the new year will be better/more productive/faster in laying out the year's agenda, sharpening digital pencils, and simply getting down to business.

In a highly unusual move, the governor, on the first day of the session, testified before the House and Senate Health Care committees about the rollout of Vermont Health Connect (VHC) and his hopes for single-payer health care in due time. (See related article on [page 5](#).) On Wednesday, he gave his State of the State address, in which he focused on opiate addiction, its ramifications for Vermont, and his proposals for addressing the issue. (See article on [page 2](#).)

When the legislature closed up shop last spring, a few bills were left in conference committee. One of those was S.41, which addresses the process for disconnecting municipal water service in the event of extended non-payment of bills by property owners. A second bill, S. 25, would make only technical revisions to the Public Service Board hearing process for the siting of energy generation facilities. And a third bill, H.526 (the shoreland zoning bill), was left in the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee after House approval last year while a Shoreland Protection Commission toured the state and provided information during the summer. The commission held a well-attended public hearing on the bill on Wednesday in the State House.

Committees spent this first week establishing their priorities for the session. The House Appropriations Committee has been hard at work since December tackling the difficult task of meeting funding needs in yet another year of looming state budget deficits. The Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee will initially focus on shoreland protection, electric generation facility siting, and solid waste. The House Natural Resources and Energy Committee has already embarked on a discussion of net metering, which allows for renewable energy facilities to be built, feed electricity into the grid, thereby providing credits or payment (up to the amount of a bill for electricity used) to the owner of the facility for the energy it produces. In almost any committee you visit, there are bills being discussed that would affect the way local governments conduct their business.

Throughout the session, VLCT Advocacy staff will bring you the highlights here in the *Weekly Legislative Report*, and on [You Tube](#), Facebook, Twitter, and our website, www.vlct.org.

Contact Karen Horn at 1-800-649-7915 or khorn@vlct.org.

Governor Focuses on Opiate Addiction in Address

Few Vermonters are more keenly aware of the devastating impact on our communities caused by the ravages of opiate addiction on our communities than local police and emergency medical responders. They are the ones first on the scenes of burglaries, home invasions, automobile accidents and overdoses caused by the addiction of a growing number of our family members, neighbors and co-workers.

The governor focused his entire State of the State speech on Wednesday on this issue and what he proposed the state government should do about it. It is a balanced proposal that addresses education, prevention, enforcement, and treatment.

The governor laid out some sobering statistics:

- Vermont has, since 2000, seen a more than 770 percent increase in treatment for all opiates.
- What started as an OxyContin and prescription drug addiction problem in Vermont has now grown into a full-blown heroin crisis.
- Vermont has experienced a more than 250 percent increase in people receiving heroin treatment since 2000, with the greatest percentage increase, nearly 40 percent, in just the past year.
- In 2013, there were twice as many federal indictments against heroin dealers than in the prior two years, and over five times as many as had been obtained in 2010.
- Last year, Vermont experienced nearly double the number of deaths from heroin overdose as the prior year.

He went on to cite some reasons Vermont has become such a market for illicit drugs:

- Vermont's Drug Task Force estimates more than \$2 million of heroin and other opiates are being trafficked into Vermont every week.
- Due to the state's proximity to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and other cities where heroin is cheap, dealers can make a lot of money from addicts here. A \$6 bag of heroin in New York City can cost up to \$30 here – that is, a \$6 purchase sells for five times more just a few hours up the interstate.
- That means that a heroin habit in Vermont can cost an addict tens of thousands of dollars per year.
- Nearly 80 percent of Vermont's incarcerated population is either addicted or in prison because of their addiction. And while a week in prison in Vermont costs about \$1,120, \$123 will buy a week of treatment for a heroin addict at a state-funded center.

To respond to this crisis, the governor proposed a four-point plan:

1. Increase state funding for drug treatment centers to eliminate the current wait list of 500 Vermonters from across the state so that those wanting treatment can get the help they need.
2. Provide treatment options immediately after an arrest, when addicts are most likely to be responsive and accepting.
3. Strengthen and better coordinate law enforcement efforts in the area through a new mapping portal that will assist law enforcement agencies across the state identify drug hot spots and extinguish them and toughen sentences for those transporting the drugs into our state and for those carrying or using weapons in burglaries and assaults to obtain the resources to purchase their drugs.
4. Convene a statewide community forum at the State House to brainstorm ideas to improve prevention efforts, and make the movie "The Hungry Heart" and its producers available to every high school in the state.

VLCT applauds the governor's focus on this issue. We look forward to working with him and the legislature on combating this challenge that faces every community in Vermont.

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New State Education Mandate Will Add to Property Tax Increase

H.270 is a bill that will mandate every school district to provide no fewer than ten hours per week of publicly funded prekindergarten education for 35 weeks annually to any three- or four-year-old child whom a parent or guardian wishes to enroll. The bill is currently being considered by the Senate Appropriations Committee. The House already approved the bill last year on a 95-43 vote. It has already been approved by the Senate Education and Finance Committee.

As passed by the House, H.270 mandates new services be provided by local school districts with no means to pay for them other than the property tax. Education expenses are projected to rise by \$57.5 million for the coming school year, assuming school budgets increase by the 3.8 percent projected by the Agency of Education. Because a one-time surplus fund of \$19 million was used last year to keep property taxes lower, state education property taxes will already have to increase \$64.3 million to pay for these projected increases in expenses even before more costs are added with new state mandates.

Seventy-two and one-half percent of the \$1.5 billion in property taxes towns are required to collect go to the state's Education Fund. The property tax is projected to provide 67.9 percent of all Education Fund revenues for FY15. H.270 will increase this property tax burden at least for the foreseeable future.

VLCT's Municipal Policy, which is our legislative platform adopted by the membership each October, has two sections which speak to the bill as drafted. First, it calls for the creation of "*a new education finance system that reduces and reforms the property tax burden. Until then, Education Fund monies should only be used for functions listed in 16 V.S.A. § 4025(b).*" Second, "*the state should provide reimbursement for state mandates on or cost shifts to local governments.*"

Unless the legislature adds a funding mechanism for the costs of these new services other than the property tax, VLCT will oppose H.270. Contact your senators. Tell them not to mandate new local expenses without providing state funds other than the property tax to support them.

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Water Quality

In last month's [Legislative Preview](#), we wrote about draft legislation that addressed an Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) report on Vermont's water quality. The House Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources Committee dove right into work on that bill (no bill number yet) this week, reviewing a new draft and developing a list of which local officials should testify.

Cleaning up phosphorus in the Lake Champlain Basin to comply with the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) could cost between \$400 and \$800 million, according to ANR staff. Lake Champlain is one of three major water bodies in Vermont for which TMDLs are required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (The others are Lake Memphramagog and the Connecticut River.) EPA and ANR are working on a new TMDL for Vermont and toured the state with a draft cleanup plan in December. This month, the agency is meeting with local officials and regional commission staff to refine those portions of the plan that would affect municipalities.

The bill in the House Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources Committee would address many of those issues in the ANR/EPA TMDL plan. It also would provide a funding mechanism to begin to pay for the enormous costs of any implementation schedule.

As drafted, the bill would:

- address the contributions of agriculture to non-point sources of phosphorus-laden runoff to the lakes by certifying small farms and conducting inspections at least once in five years, prohibiting

manure spreading within 25 feet of a surface water or ten feet of a ditch, and requiring annual training of farmers (medium and large farms are already regulated);

- exclude livestock from waters of the state;
- allow for manure spreading between December 15 and April 1 in certain circumstances;
- prohibit the application of pesticides within 50 feet of any surface water or culvert or at the base of any sign post or in any roadside ditches;
- prohibit the extraction of gravel from watercourses except to protect dams, highways, and bridges;
- direct the Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources to create and make available a model stormwater bylaw or ordinance for municipalities to adopt;
- require stormwater permits for development of impervious surfaces greater than one half acre (current law says one acre) by January 1, 2015.
- establish a Water Resources Preservation Program to provide technical support and grants or loans to projects that improve water quality and address past or prospective flood damage to river corridors and infrastructure; and
- provide education on and implement TMDL plans through best management practices.

All of this would be funded by a Water Resources Preservation Fee assessed in proportion to the property's area of impervious surface – except that a default fee of up to \$50 could be assessed against all residential property. Fees could be reduced if stormwater best management practices are implemented on a parcel or for a farm if it is subject to a Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation plan. The secretary could exempt properties from the fee. The fee would be assessed and collected beginning July 1, 2015.

The bill would mandate that municipalities bill and collect the fee and remit it to the State Treasurer, minus 0.225 of one percent of total fees collected for the city's or town's trouble. A municipality could retain 0.450 percent if it was a member of a stormwater utility or has zoning bylaws or an ordinance that established regulations similar to those established by a stormwater utility or system. The Water Resources Preservation Fee proceeds would be set aside in a Water Resource Preservation Fund along with proceeds of excise taxes to be imposed on "flushable products" and bottled water. Grants and loans would be awarded to watersheds in proportion to the amount of fees they collect.

The agency would be required to coordinate and assess all available data regarding the quality of the waters of the state including light detection and ranging information (LIDAR) mapping information, stream gauge data, stream mapping, and water quality sampling data.

In addition, the bill would require certification in erosion control expertise of shoreland contractors who would be on site to supervise any development project that disturbs more than 500 square feet of soil or vegetation in a shoreland area.

Towns would be mandated to adopt the Agency of Transportation road and bridge standards, which are themselves controversial. (To date, only 34 towns have adopted the new Town Road and Bridge standards.) Failure to adopt and adhere to the standards would constitute a civil violation with a \$5,000 per day penalty up to a total of \$25,000. Towns not adopting the road and bridge standards would forfeit five percent of their state highway aid allocation. Those funds would be re-allocated to the towns that did adopt the standards.

Not all of these provisions in the draft bill are in the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC's) Proposal for a Clean Lake Champlain which, admittedly, is a document directed at complying with EPA requirements for reducing phosphorus contributions from all sources to Lake Champlain. The DEC proposal would not, for instance, require compliance with the road and bridge standards or



sanction those who do not meet those standards. On the other hand, it would require towns to obtain permits from DEC for all 11,000 miles of municipal roads through a general permit and get them for any stormwater runoff from developed land. The Proposal for a Clean Lake Champlain would incorporate a Green Stormwater Infrastructure program for those communities not subject to the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems permit for more urban municipalities that encourages use of some tools already in place, such as VLCT's [Model Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Bylaw](#).

VLCT will be following these issues closely. Please let us know how any of these measures would affect *your* community.

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Vermont's Health System Takes Center Stage

This year's legislative session started with a focus on health system issues, particularly the launch of Vermont Health Connect (VHC) and next steps toward implementation of Green Mountain Care, described by Governor Shumlin as "America's first universal affordable publicly financed health care system." The governor spoke to a joint meeting of the House and Senate Health Care committees last Wednesday, the opening day of the 2014 legislative session. He affirmed his strong commitment to move forward with Green Mountain Care while acknowledging the difficulties with the rollout of VHC, the state health insurance exchange required under the federal Affordable Care Act. The governor announced that the administration would have third party review of the VHC rollout and the problems with development of its web portal.

The House Health Care Committee spent much of the week digging into the rocky launch of VHC by taking testimony from the administration, health insurers, and stakeholders – such as VLCT – about their experiences and what can be done to get the program running smoothly.

From our perspective, the problems with the launch of VHC – which made such a poor impression on Vermont municipal officials – go far beyond a dysfunctional web portal. State officials frequently over-promised and under-delivered. I represented VLCT in my testimony to the committee and related some of the challenges and disappointments of our members in interacting with VHC. My testimony is posted at www.vlct.org/advocacy/advocacy-testimony-and-comments.

My testimony documented the intensive efforts Vermont municipalities made to move to the new health plans offered through VHC. However, all municipalities wound up having to enroll directly through health insurance carriers or to extend their current plans for three months. Those that extended their 2013 health plans did so in the hope that the VHC small employer system would be up and running soon. The clock will quickly run out on this option. If the VHC small employer system is not working by February, the state should allow those that extended their 2013 health insurance to direct enroll with the health insurer of their choice. Further delays will only lead to a repeat of the problems that occurred with the January 1 renewals.

Some issues – such as the interaction between VHC and Medicare and new high deductible health plans with greatly increased out-of-pocket maximums – will result in higher health care expenses for municipal employees. Others, such as long call center wait times and the lack of timely or conflicting information, also continue. The House Health Care Committee needs to make sure that the problems are corrected so that VHC can get back on track and regain the confidence of Vermont municipal employers.

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Dams

There are more than 1,200 dams in Vermont: in a 2007 inventory, the Department of Environmental Conservation recorded 1,224 in 211 towns. Some are very small, some have failed or fallen into disuse over the years, some are owned by people who don't even know they own them, and some dams could be – or in a very few cases have been – rehabilitated to generate renewable electricity with new technologies that reduce impacts on the host stream. Others have been recently dismantled to restore stream flow in an attempt to promote the health of aquatic organisms.

The House Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources Committee will consider a bill (no bill number yet) to require the registration and classification of dams in the state by January 15, 2015. The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) assigns a status to each dam based on the extent of hazard it poses to public safety. Status classifications of dams are “high hazard,” “significant hazard,” “low hazard,” and “unknown hazard.” Dams that are not registered would be classified as abandoned; the state could hire an engineer to evaluate the dam, charging the cost of evaluation to the dam owner and placing a lien on the property on which the dam is located.

Jurisdiction over dams would be transferred from ANR to the Public Service Board (PSB) whenever the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission grants a license to generate electricity or whenever the PSB receives an application for a certificate of public good to generate electricity at the dam.

VLCT will follow this legislation and the possibilities it may open for small scale renewable hydro energy produced in Vermont.

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Town Highways Serving State Facilities

Last summer, VLCT participated with state agency partners, including the Agency of Transportation, in the Act 12 Section 30 Summer Study Committee, which was charged to review the condition of and funding for town highways serving state facilities. The committee listed and reviewed class 3 and class 4 town highways that serve as the primary access to state parks and other state facilities, such as fishing accesses, to determine whether the state was adequately supporting these roadways with payment in lieu of taxes payments and other funding resources. The study concluded that most of these roadways are in good condition and that relatively few towns containing such roadways were not supported sufficiently by the state. The study committee devised alternative funding mechanisms to address these funding gaps.

The Senate Transportation Committee is tentatively scheduled to hear a presentation on the committee's report next week. VLCT will be among those present to answer any questions from committee members.

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The Legislative Process and What Committees Do

Vermont's legislature is back at work. The complex legislative process is well worth understanding, particularly for municipal officials since, in Vermont, the legislature sets the parameters within which local government operates. Ideas for legislation can come from the governor, a state agency, constituents, a lobbying organization, or a committee and are then introduced to the Senate or House of Representatives by a legislator. The bill's sponsor (the person who introduces it) will often seek co-sponsors from other parts of the state or other political parties so that the bill will have greater support in both chambers. The bill is assigned a number, read (announced) on the floor of the Senate or the House



for a first time, and is then assigned to a committee in the chamber in which it was introduced. As this is the second year of the biennium, bills that were introduced last year are “alive” again this January and may be taken up by committees.

Each committee receives many bills and will work on those in which its members are interested. In this way, committee members – and particularly the chair, who establishes the committee schedule– exert significant influence on a bill’s fate. The remaining bills will “stay on the wall,” meaning they won’t be taken up for consideration right away, if at all. The committee will schedule testimony on a bill it takes up from experts, lobbyists (including VLCT staff), administration officials, and private citizens and will subsequently discuss the bill and any provided testimony. The committee may next redraft the bill, sometimes so significantly that only the bill’s title remains. The first person to talk to about a bill you’re interested in is your representative or senator, particularly if he or she sits on the committee of jurisdiction, i.e., the committee in which the bill resides.

If the committee members want to advance the bill, they will draft a committee report on it and put it on the Notice Calendar. When the bill is called up on the floor of the chamber in which it is introduced, a committee member will report the bill to the General Assembly (either the House of Representatives or the Senate); other legislators can ask about or provide commentary or suggest amendments to the bill, and will generally debate its pros and cons. Sometimes a bill will be sent to another committee for further review, consideration, and possible amending. Any bill that includes funding sources will be sent to the Appropriations or Ways and Means committees in the House or Finance Committee in the Senate for consideration of budgetary or revenue raising implications.

After floor discussion in the chamber in which the bill was introduced, the legislators will vote on whether it will be read a second time. If they vote in the affirmative, the bill is put on the Notice Calendar for a third reading the next day. Before third reading, the members may ask additional questions of the committee member reporting the bill and amendments may be added. If the bill is approved for a third reading, it is forwarded to the other chamber, where the entire process is repeated.

If the second chamber passes a different version of the same bill, a committee of conference is appointed to work out the differences. Should both houses agree to the committee of conference’s proposal (again via floor votes in each chamber), the bill is sent to the governor. The bill becomes law only when the govern signs it.

Throughout this process, there are lots of opportunities for a bill to die, and much of the job of the champions of legislation is to keep their bill – or at least the concepts it contains – alive and moving through the process in at least some semblance of recognizable form. Let the repartee continue!

Contact Jonathan Williams at 1-800-649-7915 or jwilliams@vlct.org.

The governor is scheduled to deliver his budget next **Wednesday, January 15, at two o’clock** in the House Chamber.

BILL NUMBER	NEW BILLS SUMMARY	CURRENT LOCATION
H.558	Would clarify that municipalities, in their land use bylaws, may regulate signage associated with certain listed uses.	House Government Operations
H.560	Would require law enforcement agencies to develop policies to resolve conflicts in the community and address misconduct without making arrests or filing criminal charges.	House Judiciary
H.561	Would require that all law enforcement agencies collect data on traffic stops including drivers' age, gender, race, and ethnicity.	House Judiciary
H.562	Would expand the range of speed limits that a legislative body may establish on unpaved town highways without an engineering and traffic investigation.	House Transportation
S.182	Would require a permit applicant for a potable water supply or wastewater system to own or control legally, through a permanent easement, the property necessary to meet the isolation distances required for the permit.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.184	Would require all law enforcement agencies to adopt a model eyewitness identification policy.	Senate Judiciary
S.189	Would update the Open Meeting Law's definition of meeting, clarify when a public body may enter into an executive session, and amend provisions related to meeting agendas.	Senate Government Operations
S.190	Would limit the redemption period following a tax sale of blighted property.	Senate Finance
S.191	Would require solar generation plants to comply with setback and screening requirements adopted by the municipality.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.196	Would remove the existing limit on the cumulative output capacity of net metering systems. Would require net metering customers to pay the monthly customer charge billed by the electric company as their contribution to the cost of maintaining and operating the grid.	Senate Finance
S.201	Would make changes to 30 V.S.A. § 248, the statute that governs siting review by the Public Service Board of electric generation and transmission and natural gas facilities, that include revising the standards for obtaining party status, creating a "friend of the Board" category of participants, assessing application fees for non-utility and nongovernmental facilities, and requiring substantial deference to the recommendations of local and regional bodies and to the local plan.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.203	Would create an independent Office of Energy Siting Counsel within the Office of the Attorney General to represent before the Public Service Board the interests of residents and municipalities affected by the siting of an electric generation or transmission or natural gas facility.	Senate Finance
S.206	Would establish funding for parties granted intervenor status in proceedings before the Public Service Board, create an Office of the Ratepayer Advocate overseen by a joint legislative Public Service Oversight Committee, and require that the Commissioner of Public Service may be removed from office only for cause.	Senate Finance
S.207	Would revise the traffic criterion of Act 250 to promote safe conditions for all forms of transportation, encourage development to connect existing and proposed networks for vehicular and nonvehicular travel, and manage transportation demand.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.208	Would require solid waste districts to annually submit specified data regarding solid waste services to the Secretary of Natural Resources; establish a Solid Waste Infrastructure Assistance Fund to provide financial assistance to solid waste districts and municipalities to construct, develop, or acquire infrastructure needed to meet pending requirements for the collection and recycling of mandated recyclables, leaf and yard residuals, and food residuals; and amend the beverage container redemption system to repeal the deposit on liquor containers and amend the definition of container to establish a volume limit for containers subject to deposit.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy

BILL NUMBER	NEW BILLS SUMMARY	CURRENT LOCATION
S.209	Would amend the laws requiring that all users of Vermont's transportation system be considered in all state and municipally managed transportation projects, and expand the jurisdiction of the Transportation Board to hear appeals related to the Agency of Transportation's or a municipality's determination not to accommodate these users in a transportation project.	Senate Transportation
S.211	Would permit public buildings to install sewage holding and pumpout tanks.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.214	Would increase the integration of municipal and regional land use planning with the designation of downtowns, village centers, and growth centers. Would enable the Vermont Downtown Development Board to adopt rules that provide a municipality with alternative methods to show that a growth center is sized correctly and enable that Board, when designating a growth center, to issue determinations on the center's compliance with Act 250 criteria, subject to appeal.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.215	Would require the Secretary of Natural Resources to submit to the General Assembly specific recommendations for administering, implementing, and financing water quality improvement in Vermont.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.217	Would amend the requirements for minutes that must be taken at a meeting of a public body, specifically requiring that minutes be taken and made available of executive sessions in which salaries to be paid for certain terminated employees are discussed.	Senate Government Operations
S.221	Would enact language explaining the statutory purpose for each tax expenditure listed in the biennial tax expenditure report.	Senate Finance
S.223	Would regulate the making of pension loans.	Senate Finance
S.224	Would require an Act 250 permit prior to the construction of a new structure, the expansion of an existing structure, and certain clearing of vegetation within the shorelands of lakes.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.229	Would exempt solid waste transporters in a municipality from the requirement, beginning July 1, 2015, to offer to collect mandated recyclables separated from other solid waste if the Secretary of Natural Resources has approved a solid waste implementation plan for the municipality, the approved plan delineates an area in the municipality where collection of mandated recyclable services is not required, and alternatives to services for collection of mandated recyclables is offered in that area.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.231	Would amend the requirements for the posting of land so that a property owner registers land as posted once, instead of annually.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.238	Would tax natural gas infrastructure under a different taxing scheme than Vermont's property tax system, eliminating any tax revenues from such facilities from going to towns or school districts.	Senate Finance
S.242	Would authorize the Public Service Board to regulate materials recovery recycling facilities in the state to create sufficient competition for recycling services.	Senate Finance
S.246	Would limit the exemption for municipally owned lakeshore land in another town to the statewide education tax only, while allowing the town to vote to exempt the land from municipal taxes.	Senate Finance
S.249	Would limit the amount of itemized deductions a taxpayer can take at the state level, and then use the money to lower the statewide education property tax rate for towns that keep their spending below the rate of inflation plus one percent.	Senate Finance
S.251	Would allow taxpayers 65 years of age and over to defer their property taxes until death.	Senate Finance
S.252	Would develop a financing mechanism for Green Mountain Care.	Senate Finance
S.254	Would create a transitional fund for transitional financing of Green Mountain Care.	Senate Finance
S.255	Would ensure that all employees accrue a minimum number of paid hours annually so they can take paid time from work to take care of the health and safety needs of themselves and their families.	Senate Economic Develop., Housing and General Affairs

BILL NUMBER	NEW BILLS SUMMARY	CURRENT LOCATION
S.258	Would require that any bill that affects the expenditures or revenues of the State or of a municipality be accompanied by a fiscal note when it is voted out of a standing committee of the General Assembly.	Senate Government Operations
S.259	Would allow school boards to adjust their budgets if the base education amount is raised between the voting of the original budget and the certification of budgets by the Agency of Education.	Senate Education
S.279	Would require that voter registration forms collected by someone other than the voter are delivered or mailed to the town clerk within seven days of the voter's signature.	Senate Government Operations
S.287	Would change the procedures for involuntary treatment and medication of mentally ill individuals, including (1) substituting a mandatory preliminary hearing for a voluntary preliminary hearing, (2) creating an expedited application for involuntary treatment, (3) enabling joint filing of certain applications for involuntary treatment and petitions for involuntary medication, and (4) eliminating automatic stays and automatic stays pending appeal for orders of involuntary medication.	Senate Judiciary
S.288	Would establish a Clean Water Legacy Fund to support activities that improve the water quality of the waters of the State. Would establish a Working Group on Water Quality Funding to review and recommend to the General Assembly a stable, reliable, and equitable source of financing to support actions that improve the quality of the State's surface waters.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.292	Would amend the Public Service Board's siting review process to require that energy facilities demonstrate that they will not result in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions and that electric generation facilities demonstrate that they are designed to minimize curtailment of their expected generation and include sufficient transmission facilities for that generation.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy
S.308	Would create a certification process and regulatory framework for precious metal dealers.	Senate Economic Develop., Housing and General Affairs
S.309	Would require that a psychiatrist order emergency involuntary procedures in psychiatric hospital units and in some circumstances at the secure residential recovery facility. Would require the Department of Mental Health to establish protocols for individuals received in an emergency department during a mental health crisis.	Senate Health and Welfare
S.310	Would direct that 50 percent of any funds released from escrow by the owners of Vermont Yankee be allocated to economic development authorities in the surrounding area to provide economic development assistance.	Senate Natural Resources & Energy

Local Government Day

On **Wednesday, February 19**, VLCT and the Vermont Municipal Clerks' and Treasurers' Association will present the 2014 **Local Government Day in the Legislature**. This annual special day at the Vermont State House allows local officials to learn firsthand about the status of pending legislation from VLCT and Vermont Municipal Clerks' and Treasurers' Association representatives, attend legislative hearings, and speak with their representatives and senators at the Vermont Legislature. Details will follow in subsequent *Reports*, or visit our website. www.vlct.org.