

VBA 2024 Legislative Report Week 2

The 2024 legislative session is off to a busy start. Lawmakers have already started to dive in to some of the big issues facing the state, with much more work to come in the weeks ahead. Some of the issues being discussed include:

HOUSING – The legislature’s continued response to the housing crisis will begin this year in Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs committee. While the legislature and the Administration generally agree on the big picture of what needs to happen, the devil will be in the details.

- Should Act 250 be amended to incentivize housing development in compact settlements? If so, how? And, if we amend Act 250, how can we ensure protections for our open and forested lands?
- The Administration has estimated that, as of today, we need upwards of 6800 new housing units at a cost of close to \$3 billion. Where will the money come from?

PUBLIC SAFETY – There is an escalating perception of a public safety crisis in many of our cities and towns. Much of the problems are driven by growing substance use disorder made worse by fentanyl and xylazine, lack of affordable housing and a corresponding increase in people experiencing homelessness, easy access to firearms, and a public safety workforce shortage.

- What can and should be done to address these issues is front and center for the House and Senate Judiciary committees. The Senate will hold a [Joint Hearing](#) with many stakeholders on January 17th.
- Last week the House passed a bill that would lay the legal groundwork to allow for overdose prevention centers and pay for a pilot program of two locations in the state. [The bill](#) calls for two such centers, likely to be in Burlington and Brattleboro. Overdose prevention centers are supervised locations where people using drugs can bring substances to use them with clean supplies. Staff on site can connect people with recovery resources and are prepared to reverse an overdose if needed, which advocates say helps to stem fatal overdoses and provide pathways for drug users to seek help. Gov. Phil Scott has suggested numerous times that he will veto the bill if it reached his desk. The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

BUDGET AND TAXES – This week state economists will deliver their latest revenue forecast for FY25. No one is expecting super good news. Next week the Governor will deliver his annual budget address. The mood is expected to be somber. With the massive amount of federal dollars received over the last four years all but spent and the needs of Vermonters growing, the FY 25 state budget is expected to be a tight one. Some of the increased spending needs are coming from major flood response, workforce shortages, housing, public health and safety, health care costs and education costs – all while we continue to have a static or only slowly growing tax base. The Governor may look at cutting some programs – something the legislature will likely resist. The

legislature may look to new taxes to meet some of the greatest needs – something the Governor will surely resist. There is a very chance that there will be another budget standoff this year.

HEADLINES OF NOTE

[Vermont Lawmakers Are Focused on Disaster Response, but Covering the Costs May Be Tough](#)

[Vermont Lawmakers Take Another Shot at Increasing Their Pay](#)

[Vermont House Contemplates Nixing THC Caps for Retail Cannabis](#)

[You Can Now Bet on Sports on Your Phone in Vermont](#)

[As Pandemic-Era Motel Program Nears April Cliff, Vermont Lawmakers Question Lack of Plan](#)

VBA ISSUES UPDATE

We expect the [House Government Operation committee](#) will develop a Miscellaneous Alcohol/DLL bill again this year. All new bills should be introduced by the end of January. At that time, the committee will take testimony from stakeholders and decide what provisions they want to include in their bill. No hearings are scheduled yet. Stay tuned.

VBA 2024 BILL TRACKER			
Bill	Sponsors	Description	Status
NEW BILLS INTRODUCED IN 2024 as of 1/13/24			
H 601	Rep. Lawrence Satcowitz	<p>An Act Relating To Prohibiting The Presence Of Toxic Chemicals In Plastic Packaging</p> <p>This bill proposes to prohibit the presence of certain high priority materials and high priority chemicals in packaging or packaging components sold or distributed in the State.</p>	<p>Committees: House Environment and Energy</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Energy (01/03/24)</p>
H 643	Rep. Lucy Boyden	<p>An Act Relating To The Sale Of Closed Containers Of Alcoholic Beverages Within A First- Or Third-class License Serving Area</p> <p>This bill proposes to allow the holder of any combination of first-, second-, and third-class licenses to sell closed containers of alcoholic beverages, for off-premises consumption, anywhere in first- or third-class licensed premises.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/04/24)</p>

<u>H 662</u>	Rep. Michael Marcotte; Rep. Woodman Page	<p>An Act Relating To The Merger Of Entities That Hold Separate Alcoholic Beverage Licenses</p> <p>This bill proposes to allow two or more licensed entities that have merged and formed a parent corporation to continue to hold separate alcoholic beverage licenses while operating under a unified payroll and administrative system.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/04/24)</p>
<u>H 680</u>	Rep. Katherine "Kari" Dolan; Rep. Matthew Birong; Rep. Stephanie Jerome	<p>An Act Relating To Expanding Access To Special Venue Serving Permits</p> <p>This bill proposes to allow any retail establishment to acquire a special venue serving permit from the Division of Liquor Control.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/04/24)</p> <p>The VBA GAC expressed some concern about this bill being a "slippery slope" allowing too many untrained people to serve alcohol.</p>
<u>H 726</u>	Rep. Kate Nugent	<p>An Act Relating To Compliance Checks By The Division Of Liquor Control</p> <p>This bill proposes to require the Division of Liquor Control to perform regular compliance checks of alcoholic beverage licensees.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read first time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/10/24)</p> <p>The VBA GAC expressed some concern about this bill. We will monitor it closely to understand what the sponsors intent it.</p>
BILLS INTRODUCED IN 2023 THAT ARE STILL "ALIVE"			
<u>H 7</u>	Rep. Anne Donahue	<p>An Act Relating To Replacing The Term "cider" With "hard Cider" Within Title 7</p> <p>This bill proposes to replace the term "cider" with "hard cider" within Title 7 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee</p>

			on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/05/23)
H 60	Rep. Matthew Birong	<p>An Act Relating To Fourth-class Licenses For Alcoholic Beverage Manufacturers</p> <p>This bill proposes to authorize the holder of a manufacturer's or rectifier's license to acquire not more than fourth-class licenses.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/18/23)</p>
H 78	Rep. Matthew Birong	<p>An Act Relating To Repealing The Sunset Of 7 V.s.a. § 230</p> <p>This bill proposes to repeal the sunset of 7 V.S.A. § 230 (sale of alcoholic beverages for off-premises consumption) to allow licensees to sell alcoholic beverages for pick up or delivery beyond July 1, 2023.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (01/20/23)</p>
H 158	Rep. Amy Sheldon; Rep. Dara Torre; Rep. Kristi Morris; Rep. Lawrence Satcowitz; Rep. Seth Bongartz	<p>An Act Relating To The Beverage Container Redemption System</p> <p>This bill proposes to expand the scope of beverages subject to the beverage container redemption system to include all drinks in liquid form and intended for human consumption, except for milk, dairy products, plant-based beverages, infant formula, meal replacement drinks, or nonalcoholic cider. The bill would also require all manufacturers and distributors of covered beverages to participate in a producer responsibility organization that shall manage the collection and disposition of beverage containers....</p>	<p>Committees: House Ways and Means; Senate Finance; Senate Natural Resources and Energy; Senate Appropriations; House Appropriations; House Environment and Energy</p> <p>Status: Veto of the Governor overridden by a vote of Yeas = 112, Nays = 32 (01/04/24)</p> <p>Senate will vote on override on 1/23/24.</p>
H 225	Rep. Joseph "Chip" Troiano; Rep. Avram Patt; Rep. Brian Cina; Rep. Dennis LaBounty; Rep. Emma Mulvaney-Stanak; Rep. James Carroll; Rep. James Masland; Rep. John Arrison; Rep. Josie Leavitt; Rep. Kate Logan; Rep. Kate McCann; Rep. Kristi Morris; Rep. Leslie	<p>An Act Relating To Eliminating The Tipped Minimum Wage</p> <p>This bill proposes to require that tipped employees are paid the standard minimum wage by 2024.</p>	<p>Committees: House General and Housing</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on General and Housing (02/10/23)</p> <p>VBA OPPOSES THIS BILL</p>

	Goldman; Rep. Michael Mrowicki; Rep. R. Scott Campbell; Rep. Robert "Bobby" Farlice-Rubio; Rep. Troy Headrick		
<u>H 261</u>	Rep. Logan Nicoll	<p>An Act Relating To Retail Delivery Of Alcoholic Beverages By Third-party Contractors</p> <p>This bill proposes to allow the holder of a second-class license and retail delivery permit to deliver certain alcoholic beverages to individuals 21 years of age or older through an approved third-party contractor and amend the provisions related to the permitted hours of sale.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (02/15/23)</p>
<u>H 272</u>	Rep. Matthew Birong	<p>An Act Relating To A Reciprocity Requirement For Out-of-state Consumer Shipping Licenses</p> <p>This bill proposes to limit the issuance of out-of-state malt beverage consumer shipping licenses to breweries that are located in states that allow Vermont brewers to acquire consumer shipping licenses.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (02/16/23)</p>
<u>H 273</u>	Rep. Matthew Birong	<p>An Act Relating To Direct-to-consumer Shipping Of Spirits And Fortified Wines</p> <p>This bill proposes to authorize a manufacturer of spirits or fortified wines to acquire a consumer shipping license and ship the manufacturer's products directly to consumers in Vermont.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (02/16/23)</p>
<u>H 417</u>	Rep. Kelly Pajala; Rep. Logan Nicoll	<p>An Act Relating To Drink Specials</p> <p>This bill proposes to permit a first- class licensee to sell malt and vinous beverages at a reduced price during a period of not more than two hours each day. It also proposes to permit a third- class licensee to sell spirits and fortified wines at a reduced price during a period of not more than two hours each day.</p>	<p>Committees: House Government Operations and Military Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (02/28/23)</p> <p>VBA SUPPORTS THIS BILL</p>

<u>S 60</u>	Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale; Sen. Thomas Chittenden	<p>An Act Relating To Local Option Taxes</p> <p>This bill proposes to authorize: (1) any Vermont municipality to adopt a one percent local option tax on sales, meals and alcoholic beverages, and rooms; and (2) the Commissioner of Taxes to disclose a municipality's local option tax data to the town manager or legislative body of that municipality, provided that the disclosure subjects the recipient to the penalties for unauthorized disclosure of confidential tax data.</p>	<p>Committees: Senate Finance; House Government Operations and Military Affairs; Senate Finance?</p> <p>Status: Read First Time and referred to the Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs (04/11/23)</p>
<u>S 86</u>	Sen. Richard Westman	<p>An Act Relating To Replacing The Term "cider" With "hard Cider" Within Title 7</p> <p>This bill proposes to replace the term "cider" with "hard cider" within Title 7 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated.</p>	<p>Committees: Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read 1st time & referred to Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (02/16/23)</p>
<u>S 107</u>	Sen. Richard Westman	<p>An Act Relating To Authorizing Off-site Tasting Rooms For Alcoholic Beverage Manufacturers</p> <p>This bill proposes to allow holders of a manufacturer's or rectifier's license to acquire a first-class license to sell their products at a tasting room that is not located on property contiguous with the manufacturing location.</p>	<p>Committees: Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read 1st time & referred to Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (02/24/23)</p>
<u>S 110</u>	Sen. Richard Westman; Sen. Kesha Ram Hinsdale	<p>An Act Relating To Direct-to-consumer Shipping Of Spirits And Fortified Wines</p> <p>This bill proposes to authorize a manufacturer of spirits or fortified wines to acquire a consumer shipping license and ship the manufacturer's products directly to consumers in Vermont.</p>	<p>Committees: Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs</p> <p>Status: Read 1st time & referred to Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs (02/28/23)</p>