

VBA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - WEEK 1 JANUARY 11, 2025

2025 VERMONT LEGISLATURE CONVENES

The 2025-2026 Vermont Legislative Session kicked off on Wednesday, January 8, 2025. There were leadership challenges expected in both the House and Senate, but in the end Senate President Pro Tempore [Phil Baruth](#) (D-Chittenden Central) faced no opposition and was unanimously reelected to the role. On the House side, Representative [Laura Sibilia](#) (I-Dover) challenged incumbent Speaker [Jill Krowinski](#) (D-Burlington) but came up short. Speaker Krowinski handily won reelection, with significant bipartisan support, by a vote of 111-35.

In addition to electing new leadership, both the Senate and the House made new committee assignments this week. On the Senate side, of the 11 standing Senate committees, 9 will have new leadership this session. Senator [Andrew Perchlik](#) (D-Washington) will be the new Chair of Senate Appropriations Committee Chair and Senator [Ann Cummings](#) (D-Washington) will continue to chair Senate Finance. Senator [Alison Clarkson](#) (D-Windsor) will take over as Chair of the Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee, which is the committee that also handles all liquor and DLL matters. Senator Clarkson has generally been favorable to Vermont brewers in the past.

On the House side, six of the 14 standing committees will have new leaders. Representative [Robin Scheu](#) (D-Middlebury) will take-over as Chair of House Appropriations. Representative Matt Birong will be the new Chair of [House Government Operations and Military Affairs](#), which is the committee that handles all liquor and DLL matters in the House. [Rep. Birong](#), previously a restaurant owner in Vergennes, still operates a catering/food truck and is well-versed in issues of interest to Vermont's craft beer industry.

GOVERNOR SCOTT SWORN IN FOR A FIFTH TERM

On Thursday, Governor Phil Scott (R) was sworn in for his fifth term and gave his inaugural address. The Governor's speech highlighted major challenges facing the state, especially as the population ages and there are fewer workers and students. He asked legislators to prioritize three key issues in order to make gains on all Vermont's challenges: affordability, housing, and education.

On housing, he outlined his Administration's strategy to make it easier to build homes and revitalize those in disrepair. This included strengthening and expanding infrastructure, revitalizing neglected communities, bringing in smaller-scale community investment partners and homebuilders, and smart regulatory reform.

The Governor also highlighted Vermont's education quality and affordability crisis and outlined the framework for his Administration's education reform plan. The new proposal will include a new "student-centered funding formula" to provide more and better opportunities for kids and get costs under control. He will also propose a new, simpler governance structure to deliver "a better and more equal education across communities." Finally, his proposal will provide school boards and

administrators with “support and guardrails to reduce cost pressures.” The full transcript of the Governor’s address is [here](#).

HEADLINES OF NOTE

[Capitol Recap: Phil Scott teases a big education overhaul proposal](#)

[Gov. Scott comes out swinging on education funding during inaugural address](#)

[Republicans to assume greater committee leadership in the Vermont House this year](#)

VBA BILL REPORT

Bills are just beginning to be introduced. We expect many more bills of interest will be coming in the weeks ahead.

| VBA 2025 Bill Report As of 1/11/25 | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|
| Bill | Sponsors | Description | Status |
| H 24 | Rep. Anne Donahue | An Act Relating To Requiring Retail Businesses To Accept Cash This bill proposes to prohibit a retail business from refusing to accept cash payment. | Committees: House Commerce and Economic Development Status: Read first time and referred to the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development (01/09/25) |