



Legislative Report

FINAL: 2022 Session

Representative Scott Campbell
St. Johnsbury • Concord • Kirby



June 2022

It has been a privilege and honor to serve St. Johnsbury as State Representative the last four years. I look forward to visiting with and learning the concerns of Concord and Kirby residents this summer and fall, and to representing them as well next biennium.

Scott

The 2022 session started in peak pandemic on Zoom, transitioned to hybrid, and finished almost entirely in-person despite many members out with covid. Federal relief funding to State and local governments and individuals swelled the budget to \$8.3 billion, more than 30% higher than pre-pandemic.

Allocating the new money appropriately, so as to close gaps and build prosperity without busting future budgets, proved challenging. But much excellent legislation passed and was signed by the Governor — with a few big disappointments.

About a third of both House and Senate members decided not to seek re-election, the most in recent memory. Nine of fourteen House committee chairs are retiring, along with four of six statewide elected officials (Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer), leaving only Governor and State Auditor running again.

In many ways, 2022 was -- and is -- a watershed year. This report is a summary of what was on our plate legislatively, and what we accomplished.

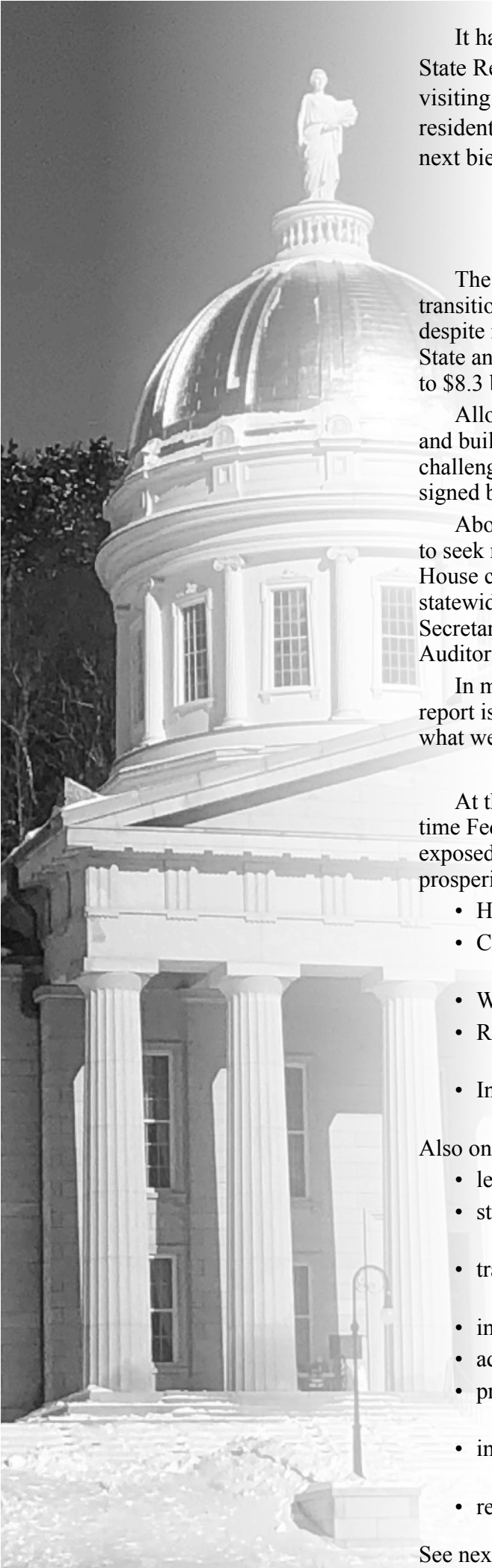
At the start of the session, top of the list was leveraging one-time Federal dollars to address systemic problems starkly exposed by the pandemic and position Vermont for long-term prosperity. Key priorities included:

- Housing: building new, rehabbing, weatherizing
- Childcare: making available and affordable for parents, with living wages for providers
- Workers: improving training, incentives, pay and benefits
- Resilience: transforming Vermont's economy to meet the climate disruption, both environmental and economic
- Infrastructure: building broadband, cellphone service, and grid upgrades, and upgrading roads and bridges

Also on the must-do list (and Why):

- legislative redistricting (required by 10-year census)
- stabilizing teacher and state employee pension system (per last year's task force report)
- transforming Vermont State College System (after near-closure in 2020)
- improving equity in school funding (task force)
- advancing clean water work (Federal EPA requirements)
- protecting biodiversity and intact ecosystems (ever-increasing stress and threat of collapse)
- improving mental health and substance use services (pandemic and social stress, drug-deaths peak in 2021)
- recognizing and addressing social inequities (it's time)

See next page for overview of bills.





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ST. JOHNSBURY, CONCORD, KIRBY

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Housing

Two housing bills make policy changes and significant investments. **S.210*** offers property owners grants to bring unused rental units back online, and provides for Div. of Fire Safety inspections to supplement overworked town officials. **S.226** supports affordable and middle-income homeowners, and brings basic consumer protection with a builder registry.

Childcare

Act 45 of 2021 increased provider pay and set a goal of limiting a family's childcare expense to 10% of income. Following up, **H.265** creates an Office of Child, Youth & Family Advocate to identify strategies to overcome inequities and shortfalls in our childcare systems.

Workforce

The culmination of years of work, **S.11** supports training and workforce development in healthcare, building trades and technical and other fields, with special focus on under-represented people and regions. The bill also authorizes review and coordination of all training programs to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Resilience

Pandemic relief funding in the budget bill is enabling a large expansion of weatherization efforts, both for lower- and moderate-income households. Expertise gained from the State Energy Management Program, as well as incentives, will be made available to towns and municipalities by **H.518**. The annual transportation "T-bill," **H.736**, includes funding for electric and high-efficiency vehicle incentives, EV infrastructure, and zero-fare transit and other public transportation. The Clean Heat Standard, **H.715**, was vetoed by the Governor, despite the Legislature including measures he requested. The bill would have reduced our vulnerability to unregulated and highly volatile fossil fuel heating prices, and offered fuel dealers a path to a more sustainable business model.

Infrastructure

Act 71 of 2021 set up communications union districts to bring broadband to remote regions. (Our own NEK Community Broadband was established as a result.) This year's budget adds further significant investment of pandemic relief funding. The T-bill includes a substantial increase in paving and road repair funding. Clean water projects, including drinking water, wastewater and stormwater, and runoff management, also gets a big boost.

**Links accessible in online version on website.*

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Redistricting

It's a thorny process. Every change affects every other district. Inevitably some are unhappy with the result. Kirby unfortunately is connected to Caledonia County in its **House** district, and to Essex in the **Senate**.

Pensions

A Pension Task Force of legislators, government officials and union representatives last fall reached a balanced compromise to stabilize the system. Governor Phil Scott vetoed the resulting bill, **S.286**. House and Senate both unanimously overrode his veto.

Vermont State Colleges

NVU Lyndon and Johnson, VT Tech and Castleton are combining into Vermont State University. The Legislature is recommitting support with significant financial resources, and setting goals and metrics, to ensure VSU's future success at all campuses.

Equity in School Funding

A 2019 UVM study found large inequities in current school funding, specifically in the "pupil weights" used in the calculation of each district's funding and taxing capacity. **S.287** implements the findings. St. Johnsbury should see a slight benefit. Kingdom East will see more.

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Protection

The Community Resilience and Biodiversity Act, **H.606**, was vetoed by the Governor after adjournment. It would have set a goal to conserve 30% of Vermont's land by 2030 and 50% by 2050, to preserve habitat and ecosystems for future generations. A bill to improve Act 250 governance, **S.234**, was likewise vetoed. It would have professionalized and streamlined Act 250 review, enabled denser village development and preserved forest blocks. (Some elements of S.234 were put into S.226.)

Mental Health and Substance Use Services

Pandemic isolation and stress have added to a crisis. **S.197** targets youth services. The budget includes base pay increases for providers. **H.711** and **H.728** focus on on emergency opioid response and long-term abatement.

Addressing Social Inequities

In 2019, the Legislature established the Office of Racial Equity, and last year issued **an apology** to Vermonters and their descendants who suffered harm from eugenics policies in the 1900s. This year, **H.96** establishes a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to research and investigate systemic discrimination caused or permitted by State laws and policies, and recommend remedial action. The events of the last two years highlight the need to grapple with these issues.

