

Education and the 2021 Legislative Session

January 7, 2021

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AGENDA

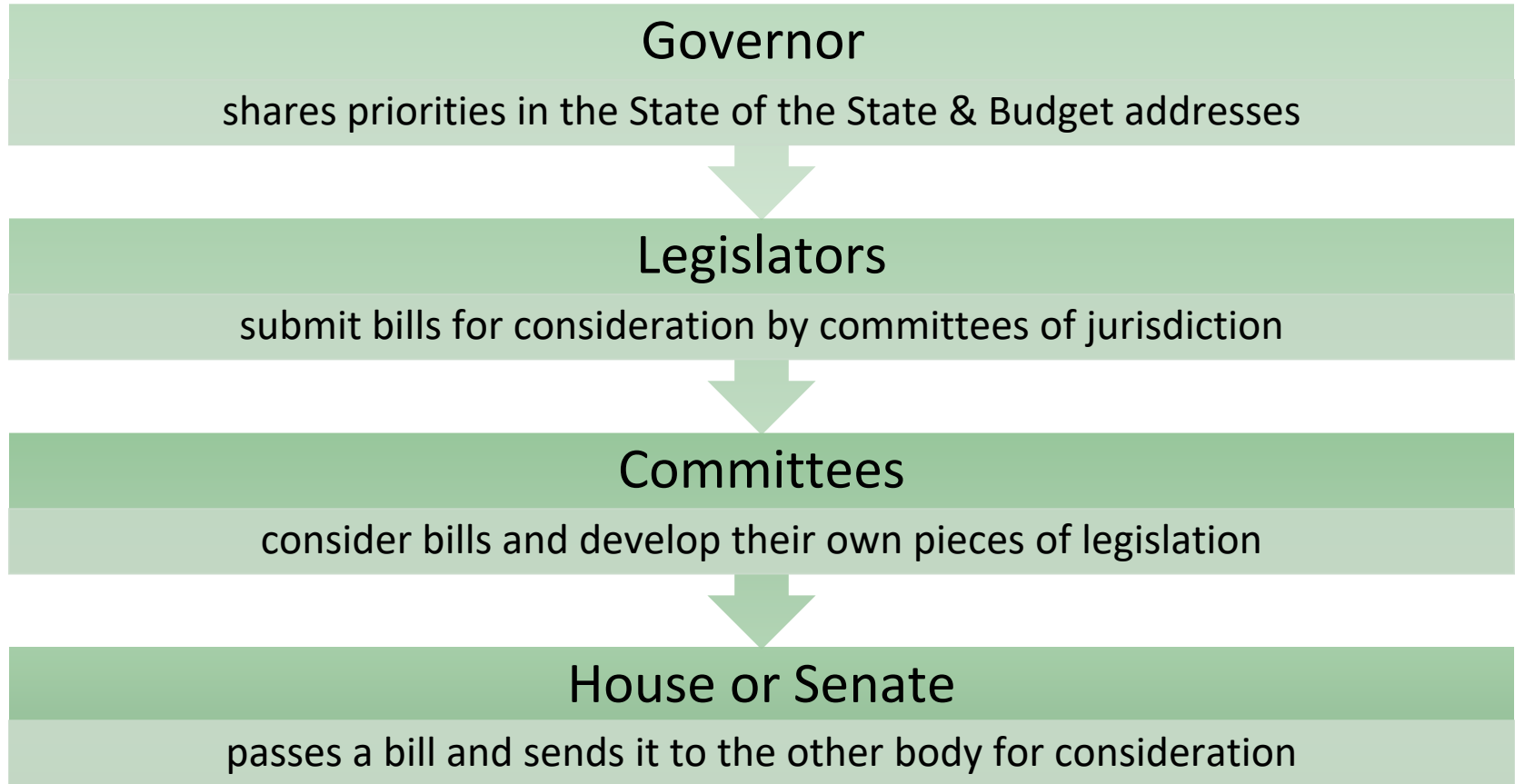
- Overview of the Legislative Process
- Overview of the 2021 Political Environment
- VSBA Resolutions
- School Boards as Advocates in 2021

Overview of the Legislative Process

Overview of the VT General Assembly

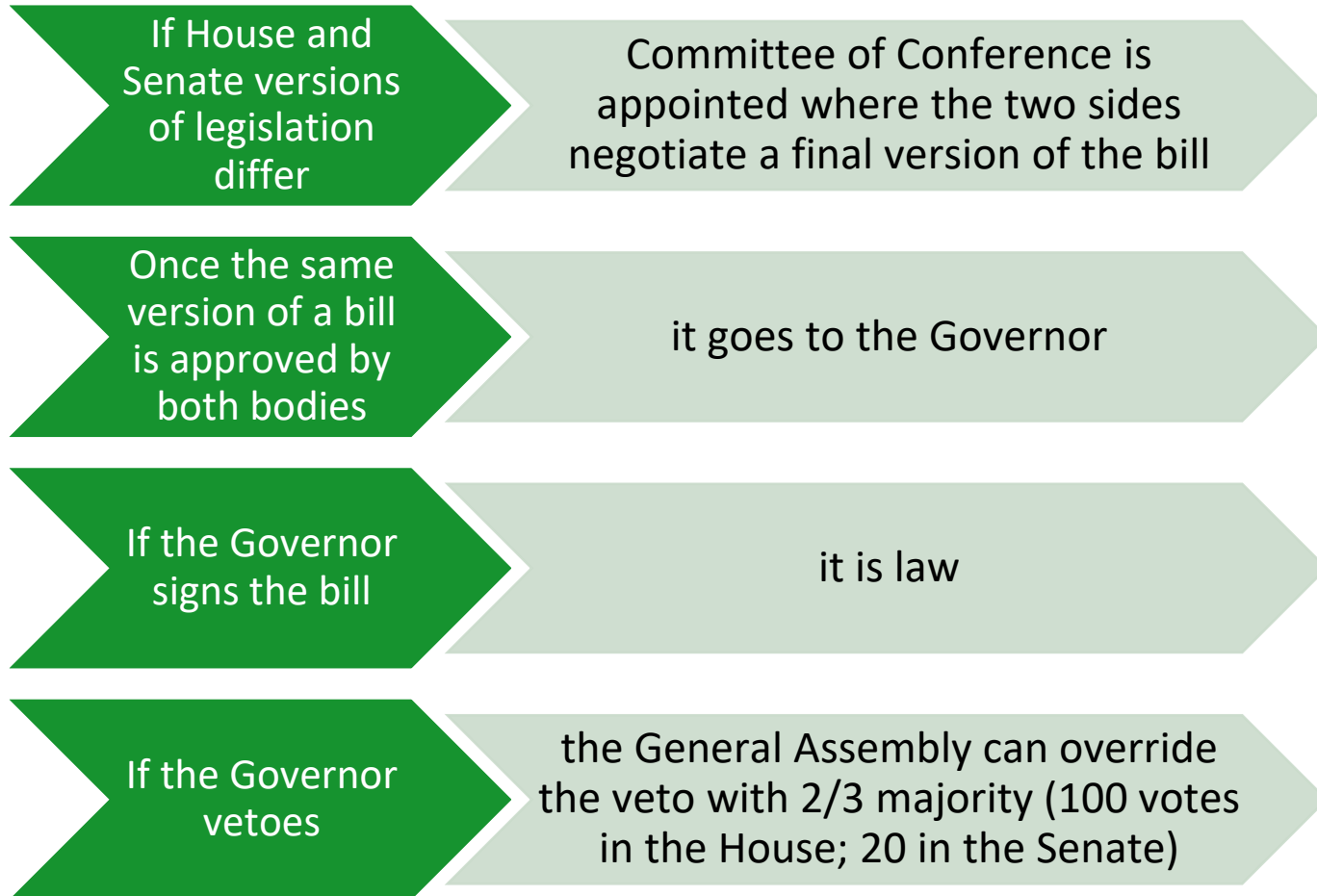
- House - 150 Representatives
- Senate - 30 Senators
- Two year terms
- Convenes in January for a biennial term - typically adjourns in May
- Staff limited to legislative counsel and joint fiscal office
- Committees of interest:
 - Education; Appropriations; Finance (Ways and Means); Institutions; Government Operations; Health and Welfare

Overview of Legislative Process (1 of 2)



*Infographic summarizing [how a bill becomes a law](#)

Overview of Legislative Process (2 of 2)



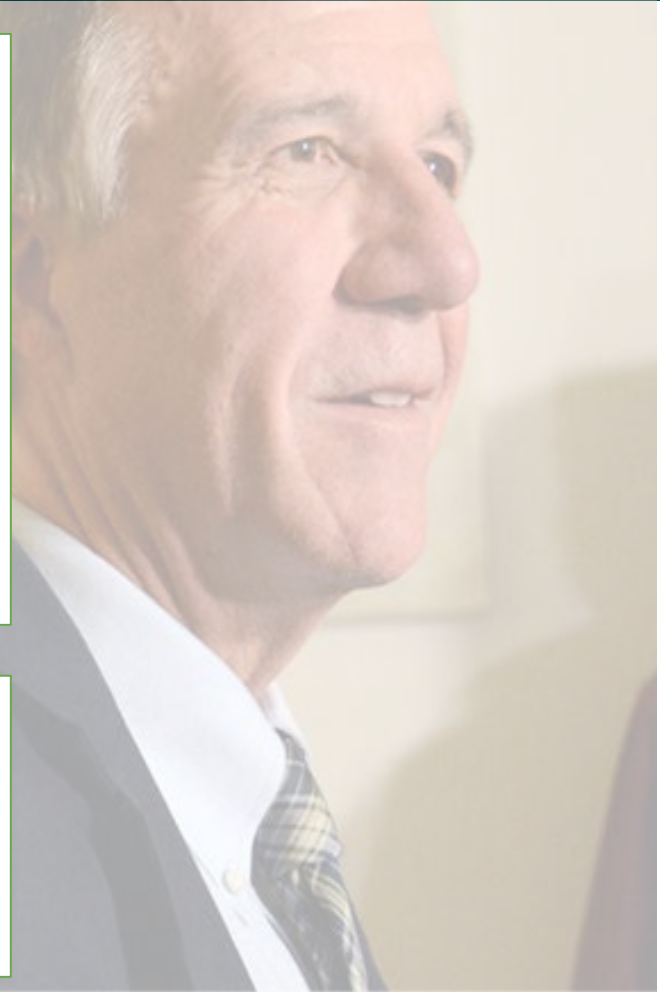


Overview of 2021 Political Environment

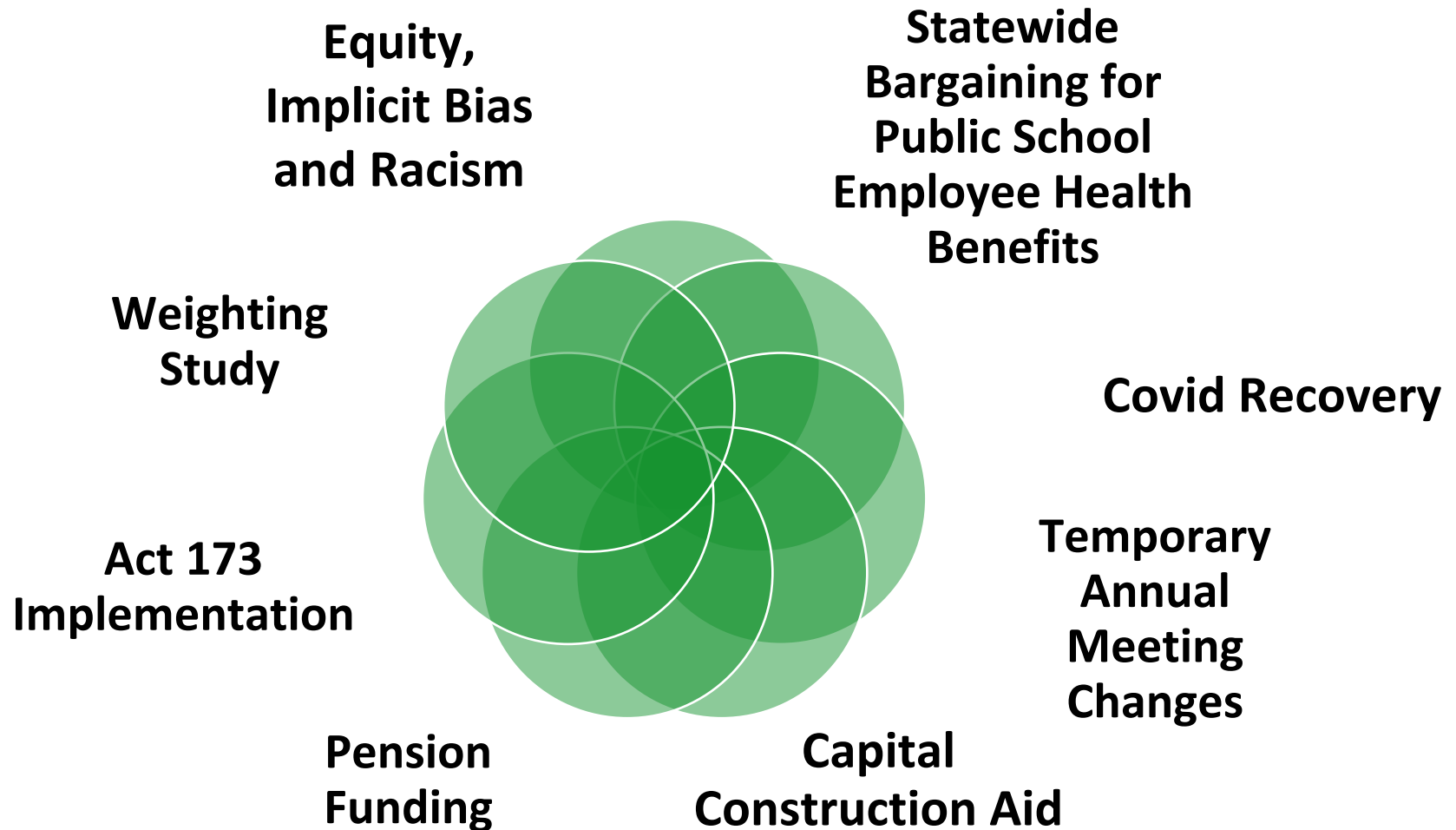
2021 Political Environment

Education Committees

- **Rep. Kate Webb continues as Chair of House Ed**
 - Returning committee members: Vice-Chair: Cupoli of Rutland City; Ranking Member: Conlon of Cornwall; Austin of Colchester; Hooper of Randolph; James of Manchester; Toof of St. Albans Town
 - New committee members: Arrison of Weathersfield; Brady of Williston; Brown of Richmond; Williams of Granby
- **Leadership prioritizes essential COVID-19 topics**
 - Learning
 - School / Government operations
 - Economy
 - Logistics of General Assembly



2021 Policy Issues Impacting Education



December 1 Tax Commissioner's Letter

*[Link to the December 1 Letter](#)

Summary:

- Predicts average 9% increase on education property tax bills (w/o intervention)
- Projects \$38.9m cost of teachers' retirement to the Education Fund (5x FY20)
- Does not include consideration of Education Fund deficit (\pm \$58m)
*as stated in the letter
- Assumes 3.75% increase in education spending
- Does not factor in any potential Federal Relief

NEW: Tax Calculator:

- expected in February
- districts can calculate how different per pupil spending amounts will impact tax rates at a variety of income & property value levels

H.48 - Annual Meeting

Allows municipal legislative body to vote to:

- (1) move the date of the 2021 annual meeting to a date later in 2021 and
- (2) require the municipal clerk to mail Australian Ballots to all of the registered active voters in the municipality

Current information is that this bill will be expedited and could be sent to the Governor for his signature very early in the session



VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2021

[VSBA Resolutions:](https://www.vtvsba.org/public-policy)

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VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2021 (1 of 5)

- **ADDRESSING EQUITY, QUALITY AND COST EFFECTIVENESS** The VSBA supports initiatives that are designed to create greater equity in high quality learning opportunities and to achieve cost effectiveness. Such initiatives shall focus on the needs of the students and taxpayers of the state of Vermont. Any initiative that impacts our governance structure or funding system must be designed in a way that reflects our community values. School boards are in the best position to inform this process and must be fully engaged in this effort. The VSBA will work with the General Assembly and our members to support initiatives at the state, regional, and local level that will address our challenges while maintaining and strengthening local communities.

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VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2021 (2 of 5)

- **EQUALIZATION** - It is the duty of the State of Vermont to ensure fiscal equity for all school districts to allow equal educational opportunities for all students. Significant state expenditure is required to equalize the financial resources of districts and maintain the educational opportunities of students.
- **EQUITY AND ANTI-RACISM** The VSBA should demonstrate and promote the unequivocal, collective responsibility for equitable and inclusive education environments by recognizing, responding, and speaking out against injustice and racial inequity...VSBA commits to:
 1. promote and support implicit bias training for all faculty and staff in Vermont public schools, including athletic and co-curricular personnel, and officials across the state (see H.714 of 2020); and
 2. promote professional learning for school leaders and school board members that include but not be limited to: Equity Literacy, Curriculum Audits, Review Protocols for Examining Bias in School Policies and Procedures, Culturally Responsive Instruction and School Culture, Student Leadership and Voice, and Examining Power and Privilege in Schools.

VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2021 (3 of 5)

- **FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING OBLIGATIONS, EDUCATIONAL EQUITY, FUNDING ADEQUACY, UNFUNDED MANDATES** The school boards of Vermont request the state and federal governments provide the financial resources promised in preexisting laws as well as provide for new burdens placed on public schools by the pandemic and beyond, and ... that the state and federal governments must provide this financial support in a manner that ensures our children receive the necessary academic, physical and emotional resources, not by privileges and advantages for some but by the opportunities we generously bestow upon all.
- **HOLD HARMLESS STUDENT EDUCATION DURING A STATE OF EMERGENCY** Vermont's PK-12 students should be held harmless from reductions to the education funds available to school districts. Vermont's school districts should be given the necessary resources to operate their schools in a safe manner during a declared state of emergency in Vermont.

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VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2021 (4 of 5)

- **EMOTIONAL WELLNESS OF STUDENTS** The VSBA urges the General Assembly to expand funding support to local schools to increase the availability of mental health counseling, emotional wellness, and psychological supports to students as VT schools return to class during the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. These efforts will further support schools meeting Vermont's Agency of Education's Education Quality Standards, specifically Healthy and Safe Schools through the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model's domains 4 and 7.
- **REFORM THE EDUCATION TAX SYSTEM** - The General Assembly should examine alternative funding sources for our education system that are more equitable and sustainable, rather than continue a system that predominantly relies on the property tax for revenue.

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VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2021 (5 of 5)

- **BROADBAND ACCESS FOR EDUCATION** That providing universal access to high speed broadband services for every student and family in Vermont must be a goal of the highest order for the government of the State of Vermont. And, where access to such broadband services is available but cannot be reasonably afforded by families with students in our schools, that some form of financial support should be made available to those families (although not as an additional unfunded cost to the school districts) to ensure that the students in those families have the high speed broadband service necessary to support their education
- **AUSTRALIAN BALLOT FOR DISTRICT VOTES** State statute (17 V.S.A. § 2680) should be amended to provide school districts with the option to engage voters directly with Australian ballot questions without first conducting a district meeting in order to make a decision by Australian ballot.

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School Boards as Advocates in 2021

School Boards as Advocates in 2021

- Establish a relationship with your legislators. Be a credible source of information on education issues impacting your community.
- Focus messages to legislators on the effect proposed legislation on students, not on you as a board.
- Present your point of view to legislators in language they will understand.
- Because of the many last-minute changes which a bill can undergo, when possible support positions and principles rather than specific legislation.

VSBA Resources to Support Advocacy

- Regular legislative updates via the VSBA Legislative blog: <https://www.vtvsba.org/blog>
- Three legislative session reports from the Vermont Education Legislative Collaborative
- VSBA Updates and Action Alerts
- Commentary and Testimony on our website
- Connections with legislators and committees

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