

# Education and the 2020 Legislative Session

February 6, 2020

**Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director**  
**Sandra Cameron, Director of Public Policy**

# Introductions

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# Webinar Logistics

- PowerPoint presentation
- Question box to ask questions. Questions are always welcome!
- Evaluation form when you exit the webinar
- E-mail follow-up to each participant with summary information, video, and PowerPoint slides
- Archives at [VTVSBA.org](http://VTVSBA.org) and on the VSBA Youtube channel

# Agenda!

- Overview of the Legislative Process
- Overview of the 2020 Political Environment
- VSBA Resolutions
- School Boards as Advocates in 2020



# Overview of the Legislative Process



# Overview of the VT General Assembly

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- An aerial photograph of the Vermont General Assembly chamber. The room is large and ornate, with a high ceiling and a patterned carpet. Rows of wooden desks are arranged in a semi-circle, facing a central area. Many people are seated at the desks, some looking towards the center. The room is well-lit, and the overall atmosphere is formal.
- 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; Agriculture, Appropriations; Finance (Ways and Means); Institutions; Government Operations; Health and Welfare

# Overview of Legislative Process

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## Governor

shares priorities in the State of the State & Budget addresses



## Legislators

submit bills for consideration by committees of jurisdiction



## Committees

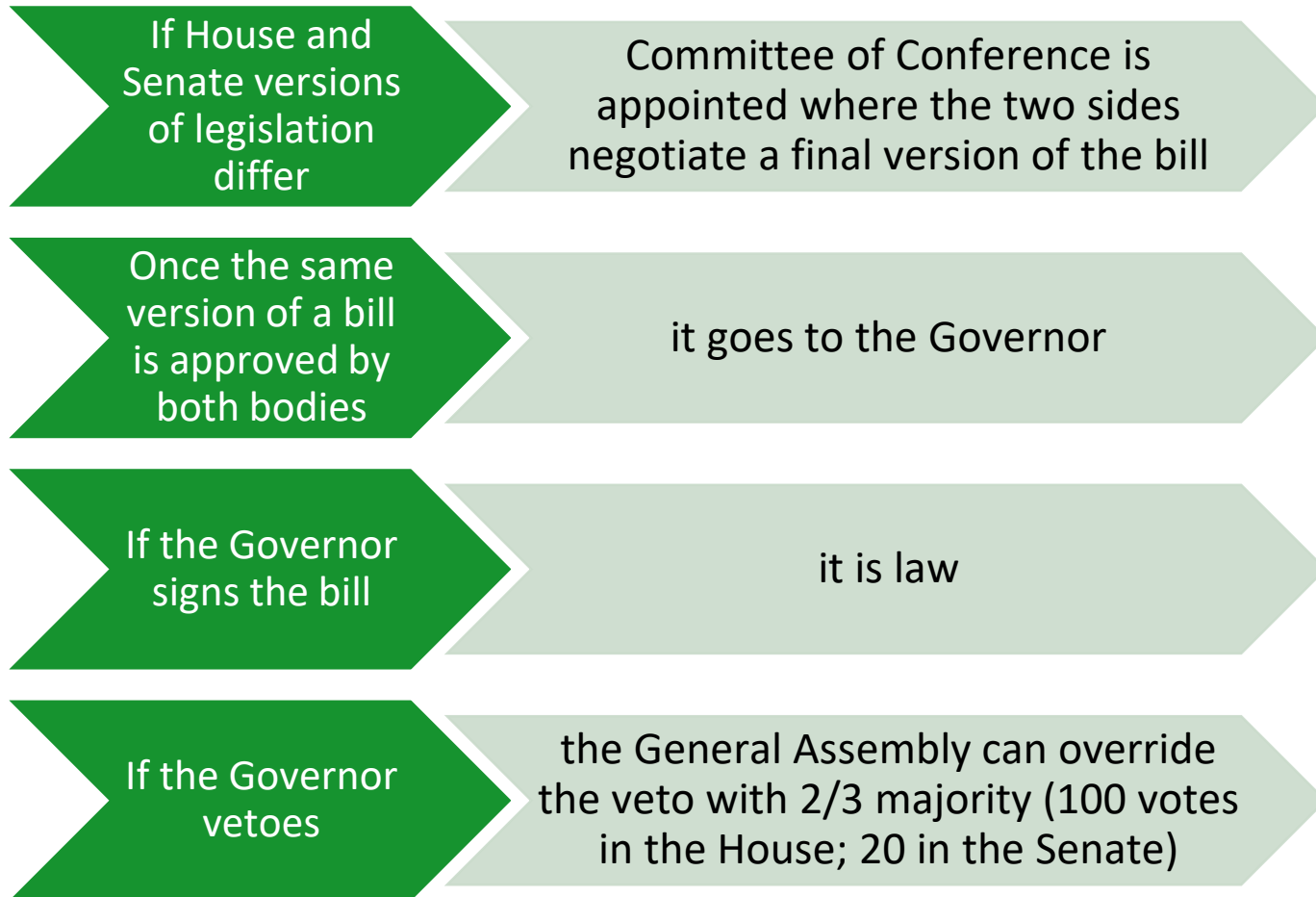
consider bills and develop their own pieces of legislation



## House or Senate

passes a bill and sends it to the other body for consideration

# Overview of Legislative Process









A photograph of the Vermont State Capitol building in winter. The building is a large, light-colored stone structure with a prominent central dome topped by a statue. The foreground is covered in snow, and bare tree branches frame the top and sides of the image. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

# Overview of 2020 Political Environment

# 2020 Political Environment

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- **Democrats in the General Assembly hold a veto-proof majority**
- **Impact of arbitrator's decision in statewide bargaining on budgets to be determined**
- **Multitude of special interests proposing legislation affecting education**
- **Weighting Study implications and implementation under consideration**



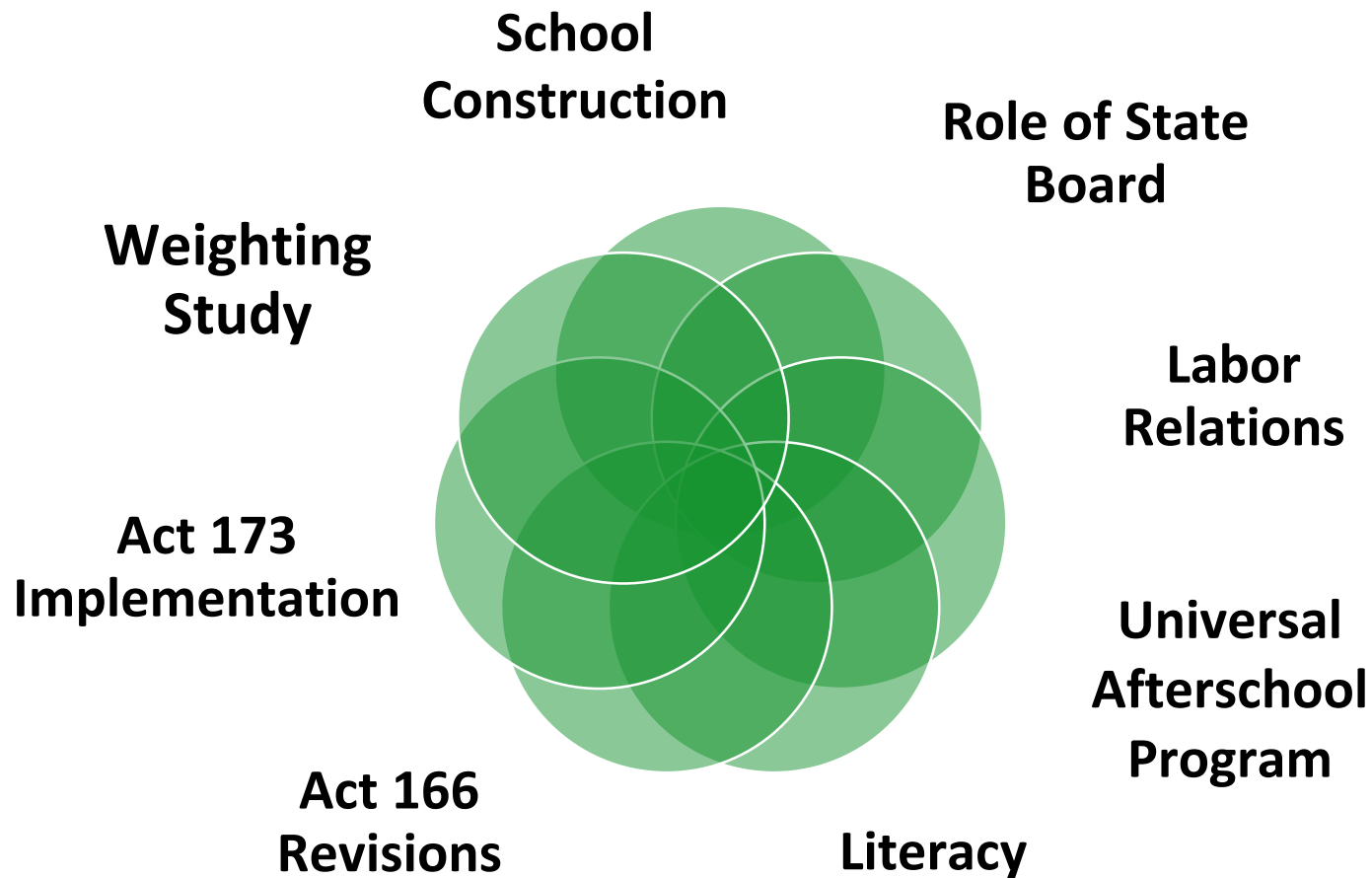
# December 1 Tax Commissioner's Letter

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- Predicts average homestead tax rate and non-residential rates will increase by 6 cents
- Assumes 5.53% growth in education spending
- States that if budget growth could be restrained to 1.4% cumulatively (1.9% per pupil) average statewide rates could stay the same as the current year. Average tax bills would still increase 2.16% under that scenario due to rising property values and incomes.

# 2020 Policy Issues Impacting Education

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# 2020 Policy Issues Impacting Education

**School Construction - there is interest in considering legislation that would reinstate school construction aid, which was suspended in 2007.**

## **Labor Relations Bills:**

**S.226 - statewide bargaining for public school employee health benefits**

**H.805 - collective bargaining rights of teachers**

**S.254 - union organizing**



# 2020 Policy Issues Impacting Education

## Role of State Board

- State Board of Education currently has authority to adopt all rules - draft committee bill **20-0777** proposes to transfer various duties and responsibilities from the State Board of Education to the Secretary of Education to permit the State Board to focus on long term strategy and high priority educational issues.
- Series 1100 - State Department of Education—organization and administration
- Series 2300 - Length of School Day and Year; Vermont GED; Driver Education
- Series 4500 - Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Schools
- Series 4000 – Pupils—conduct of students; home study students
- Series 6000 - School Buildings and Sites---building requirements for eligibility for State aid
- Series 6001 - 6005 - School Bus Idling
- Series 6300 - General Rules for Prequalification of Bidders on Contracts over \$500,000
- Series 6400 - Construction Management—to ensure a fair and open process
- Series 7000 - Relationship with Public, Other Agencies, and Institutions—list of relationships
- Series 8100 - School Lunch Programs
- Series 8200 - Child and Adult Care Food Program-
- Series 9000 - Public Bids--process Series 9100 - Net Cost Per Pupil—tuition rates
- Series 9200 - Full-time Equivalent Enrollment of Pupils—ADM calculation
- Series 9300 - Allowable and Extraordinary Transportation Expenditures
- Series 9400 - Sliding Scales Calculation—this rule is no longer in effect
- Series 9500 - Reporting Students for Whom English Is Not the Primary Language
- Series 10000 - Coordination of Services to Children and Adolescents with a Severe Emotional Disturbance—coordination among agencies Uniform School Calendar—for 1996-97 Unsafe School Choice Option Policy—to allow students to transfer to another school in the district if the student is unsafe

# **2020 Policy Issues Impacting Education**

**Act 173 Implementation - connection to Weighting Study and ensuring professional development**

**Weighting Study - committees are analyzing it and how it may be utilized, especially with respect to the interconnectivity to Act 173**

# 2020 Policy Issues Impacting Education

## **Act 166 Revisions - Draft 3.1**

- The House Education Committee is working on a bill, which proposes, among other considerations, to eliminate joint administration by the AOE and AHS, to require that school districts that pay tuition for prekindergarten education use uniform forms and processes developed by the AOE, and to simplify and clarify the quality criteria for prekindergarten providers.



# 2020 Policy Issues Impacting Education

**Literacy - connection to DMG Report and Act 173. House Education Committee is considering how best to address literacy through Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**

**Universal Afterschool Program - S.335 creates a 15 member Task Force to consider and recommend framework for and cost of this program beginning no later than June 30, 2020**



VERMONT  
SCHOOL  
BOARDS  
ASSOCIATION

VSBA Resolutions  
Applicable in 2020



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# VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2020

- **ROLE OF THE SCHOOL BOARD** - Education in Vermont is overseen by local school boards. Each local board serves as the Board of Trustees for education on behalf of the entire community. It is entrusted with assuring that the young people of the community receive a high quality education and that taxpayers are receiving an excellent return on their investment of tax dollars.
- **THE ESSENTIAL WORK OF SCHOOL BOARDS** - Create a vision for education in the community; Establish policy parameters to carry out that vision; Hire a superintendent to administer the district to achieve the vision; Monitor progress toward the vision; Develop and adopt a budget to support the vision and monitor plan vs actual expenses; Advocate for education within the community. Be sure your community understands the needs of the local education system and is supportive of the education being provided to young people; Meet other legal requirements; Be sure the system is operated ethically.

# VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2020

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- **COST CONTAINMENT:** The VSBA advises the Vermont General Assembly to allow reasonable time for school districts to plan for cost containment legislation and refrain from passing legislation that affects budgets already adopted by school boards or approved by voters.
- **COST CONTAINMENT:** The VSBA supports the study and consideration of the costs associated with providing social services when making funding decisions and in setting any ratios.

# VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2020

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- **SUPERVISORY UNIONS:** The General Assembly should examine the laws governing Supervisory Union board structure and the process for waiving the statutory requirements for SU board structure or composition, taking into account issues of fairness, equity and funding.

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# VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2020

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- **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...



# VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2020

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- **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.
- **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.

# VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2020

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- **USE OF THE EDUCATION FUND** - The VSBA opposes any diversion of funds raised through the statewide property tax to programs not within the jurisdiction of public school districts or supervisory unions.
- **UNFUNDED MANDATES** - All new educational requirements or programs mandated by the federal government or the State of Vermont should be fully funded by either the federal or state government.

# VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2020

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- **LOCAL DECISION MAKING** - Local school boards have been given responsibilities to oversee public education and to make the important decisions necessary to assure the provision of high quality education in an efficient and effective manner; they must be assured that there is no state interference in their decision-making responsibilities.
- **THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN EDUCATION** - In order to accomplish these goals, the Agency of Education must be properly staffed and resourced. VSBA desires to be a strong partner with the State Board of Education in overseeing Vermont's education system. VSBA believes that the State Board should include an active school board member, an administrator and a teacher.

# VSBA Resolutions Applicable in 2020

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- **EARLY EDUCATION** - The VSBA encourages the General Assembly to create universal access to pre-kindergarten education, through a system that emphasizes equity, quality, and simplicity. School districts should play a central role in assuring quality and accountability in publicly funded early education programs. Private providers of early education services that meet high standards can and should play significant roles as partners with school districts and parents.

VERMONT  
SCHOOL BOARDS  
ASSOCIATION

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A group of people are seated around a large, light-colored conference table in a meeting room. The room has a whiteboard on the left wall and a bulletin board on the right wall. Several people are visible, some looking at papers or laptops. The text "School Boards as Advocates in 2020" is overlaid in a large, black, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

# School Boards as Advocates in 2020



# School Boards as Advocates in 2020

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- Establish a relationship with your legislators. Be a credible source of information on education issues impacting your community.
- Messages to legislators should emphasize effect 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

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- Regular legislative 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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# Contact Information

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