



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE
Joint Fiscal Office

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Fiscal Note

April 4, 2024

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S.159 – An act relating to the County Governance Study Committee

As passed by the Senate

Bill Summary

The bill proposes to create a County and Regional Governance Study Committee. The Committee would be comprised of six legislators. Members of the Committee would be entitled to per diem compensation and expense reimbursement for up to 10 meetings.

Fiscal Impact

Per diem compensation and expense reimbursement for the Committee would cost the General Assembly up to \$15,000 in either fiscal years 2025 or 2026.

As introduced, Section 1 would have appropriated \$50,000 from the General Fund to the Joint Fiscal Office in fiscal year 2025 to contract with one or more consultants to assist with research, preparation of a report, and any other assistance deemed necessary by the Committee. The Senate, concurring with the recommendation of its Committee on Appropriations, removed this appropriation to instead reflect all appropriations in the fiscal year 2025 appropriations act (Big Bill).

Background and Details

Section 1 proposes to create a County and Regional Governance Study Committee to address local government capacity challenges as well as regional collaboration, resource allocation, and service delivery. The Committee would be comprised of six legislators (three from each body) from geographically diverse regions of Vermont. The Committee would receive the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Operations, the Office of Legislative Counsel, and the Joint Fiscal Office. The Committee would be authorized to contract, through the Joint Fiscal Office, with one or more consultants to assist with research, preparation of a report, and any other assistance deemed necessary by the Committee.

The Committee would be required to deliver a report with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action to relevant committees by November 1, 2025. Members of the Committee would be entitled to per diem compensation and expense reimbursement for up to 10 meetings, which would cost the General Assembly up to \$15,000. These expenses may occur in either fiscal year 2025 or 2026, depending on the timing of the meetings and their respective attendance.

As introduced, Section 1 would have appropriated \$50,000 from the General Fund to the Joint Fiscal Office in fiscal year 2025 for consulting expenses to support the work of the Committee. The Senate Committee on Appropriations recommended deletion of this appropriation to instead reflect all appropriations in the fiscal year 2025 appropriations act (Big Bill). Should the Committee wish to contract with consultants to assist with its work, those costs would impact the legislative budget in fiscal year 2025 and/or 2026.