

Vermont State Ethics Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2022

Contact: Christina Sivret, Executive Director, Vermont State Ethics Commission
Christina.Sivret@vermont.gov, 802-828-7187

Senate Government Operations Committee Unanimously Passes S. 171

Montpelier – Yesterday the Vermont Senate Committee on Government Operations unanimously passed Senate Bill No. 171 (S. 171), an act relating to the adoption of a State code of ethics. The bill, sponsored by Senator Anthony Pollina and Senator Jeanette K. White, is the first legislative step towards a code of ethics that covers all State of Vermont public servants. It will now move to a full Senate vote.

For too long, Vermont has been one of a handful of states without a State statutory code of ethics. The Vermont State Ethics Commission has consistently advocated for such a code.

On February 10, 2020, Gov. Phil Scott and other statewide office holders echoed the Ethics Commission. In a [letter](#) to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations, they stated in part, “[I]n our public service, we must account for and address issues such as: conflicts of interest, preferential treatment, abuses of power, outside gifts, and protections for whistleblowers. A Code of Ethics embedded in Vermont law will provide public servants with direction and clarity on numerous issues they regularly face.” Their letter urged legislators to “work with the Ethics Commission and others to establish a Code of Ethics for Vermont’s public servants in all three branches of government.”

S. 171 is the result of this collaboration. It is based on extensive study, discussion, and public comment and has been thoroughly vetted. It provides clear guidance on ethics rules, and describes a baseline for the ethical conduct required by public servants in all three branches of government,

What happens next? In the next few days, S. 171 will be brought before the full Senate for a vote. If it passes, it will then move to the House Committee on Government Operations for further consideration. The Ethics Commission believes the passage of this bill is vital to promote and maintain trust between the government and citizens of Vermont, and we hope to see it pass quickly through the next stages of the legislative process.