

1 S.15

2 Introduced by Senator Hartwell

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Utilities; Public Service Board; Department of Public Service;
6 legislative oversight

7 Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to create a joint legislative committee
8 to oversee the functions and performance of the Public Service Board and the
9 Department of Public Service and assess whether their actions are responsive
10 to the needs and concerns of Vermonters.

11 An act relating to creation of the Public Service Oversight Committee

12 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

13 Sec. 1. 2 V.S.A. chapter 29 is added to read:

14 CHAPTER 29. PUBLIC SERVICE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

15 § 981. PUBLIC SERVICE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

16 (a) A joint legislative Public Service Oversight Committee is created. The
17 Committee shall be appointed biennially and consist of ten members: five
18 members of the House appointed by the Speaker, not all from the same
19 political party, and five members of the Senate appointed by the Senate
20 Committee on Committees, not all from the same political party.

1 (b) The Committee shall elect a chair, vice chair, and clerk from among its
2 members. The chair shall alternate biennially between the House and Senate
3 members. A quorum shall consist of six members.

4 (c) Committee action shall be taken only if there is a quorum and the
5 proposed action is approved by majority vote of those members physically
6 present and voting.

7 (d) The Committee may adopt rules of procedure to carry out its duties.

8 § 982. FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES

9 (a) The Public Service Oversight Committee shall carry on a continuing
10 review of the functions and performance of the Public Service Board and the
11 Department of Public Service. The purpose of this review is to assess whether
12 these entities are functioning in a manner that best serves the interests of
13 ratepayers, as well as the general good of the state, as appropriate. Among
14 other things, the Committee shall evaluate: whether the public has adequate
15 input in Department actions; whether the public has sufficient representation in
16 proceedings before the Board; and whether there is a sufficient separation
17 between the Department and the Board.

18 (b) In conducting its review and to fulfill its duties, the Committee shall
19 consult the following:

20 (1) the Public Service Board;

21 (2) the Commissioner of Public Service;

1 (3) ratepayers and advocacy groups;

2 (4) public service companies subject to regulation by the Public Service

3 Board; and

4 (5) any other person or entity as determined by the Committee.

5 (c) The Committee shall work with, assist, and advise other committees of
6 the General Assembly, members of the Executive Branch, and the public on
7 matters relating to state utility regulation. Annually, on or before
8 December 15, the Committee shall report its activities together with
9 recommendations, if any, to the Governor and the House Committees on
10 Commerce and Economic Development and on Natural Resources and Energy
11 and the Senate Committees on Finance, on Natural Resources and Energy, and
12 on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs.

13 § 983. MEETINGS AND STAFF SUPPORT

14 (a) The Public Service Oversight Committee may meet during a session of
15 the General Assembly at the call of the Chair or by majority of the members of
16 the Committee. The Committee may meet during adjournment subject to the
17 approval of the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the
18 Senate.

19 (b) For attendance at meetings which are held when the General Assembly
20 is not in session, the members of the Committee shall be entitled to the same

1 per diem compensation and reimbursement for necessary expenses as those
2 provided to members of standing committees under section 406 of this title.

3 (c) The Committee shall have professional and administrative support from
4 the Legislative Council and the Joint Fiscal Office. The Department of Public
5 Service and other agencies of the State shall provide information, assistance,
6 and support upon request of the Committee.

7 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

8 This act shall take effect on passage.