

Early History of Legislative Joint Fiscal Committee and Office State of Vermont

1968 (1967 Adjourned Session)

Joint Rule R-83 was adopted, providing that at the beginning of each legislative session a Joint Fiscal Committee (JFC) consisting of four Representatives and four Senators be appointed: the chairs of the four “money committees,” ex officio; two House members to be appointed by the Speaker, one from each major party; and two Senators, to be appointed by the Committee on Committees, one from each major party.

Functions: “. . . carry on a continuing review of the fiscal operations of the state, including revenues, budgeting and expenditures.”

July 6, 1970 (first meeting for which there are minutes)

The Chair was Rep. Luther Hackett. Staff assistance was provided by a Research Associate (John M. Lindley III) under the employ of Legislative Council. At that and the subsequent two meetings there was discussion about retaining a fiscal analyst in the employ of the JFC, and interviews were held.

September 16, 1970

After an executive session discussion about hiring staff, the JFC adopted a motion directing the Executive Director of the Legislative Council to assign to the JFC, effective October 1, 1970, the individual who had been assisting the committee as a full-time staff member of the JFC. The employee was to work directly for the JFC but under the administrative control of the Executive Director.

November 1973

The Legislative Council hired then-State Finance Commissioner Bruce Mosher as Joint Fiscal Officer. (The former Committee staff member, Mr. Lindley, had resigned to accept a position outside State government.)

1974 (1973 Adjourned Session)

Senator Edward Janeway was elected Chair of the Joint Fiscal Committee.

One of the first actions in the 1973 Adjourned Session of the General Assembly was authorization for the JFC to employ staff (Act No. 128). The functions were expanded, as set forth in 2 V.S.A. Ch. 15.

Effective January 24, 1974, Bruce Mosher and Virginia Catone, who had been employed on a temporary basis to provide administrative support to the JFC and House Appropriations Committee, were transferred from the Legislative Council to the newly established JFC. Two additional persons were hired at the same time, a full-time administrative secretary and a temporary secretary-assistant for the Senate Appropriations Committee.

On June 11, 1974, the JFC authorized employment of an Assistant Legislative Fiscal Officer effective September 1974, primarily to provide additional assistance for the Appropriations committees. Richard Bowles was hired to fill this position.

The Legislature began expanding the statutory functions and responsibilities of the JFC in that session (1973 Adjourned Session). The Committee in those early years assumed an important role in overseeing such diverse activities as the rehabilitation and operation of the Lamoille Valley Railroad (then St. Johnsbury & Lamoille County Railroad), the now-defunct Bicentennial Steam Train, and the Juvenile Services Program. In addition, the Committee on its own expanded its activities; for example, subcommittees participated in or directed in-depth studies in the areas of motor vehicles, centralized data processing, special education, higher education, and social welfare.

1975-1976

Senator John Boylan was elected Chairman for the biennium.

On November 30, 1976, the Committee authorized contracting with John Fleiter to provide revenue projections for the second half of FY 1977 and for FY 1978.

1977-1978

Representative Peter Giuliani succeeded Senator Boylan as JFC Chair.

In May 1977, the Committee discussed the need for additional permanent staff, the Chair observing that "it was time to expand Legislative fiscal support and be less reliant on the Executive Branch" (quotation from the JFC Minutes of May 5, 1977). Senator Boylan, Representative Madeleine Kunin, and the Joint Fiscal Officer were requested to study the question of additional staff and to present a recommendation.

On June 16, 1977, they presented a recommendation to the JFC to employ John Fleiter as revenue consultant and fiscal analyst on a full-time basis and Peter Herman to assist the House Appropriations Committee during the session and to participate in JFC assignments, on an eight-month basis.

A significant addition to the Committee's and the staff's responsibilities occurred during the 1977 adjourned session: the transfer from the Emergency Board to the JFC of authority with respect to approval of the acceptance of grants by State agencies and departments. During that session, the Committee membership was expanded by two, one each from the House and the Senate.

Addendum - 1979-1999

Office and Staff:

From December 1977 until late 1996, the Joint Fiscal Office staffing remained level at seven

employees plus a temporary staff member during legislative sessions. Increasing demands by legislative committees and individual legislators, plus a major property tax reform initiative, have led to the creation of additional analyst positions in 1997 and 1998. One of these positions was authorized during the 1998 session to work solely in the transportation area. As of the 1999 session, nine exempt positions are authorized in the Joint Fiscal Committee; and there is one temporary employee for the House Appropriations Committee who also staffs the Joint Fiscal Committee meetings between sessions. Beginning with the 1991 session, revenue estimating services have been provided on a contractual basis, with JFC approval.

Late in 1982, policies and procedures covering the staff and office were developed. These have been updated periodically to reflect changes in statute relating to the JFC as well as in JFC rules of procedure, policy statements, and personnel policies. An updated compilation of these policies is presented for Committee approval at the organizational meeting that takes place early in each biennium of the General Assembly.

Committee responsibilities:

Each session myriad studies and other special projects, as well as requirements for JFC review and action on a wide variety of subjects, have been added to the responsibilities and functions of the JFC and JFO delineated in statute.

Meetings:

There is no statutory stipulation as to the number of meetings which the JFC must hold between sessions, but generally the Committee meets at least three times during the summer and fall.