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Richard M. Nelson

Vermont

State Representative, HD-ORL1 (R)

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67

Lifetime
Freedom
Score

2025 VT Legislative Scorecard

✓ Pro-Freedom ✗ Anti-Freedom – Did not Vote **Vote**

1. Proposes to amend Chapter I of the Vermont Constitution, establishing a constitutional right for employees to organize or join a labor organization. ✓

Pro-Freedom: **No** · Cast: **No** · PR 3 · 05/01/2025

2. Amends Vermont's labor laws to facilitate union organization to include Judiciary Department positions, and expands collective bargaining-rights. ✓

Pro-Freedom: **No** · Cast: **No** · S0125 · Passed 81–51 · 05/13/2025

3. The "Big Bill - Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Act" makes appropriations to support state government operations in fiscal year 2026. ✗

Pro-Freedom: **No** · Cast: **Yes** · H0493 · Passed 132–3 · 05/15/2025

4. Enacts comprehensive healthcare payment and delivery-system reform. ✓

Pro-Freedom: **No** · Cast: **No** · S0126 · Passed 99–38 · 05/21/2025

5. Establishes the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program. ✓

Pro-Freedom: **No** · Cast: **No** · H0091 · Passed 92–42 · 05/29/2025

6. Omnibus housing-development bill that expands the Vermont Rental Housing Improvement Program with grants and forgivable loans, and creates the Vermont Manufactured Home Improvement and Repair Program. ✗

Pro-Freedom: **No** · Cast: **Yes** · S0127 · Passed 137–2 · 05/30/2025

Scorecard Votes: 67%

Why do these votes matter?

1. Collective-bargaining Constitutional Amendment

Proposal 3 proposes to amend Chapter I of the Vermont Constitution, establishing a constitutional right for employees to organize or join a labor organization. It provides that no law shall be adopted that interferes with, negates, or diminishes this right, or prohibits the application or execution of an agreement between an employer and a labor organization that requires membership as a condition of employment.

We have assigned pluses to the nays because collective bargaining interferes with individual liberties, and compelling individuals to negotiate collectively infringes upon their right to freely associate or negotiate on an individual basis.

2. Collective Bargaining

S0125 amends Vermont's labor laws to facilitate union organization to include Judiciary Department positions, and expands collective-bargaining rights. The bill lowers the employee-signature threshold for petitions, broadens the definition of "employee," and streamlines procedures for certification, unit determination, and elections for state, municipal, education, and early-care workers.

We have assigned pluses to the nays because collective bargaining interferes with individual liberties, and compelling individuals to negotiate collectively infringes upon their right to freely associate or negotiate on an individual basis. This bill expands unionization for public employees; these taxpayer-funded public-employee positions should not exist in the first place, let alone be subject to unionization and collective-bargaining mandates that further erode individual liberty and taxpayer accountability.

3. Omnibus Spending Bill

H0493, the "Big Bill – Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Act" makes appropriations to support state government operations in fiscal year 2026. Key provisions include establishing an Office of Health Equity; funding the Office of Racial Equity within the Department of Health; expanding emergency housing assistance; creating and funding a Substance Misuse Prevention Special Fund; increasing grants and spending across departments including Children and Families, Corrections, Education, and Health; allocating funds for HIV/AIDS services; health-equity grants, and various social programs.

We have assigned pluses to the nays because this legislation expands unchecked government spending for the welfare state at the expense of taxpayers. It diverts taxpayer funds into new bureaucracies focused on equity and racial programs; funnels cannabis tax dollars into substance misuse prevention; increases government intervention in housing, health, and social services; and rewards collective dependency over individual and fiscal responsibility. Economic prosperity and safety comes from limited government and free markets, along with personal responsibility.

4. Healthcare Central Planning

S0126 enacts comprehensive healthcare payment and delivery-system reform. This legislation appropriates millions in taxpayer dollars for new bureaucratic positions and hospital incentive grants, and creates the Health Care Delivery Advisory Committee and Vermont Steering Committee for Comprehensive Primary Health Care. It mandates the Green Mountain Care Board to implement reference-based pricing as a cap on hospital payments, which limits the maximum reimbursement hospitals may accept for services. Additionally, it mandates global hospital budgets for all Vermont hospitals, and requires development of a Statewide Health Care Delivery Strategic Plan, and increases government oversight of hospital networks.

We have assigned pluses to the nays because this legislation expands government control over healthcare in Vermont. By imposing price controls, global budgets, new bureaucracies, centralized planning, and expanded data collection, the bill replaces free-market principles with socialism. This reduces healthcare freedom, increases long-term costs to taxpayers and patients, and moves the state further toward socialized medicine completely controlled by the state. Affordable and high-quality healthcare is achieved through competition, individual choice, personal responsibility, and limited government.

5. Homeless Community Programs

H0091 establishes the Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program, which expands and replaces existing emergency-housing programs with a new state-run framework starting in FY2027. It creates a \$10 million one-time General Fund appropriation for a shelter and supportive housing for homeless individuals, increases community-based shelter capacity, reduces reliance on hotels and motels, and provides interim shelter and services for households at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

We have assigned pluses to the nays because this legislation expands government dependency and the welfare state at taxpayer expense. It creates a new state bureaucracy and housing program that spends millions in taxpayer funds on big-government services, shelters, and housing initiatives. Effective pathways out of homelessness come from economic freedom, job creation, and limited government. State appropriations, mandates, and programs reward dependency, erode individual responsibility, and prevent free-market solutions.

6. Subsidized Housing

S0127 is a sweeping omnibus housing-development bill that expands the Vermont Rental Housing Improvement Program with grants and forgivable loans up to \$70,000 per unit for rental rehabilitation, and creates the Vermont Manufactured Home Improvement and Repair Program. This legislation also establishes the Vermont Infrastructure Sustainability Fund for low-interest loans, and the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP), and creates a State Housing and Residential Services Planning Committee for developmental-disabilities housing. Additionally, it imposes new reporting requirements for landlords, bans rental-application fees, and expands housing requirements to prohibit "discrimination" based on citizenship or immigration status.

We have assigned pluses to the nays because this legislation creates a massive expansion of government intervention in the housing market. Legislators should address Vermont's housing shortages by repealing burdensome zoning, permitting, and regulatory barriers that drive up the cost of housing. This bill creates new bureaucracies and entitlement programs through subsidies, grants, loans, and tax-diversion schemes that override the free market. Affordable housing is best achieved through economic freedom, limited government, and free-market development. This interferes with landlord property rights and voluntary landlord-tenant relationships, and entrenches dependency on state aid.