

PHILIP B. SCOTT
Governor



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

June 17, 2019

Vermont General Assembly
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Legislators:

Today, I signed H.16, *an act relating to boards and commissions*.

I am signing this bill because I support the changes to various boards and commissions. The changes reflected in H.16 to repeal unnecessary or outdated boards and commissions, and to modernize their duties and responsibilities where appropriate, is critical to our ongoing work to make government more efficient.

H.16 was introduced as a housekeeping bill to update statutes addressing state boards and commissions and had widespread support. However, with little notice and minimal testimony from affected parties, the bill was substantially amended and, as passed, imposes mandatory binding arbitration 30 days after a contract impasse on contracts between municipalities, local public safety employees, and their bargaining agents.

Existing law already provides town and city voters the right to adopt binding arbitration procedures through referendum and many communities have taken advantage of this local authority. This bill has abruptly taken that local decision out of the hands of the voters who pay the salaries and benefits of their public safety officers, firefighters and first responders.

I understand the House considered a study, which may have been a more appropriate route. In the future, the Legislature should consider the appropriate balance between autonomy for municipalities and matters of equity for first responders in municipalities that have not adopted binding arbitration by referendum.

However, in negotiations between the State and its unionized state employees, I don't believe H.16 will have a dramatic effect on current practice, therefore I am willing to accept this as another option at this level.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Scott", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

c: The Honorable Mitzi Johnson, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Tim Ashe, President Pro Tempore
The Honorable William MaGill, Clerk of the Vermont House of Representatives
The Honorable John Bloomer, Secretary of the Vermont Senate