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Act 133 Working Group Meeting Transcript - November 13, 2025

0:45

Good morning, everyone.

0:46

Thank you so much for joining us for the ACT 133 Working Group.

0:52

This meeting is being recorded and will be transcribed.

0:55

Just so everyone's aware that's happening.

0:59

And today we are getting feedback on the draft report that everyone was sent last Thursday.

1:13

I just want to say thank you to the people who already provided feedback.

1:17

It's really helpful to get that ahead of time, but it's not too late.

1:21

So provide feedback now if you have feedback.

1:25

And I think the best way to structure this, particularly since we don't have written feedback from everyone, is to go section by section again, unless there's something.

1:38

And I'm going to move us pretty quickly, hopefully.

1:44

And Cynthia, do you have a copy of the report?

1:48

OK.

1:48

Do you want a paper copy or are you good?

1:50

If you have one, that's great.

1:52

Hang on a moment.

1:54

And everyone else has a digital copy at home.

1:57

Would you like a paper copy as well?

2:00

I'm just.

2:00

Yeah, that that would be kind of, I'm more paper than I am.

2:05

I try and be digital, but I'm analog.

2:10

Thank you very much.

2:12

If you send it to Brian, he, he can send, he can copy for us.

2:17

So we'll go section by section again.

2:23

You know, I think less grammatical corrections.

2:27

I'm sure there are some.

2:29

I know there are some.

2:30

I've seen some, we were, this is actually a fairly big report and working on it in multiple authors.

2:37

So I know that there's work to be done on some consistency in terms of how we're using language and also obviously grammar.

2:50

Happy to happy to make those changes, but I think for the purposes of this meeting, it would be better if we talked about concepts and the way things, tone, that kind of thing.

3:04

So does anyone and there are page numbers on the document.

3:10

So we'll go.

3:11

We're on the first page.

3:13

Clearly, we did not write the executive summary.

3:16

We will be, Kate.

3:19

Thank you.

3:19

Yeah, I just, I need to understand sort of the bigger framing and timeline here of how this works.

3:24

So this is the first time we've received anything in writing.

3:27

It's been over a year, right?

3:28

We've been meeting.

3:29

This is the first time it's 40 pages.

3:30

We got it.

3:31

We got three business days to review 40 pages.

3:33

First time we've received anything in writing.

3:35

There's been no votes.

3:37

Anything that's recommended in there as this is what the group felt.

3:41

Again, no votes.

3:42

So it was what the author felt was the consensus and apparently the author decided we were going with consensus or where it was deadlocked, deadlocked.

3:54

So I, I need to understand before I spend any more time trying to give comments or feedback beyond the year that I've the, the eight months of feedback I've already given, which do not feel reflected in this report.

4:07

Like how is this report going to be created and what is the guideline and are we voting on?

4:16

I'm not, I don't think that it's productive to have votes per SE, yes or no on this report.

4:24

What we, what we have done is created that survey and use the survey results to get the consensus of the group.

4:32

Whether we have general consensus, no consensus or opposition.

4:37

There's few, there's really no topics where everyone thinks there's a bad, it's a bad idea.

4:42

But we will use that survey as a whether weather report on the group.

4:52

So no, we don't have votes yes or no.

4:55

I don't think there's any of these topics that are yes or no topics.

4:59

Honestly, there's a lot of Gray in every single topic.

5:02

So and a lot of nuance.

5:04

And so as we're going through, we can talk about if people don't feel like their perspective is adequately represented.

5:13

I'm happy to hear that, Kate, and we can put that in there.

5:17

But there was I'm not, I don't think that these topics are yes, no votes.

5:24

And the goal, the timeline for this is we're going to take feedback now, we're going to make adjustments.

5:32

We'll circulate it again.

5:33

Our goal is to finalize this report, file this report by next Friday.

5:40

Just to note that survey, nobody was told that survey was going to be used to, to like that's that was it.

5:45

That was our vote.

5:46

Half of the people who voted on this or who shared feedback on the survey are not working group members and we do not have all working group members represented in that survey.

5:54

So that's super concerning because it's unclear.

5:58

Like how does we don't even know how school boards, for example, is feeling about all this 'cause they're not represented on the survey.

6:04

So there's a big piece of of the required participation in this working group missing in this report.

6:11

And I will say as the one person who currently has my vote being suppressed, who cannot vote, I have not been able to vote for four years.

6:20

I am the only person on this working group who is currently not able to vote or be civically engaged.

6:24

I do feel like there are places in here where there could be strong recommendations and there are not.

6:30

So I'll, I'll hold the comments until we get to that part.

6:32

But I, I have shared this repeatedly for eight meetings.

6:35

None of it's in the report.

6:38

OK, I I can't make the school board members participate.

6:44

I do feel like when we sent out the survey, we were clearly asking for people's opinions and so that we could drive to writing a report.

6:53

I intentionally did not cast it as voting because that again, we can talk about this as we move through, but these topics are wide and Gray and are diversity of our working group, which is reflected in this report.

7:11

I'm happy to go topic by topic, but we don't have consensus on a lot of these things.

7:18

And the way that I have been thinking about this report is we have really exfoliated the issues.

7:24

There's tons of policy decisions that the legislature needs to act on and we have gotten to a place where we can get them further down the conversation than we were before the working group started.

7:36

So that that is the intent of the report at this moment.

7:42

And we can go topic by topic.

7:43

And Kate, I, I want to hear your frustration.

7:46

I, I honor your frustration and we'll get there.

7:49

And I and I know which section you're talking about.

7:53

And you know, we keep there's, there's a style decision that we can talk about maybe at the beginning before we even get there is we did not call out specific people's opinions.

8:05

So specific stakeholders in the group's opinions, we could do that or we could not do that.

8:12

But in drafting, we made the decision to not do that.

8:18

And but we could shift if, if the working group would rather it's say that this stakeholder group opposes this or this stakeholder group is neutral on this or this stakeholder group supports that, we can do that.

8:35

But we hadn't had a conversation as a group about whether or not to do that.



8:39

And I didn't want to do that at the outset before we had the conversation.

8:43

So maybe that's the best and first thing that we could do is I think there's three options there that would be keeping it general like we have.

8:55

It would be including stakeholders if they feel strongly like on a particular topic or everybody all the time.

9:03

But that I'm, I'm concerned about how that reads and looks.

9:09

But Megan, I see your hand is up.

9:11

Do you have a response to that or something else prior?

9:18

I just I want to acknowledge the the amount of work that needs to go into building this report and the deadline.

9:30

The timeline is feels tight because it was due on the 1st.

9:36

I also acknowledge that what Kate says about the three business days to respond and review and I, you know, I sent this to you and Jenny and Kelly, I I also am feeling a little like I not see, not not sure how to really respond to this without feeling like responding to this is tacitly saying, yay, let's, let's move forward.

10:10

And I'm feeling like the timeline is a little short.

10:14

You know, I want to just and, and encourage like a non, just like if we can be non defensive in response, because it is it, it does have that kind of tight timeline as, as Kate said, the three days to respond, and that was for last night.

10:33

I was like, I'm onboarding a new employee.

10:35

We've got a whole bunch of stuff going on.

10:38

I had, I, I could have taken my weekend to, to go through this and, but, but chose not to because of other family and lots of.

10:50

So, so and, and I, I, I don't mean to bring this up in a way that elicits defensiveness because I don't think that's useful.

11:00

But I'm wondering if we can just sort of talk about, you know, is there a possibility of extending that timeline as we begin to look at.

11:11

And yeah, so I can respond to that.

11:16

And I, I think it's a fairpoint, but I also would ask for the same grace to be given to this office, which is this is a huge project that we have taken on and it's very complicated.

11:30

A lot of people have very strong feelings.

11:32

This is not an easy thing for us to do either.

11:34

So I just asked for grace in both directions is my request to the group.

11:40

And I don't think that you weren't giving that Megan, but I just, I just also need to ask for that.

11:48

We can rethink the timeline, but I do need this project to be done by early December, like because of the other things that this office needs to do.

12:01

So, you know, we could and I need people to be able to take a break over Thanksgiving.

12:08

And we all need to take a break over Thanksgiving.



12:10

So given the tightness of everything, you know, we could think about having feedback continue and maybe we cancel this meeting now and people focus on feedback.

12:24

That might be a more productive use of our time than having this meeting.

12:29

Because, because if people don't feel ready to give feedback or haven't had enough time to absorb the report, which I'm hearing clearly from a lot of people, then I'd rather that people take the time and have that and we schedule another meeting so that we have given people the time that they're asking for.

12:51

So I, I don't know what I want us to be productive.

12:56

I want us to have a conversation where everyone feels prepared.

13:02

So I'm inclined to do that rather than have a divisive or harder conversation today where people feel like they aren't prepared that it was sprung on them.

13:14

And then I, I don't, I don't want people to feel that way.

13:18

So if people would like another week to, to look at something, then let's do that.

13:24

I, I absolutely think we need to proceed with this meeting and start getting out at least some of the things that we would like to say about this report instead of cancelling and scheduling another meeting a week from now.

13:37

We might need another meeting, but maybe we need two or three more meetings to really get through this.

13:43

But I think it's, I'm a little like that, that would even be a consideration.

13:50

Whatever time people have had to invest is the time that they've had to invest.

13:54

And we'll explore what we've come up with thus far.

13:57

But if we need to do it again, maybe we need to do it again.

14:00

But I, I, I can't support us not actually having this conversation today.

14:08

But I'm fine with us having the conversation.

14:10

Laura.

14:10

I just am trying to respond to what I'm hearing.

14:14

But if, if that's not what people want to do, that's totally fine.

14:17

I'm not saying we should.

14:18

I, I scheduled the meeting.

14:20

Our office scheduled the meeting.

14:21

We think this report is ready for discussion.

14:23

So if people are ready for the discussion, this office is ready.

14:28

Susan, I'm going to hear from you and then Kate.

14:35

Yeah, I was just wondering our, our this committee was so divided and I'm wondering if this report is, I mean, I, I found the report to be readable and it pointed to the places where we found some consensus.

14:59

It pointed to places where we didn't find consensus.

15:02

It pointed to find to places that the legislature could take action.

15:06

So I, I think it did a good job in that.

15:09

I think what it didn't do was capture the polls and by I guess I wonder whether the work of this committee is to capture all the polls or if that's the work of the advocacy groups.

15:26

I wonder if there just wants to be, if there want to be addendums to this report.

15:34

We're never going to agree.

15:37

I mean, I, well, maybe not never, but we didn't agree on a lot of key points.

15:43

And so to, you know, to, to use this report as the structure and then to have to say, here's some things that, that, that this group thought needed to be said, that here's some groups that that group, things that that group needed to be said as addendums might be one way to move forward in a more efficient way.

16:00

But it, it's just, it's just a thought.

16:03

It's a good thought and one that has been brought up before.

16:09

And I don't think that I think it might be a very helpful thought at this time because I I have written many legislative reports and I can tell you that the first 3 pages are the ones that are read.

16:26

And so as we were getting further and further and further in length, I became concerned about how much people are going to actually read this.

16:40

And so we may want to, and this is specifically why the executive summary has not been written is because the, you know, we needed this meeting because we could



really talk about not exactly the specifics of the proposals, but the the diversity of thought on things and refer to make sure that people understand they should read the report plus the addendums in the executive summary.

17:12

If that's the direction we go, then we should do that right in the executive summary so people know that they should be reading not only the report, but the addendums.

17:24

Or we could do no addendums and have more specific people's opinions throughout the body of the report.

17:31

Again, that brings me back to that original question, but Kate, I want to hear from you.

17:36

Thank you.

17:37

I just have to name every single meeting, literally every single meeting.

17:43

We have been told to have grace with your office.

17:47

We have been told to have patience.

17:49

We have been told that we are asking for too much.

17:51

I need to name that.

17:54

Those of us who are here around this table, many of us are not paid to be here, OK?

17:59

So we can't keep being told to have grace and to extend something that has not extended to us, has not been expended, expended to us for this entire process.

18:09

So today we need to talk about process.

18:12

And we need for the people who wrote the report for your office to suspend judgement, to suspend the asking for grace.

18:21

You need to hear from us.

18:22

You need to write down our notes, right?

18:25

Like we have to have a conversation about the process and how we actually make a report that's going to feel meaningful to all of us.

18:32

And the other thing I want to name is that in the survey responses, the one group that has not had any survey responses, so I have no idea where they're at.

18:40

And they have requirements to uphold state and federal law is your office.

18:44

And in the writing of the report, Secretary of State has couched themselves within the midst of municipal advocacy groups, membership groups, and other members of this group.

18:57

So we actually have no idea where you are, and yet you have a responsibility to Vermonters to actually take a stand on the things that you need to take a stand on.

19:05

So I would also like to suggest that it be very clear what the recommendations are from the Secretary of State's office in this report, just to be clear on process, there is a transcript being made of this meeting.

19:21

So that's how we're taking notes, Kate.

19:24

So do people want to proceed and do I'm hearing yes.

19:33

And do people want to have stakeholders named in the group or not named in the group or only if people have strong opinions?

19:44

And then Susan had a fourth choice, I think that could be used for any one of those selections, which is that people have addendums to this report.

20:04

Megan, I, I just, I think I raised my hand because there was silence.

20:10

But I I I think proceeding with the meeting is important.

20:18

I think I think I like, you know, I, I when you said let's not proceed, I was like, yeah, yeah, I got some more time back, but I think we need to proceed with the meeting.

20:30

I think, you know, when Susan says, you know, I, I appreciate Kate, you, you're and I, you know, I think it must be very hard, but you're, your emphasis is helping bring some things to light and I appreciate that.

20:49

And Susan, when you know, when you talk about what, where we are divided, my mind is, I'm still, it's still opaque to me where we are divided.

21:03

So I don't, so that's, so that's something I'm like, wait, wait, what?

21:06

What are we actually dividing on?

21:08

I'm I'm not entirely certain.

21:09

It may be electronic voting.

21:12

It may be so it may be the issue of allowing for hybrid meetings for town, for annual meetings or for town meetings.

21:21

So I'm, I'm, I'm just not sure.

21:22

I know it's archiving.

21:24

I know that was 1.

21:28

So I'm curious to see where we're going to proceed.

21:31

But I think along with, I would like to say, you know, I, I, I hope that if we proceed today, it doesn't mean we're like that.

21:42

We're like yay with this particular format.

21:44

And I have looked through and I do appreciate the amount of work that has been done on it.

21:51

So I hope, I hope you can hear that as well.

21:53

And I, I know everybody is doing the best that they can.

21:56

So I'm, I, I just, I say that like I, I'd like to proceed, but I'd like to understand a little bit more about where our divisions are.

22:05

And yeah, so do people not feel comfortable talking about what we're going to do with stakeholders, whether we name that the disagreement by stakeholder group or not or addendums?

22:22

I'm not getting a sense of what people want there.

22:25

Laura, we will, I have comments and observations for today as we go through this document, but also we will be submitting something in writing.

22:38

Again, it's been a short timeline, but you will be getting written as well Comment.

22:45

But I, but I, I mean, I, I think we just need to dive in.

22:50

OK, Well, I, it would be helpful for me for our team to know whether we're naming specific people or not as we're creating, you know, because it depends on how we structure the report.

23:04

So if people don't want to do that right now, I suppose that's OK, but it would be helpful just structurally like because people I need to know as we're going through, do I say, do you agree with this, Laura?

23:16

Do you agree with this cake?

23:18

Do you agree with this, Susan?

23:19

Or do we?

23:21

Let's depend, depend on what people are saying.

23:27

And I think if we have an opportunity, I think if we have an opportunity to comment, you'll know whether we agree or not.

23:35

OK, so let's let's dive into the substantive and and skip the introduction and purpose because that's not where we'll take feedback on that obviously, but that's not a place where we where people's opinions are really.

23:59

OK Best practices guide that we need more time with.

24:05

Obviously this group hasn't seen it.

24:08

It can't be part of this report because it would be too long.

24:13

So I'm going, I'm on the top of page 5.

24:17

Is everyone comfortable with me jumping to there?

24:20

No, OK, OK Laura, where, where, where do you want to start?

24:28

I would like to start with #1 on page one.

24:32

Well, actually into page 2 where you say the ADA requires that public.

24:38

I would like to also just add that these are not my for full transparency.

24:42

These are not my comments exclusively.

24:46

I in collaboration with Jessica Rad Borders, an attorney at ACLU and her observations and her recommendations of things that we need to address.

24:56

So I want to say Disability Rights Vermont, ACLU, maybe some others that we've been working with like HRCBCIL, may have similar feelings about these comments.

25:08

But you say ADA requires that public entities must make reasonable modifications in response to requests for reasonable accommodation.

25:19

And then additionally, public entities must proactively assess and modify how they communicate with people with disabilities.

25:25

I think right off the bat you're ignoring in this report that if the harm is obvious and open that there is a affirmative obligation to address it.

25:40

the IT should not become incumbent upon people with disabilities to have to make reasonable accommodation requests.

25:47

We are obligated before that becomes a necessity to address the obvious and open violations of the law and which is part of what this process is here to do.

26:03

But this puts the responsibility again back on on a person with disabilities to make reasonable accommodation requests when the the the full intent and purpose of all of this should be that we are addressing the open and obvious problems.

26:26

There is case law that supports this Pierce V District of Columbia like La Union del Pueblo Entero versus Abbott.

26:38

These are cases that support that affirmative obligations of public entities to provide modifications with or without any other requests for from people with disabilities.

26:52

So I want to make that clear right off the bat that I think from the get this, this continues to represent that it the obligation falls on people with disabilities to deal with this and we are here to make sure that the obligation does not fall on people with disabilities.

27:11

So Laura, let me just say you are clearly the expert in this space this I was hoping that you would provide feedback here.

27:20

Your feedback is well heard.

27:21

And if you provide some language, I'm happy for our office to incorporate it.

27:28

That's not a problem at all.

27:31

OK, Also in that same sentence you you say that the ADA's bare, bare minimum, but also we need to include the Vermont Public Accommodations Act here again, really happy to put that all in Laura.

27:51

And I'm, I'm happy to do that this, I can tell you this part was written incredibly quickly.

27:57

So it's, it wasn't ever fully cooked.

28:01

And I would love your your edits there, Susan.

28:09



Yeah, I think Laura's comments are a really good sort of flag to for why it makes sense for us to be submitting written comment.

28:23

We just spent 5 minutes on the first paragraph and there there's going to be a a a lot more stuff and I've got a lot of really smart people in this group.

28:33

And so I guess one question that I have it back to your original, your question of like what's the best way to edit this report?

28:43

I guess one question that I have to ponder is what's the most useful document for the legislature to have?

28:50

They they asked us to get together to do this thing.

28:54

I think we largely replicated what had happened at the State House, which was lack of agreement.

28:59

And but we did unearth, you know, some possible things that that points where, where, where people could move forward.

29:09

So I guess in in thinking about what's the best thing to to give them what's most useful to to them.

29:17

And it may be this report plus the, I don't know the other point that I just wanted to make sure to say since is the the point about best practice guide, in many ways a significant part of our work is the best practice guide.

29:37

And we kind of kicked the can down the road on that.

29:41

And I would just want to be sure that we have the have decide on a process for this group to review on the best practice guide.

29:50

If I were a legislator or if I were a municipal official, that's what I would read, not this report.

29:55

I think this I think the best practices guide is the meat really the most important piece.

30:00

So that's what we're giving people on the ground.

30:05

And yeah, we can't, we couldn't accomplish that obviously by November 1st in May.

30:15

And it's more important than than this.

30:17

And, and so I, I would want a process.

30:19

And I wonder if we, if we have enough grace to, to have a few more weeks on that.

30:24

I wonder if we want a little longer on the, on the best practice guide to we're going to have to, if this report is continuing for longer.

30:35

You know, part of the reason why we need to file this report is so that we can start working on the best practices guide and and if this continues, which it it should, it sounds like then we're going to need more time on the best practices guide as well.

30:51

Kate, thank you.

30:53

So I disagree that the meat is the best practices guide.

30:55

The meat which actually is missing right now.

30:57

Where's the beef in this report?

30:59

Honestly, is the recommendations to the legislature so that they can do a thing.

31:03

There are really no recommendations to the legislature in this.



31:06

There is some mention that maybe some laws maybe should be considered to be changed at some point, right?

31:12

But we've had a a year, we don't know what laws, there's no mention of it.

31:16

There's nothing specifically in here for the legislature to act on.

31:20

The only strong recommendation in this whole report that I could find that used like must language was something that we never talked about.

31:27

I think it said something like we must continue to support art spaces.

31:30

Like that's literally the strongest recommendation in this report, which is hilarious because that's not what this report is about.

31:36

So there needs to be some mention of the laws.

31:38

If something needs to be changed, write that down and recommend what it needs to be.

31:42

I've been asking for the laws for a long time.

31:45

In this report, it says it's very clear that the laws need to be changed.

31:48

I don't think that is very clear.

31:50

I think even within that we have disagreement, and that also needs to be named.

31:55

And if the Secretary of State's office still continues to feel that there is ambiguity, name where that ambiguity is and where that needs to be changed.

32:03

Now, the second thing that I want to say, this is broad.

32:06

This is for every part of this report and I just really don't know how to give substitute and cost comments without saying this.

32:12

First is that this report is incredibly ableist, OK?

32:17

The way that it frames disability, it frames disability as the problem.

32:23

Disability is not the problem.

32:25

Ableism is the problem.

32:27

Systemic exclusion, Historical exclusion, Current exclusion, cultural ableism is a problem.

32:32

So the very first sentence where this happens, I'm going to read it out loud because I'm hoping attitudinally we can all start to see where it is and shift it.

32:41

OK, so here's the first sentence.

32:43

People who are disabled faced increased challenges like physical access to a building, inability to enter public spaces or when in a public space either in person or remotely, being unable to fully participate due to their disability.

32:57

No, that is not why they are unable to participate.

33:01

It has nothing to do with their disability.

33:03

It has to do with the inaccessibility of the systems.

33:06

So that reframing needs to be reframed for the whole report.



33:14

Kate, I hear what you're saying and I just want to make sure that I'm full.

33:21

I hear what you're saying and I want to make sure that I'm fully understanding the shift that you're asking for.

33:27

So is and I'm doing something without being able to think about it enough but which is hard for me.

33:37

But are you saying that that instead of the way that sentence is currently written, it should say something like public spaces are not designed equally for all and our systems of democracy need to be re examined to ensure that all who participate, who are entitled to participate in democracy, which is all can access democracy?

34:07

And that's very cumbersome.

34:09

But is that the type of shift that you are asking for?

34:15

How would you derive that sentence?

34:17

I guess is a good way to if, if not that way, how would you suggest that sentence be rewritten since you called out that one sentence just so I can really understand the shift that you're asking for.

34:27

Because I, I want to.

34:29

Yeah.

34:29

So the reframe really goes back to the the conversations that we've had since the start of this gathering.

34:36

You know, I since I've been part of it six months ago.

34:39

So we've never talked about what the current problems are.

34:46

Why is this report needed in this moment?

34:48

We've glossed right over that, right.

34:50

And we can't, we have to say clearly why we need to do this, why this work is necessary now, why potential recommendations to the legislature are needed because of the current voter suppression, because civil rights and human rights are being taken from Vermonters around the state, right?

35:11

Like, we need to start with that.

35:13

And then this is more than just like changing the sentences.

35:16

It really is an attitudinal shift that the writers of the report need to understand is that this is because this happens at every level, right?

35:27

This happens when you go and ask for a reasonable accommodation from town clerks.

35:30

Like if you read it, the survey responses that Diana sent us, it's in every single one of those survey responses, right?

35:36

Disabled people are not the problem.

35:38

Disability is not the problem.

35:40

Ableism is.

35:41

The way that the structures are currently built are the problem.

35:44

So let's fix them, OK.

35:50

And I'm really hearing the feedback here.

35:53

I'm just trying to figure out how to absorb it and make that change.

35:57

So I, I hear it, I just, and I, and I'm open to making those changes.

36:05

I think we all, I mean, I think grounding principle, we all want and are committed to making this better.

36:13

It's just we're coming at it from a wide variety of perspectives and a wide variety of experiences.

36:20

So I am, I don't want this report to be ableist.

36:26

I take the feedback well.

36:28

I wasn't the only author, but you know, our office worked on this.

36:31

But I don't want it to read as ableist.

36:34

And I am apologize that it did.

36:37

And I'm committed to not making it that way.

36:39

But I'm going to need some more concrete examples of how to do that because I, I, I, I'm going to ask this group to help me with that because this is, you know, this is not the intent and I don't want it to be that way.

36:59

So it may be that I, that we need specific sentence structures.

37:03

It may be that as we're framing topics, we should do it in a better way.

37:10

I also want to make sure that we represent everybody's perspectives.

37:16

And so there are places where I know that advocacy groups really would say something differently than other members of the stakeholder group.

37:29

And so we have to balance that too.

37:32

Yeah.

37:33

And where you want to say ablest things, like say ablest things, right.

37:36

Like our job is disabled people is not to Polish it to make it sound non like non ableist, like say the ablest things.

37:41

But I'm just telling you, here's my response to that.

37:46

OK, Well, I don't want it to be ableist, Kate.

37:51

Like that's not my goal.

37:53

So and and this is a collective project.

37:57

This isn't just the Secretary of State.

37:59

So I'm not, I'm not trying to shift work to any of you.

38:04

I'm just trying to make sure that this reflects all of us.

38:07

I mean, we could simply change that sentence to say, you know, when in public spaces, either in person or remotely being unable to fully participate due to open and obvious barriers in our system that have yet to be addressed that.

38:32

Thank you, Laura.

38:32

I appreciate that.

38:34

And and and we can take that and I'm sure that use that type of reframing throughout the report.

38:43

But also if you see things that are really clear, please provide written comment.

38:52

And again, I'm really not trying to shift the work.

38:57

I just, we need help.

38:58

Clearly we do.

38:59

We got, we got the tone wrong in places and we can accept that feedback, but we need help changing it too.

39:07

So my, my hand was raised specifically to address that because we, we were talking about best practices.

39:18

And I just wanted to say that, you know, I think it's on page four that we, there's a statement at the top of the page that says the working group will issue a best practices guide that will be posted etcetera.

39:33

And I don't think we have an agreement on best practices.

39:37

So even that is, you know, we're going to have that ready by January 2026, but I don't know that we have any agreement yet on best practices.



39:50

I 100% agree with you on that.

39:54

And that was sort of a, a placeholder to see, you know how this report landed and, and we have a list of best practices and, and the discussion that we had around it from a meeting that we had.

40:14

Back in the early spring and we have throughout the meetings, we've talked about a lot of best practices and then in the survey results, you know, people said clearly this should be a best practice and not a mandate.

40:28

So we have that.

40:30

But I agree we're not, we're not in consensus and that hasn't been shown to the whole group.

40:38

So we can, we can make a process around that, Laura.

40:42

And thank you, Jessica, for that resources.

40:45

I appreciate that, Susan.

40:52

Yeah, I, I really, really appreciate.

40:54

I've learned a lot in this process and I'm really appreciating the framing.

40:57

The, the, the, the, the more words, the better.

41:01

Laura, your, your offering of how to phrase something.

41:05

So that doesn't sound ableist.

41:07

I think it is really helpful and appreciate that you know, how how what a burden it is to have to constantly be asking the world to reframe things.

41:21

So I think that's I, I really respect that.

41:25

I also think that there are a lot of issues that we're dealing with and disability rights is a huge one here, but there are lots of other things that are important in democracy as well, like for example, security.

41:41

And so often times there's going to be a tension between two good things.

41:46

We, we, we want to make sure that, you know, voters are voting and we also want to make sure that voters aren't voting twice, that voters aren't voting in the wrong place or, or, or that they, or that they're voters at all.

42:00

You know, so that, and, and that's, I know the Secretary of State's office, but I know all local election officials are under a microscope to, and in particular from the right on security issues.

42:15

And they're, they're challenging the, the, the processes that we put forward.

42:19

And so, and that's, it's attention, open and secure our intention.

42:25

Those, those two things fight with each other.

42:27

And it doesn't mean that we can't have both.

42:29

But I think that needs to be reflected in the report that we value both, that we want both and that it's hard and that work that we're working on ways to navigate access and security.

42:39

Similarly, quantity, quality, we want everybody to be involved and we want the process to be great.

42:44

And so I think that that's going to be a challenge as we as we write this.

42:50

And it's almost going to be like every paragraph, it's going to be it's going to be who gets the last word, you know, almost.

43:02

Yeah, again, good.

43:03

All good things.

43:08

OK.

43:09

I agree with you, Susan.

43:10

I just want to make sure that as we're moving through and I am definitely hearing that the ableism feedback and we can absolutely do better there.

43:27

I, I see it.

43:30

I'm sure I don't see all of it, but I see, I see your example, Kate.

43:34

And, and I agree with you, Laura, about best practices and that guide.

43:44

And we're going to have to come up with a process and a timeline that's going to work for that work.

43:51

And Megan, I see your hand is up.

43:56

I'm curious.

43:56

I'd like to go down that road a little bit more about what we've this perceived tension because I had made a note on the bottom of page the top of page 4 about, you know, state broadly there's a tension between accessibility and current capacity and to if we're going to call out tensions to either name them.

44:16

You know, it said, you know, it's this big example was technology, but I wonder if maybe we shouldn't be framing it as a tension, which again has this, I this, this idea that there's some, you know, I, I think that there's a possibility of framing this in a different way.

44:38

That's not we have some tensions.

44:41

It's sort of like buying into the narrative when we have it's buying into the something.

44:45

It's buying into the the narrative that the right is sewing around security issues.

44:52

And it's sort of, you know, you've already lost the argument if you're responding to that without, you know, and I don't want to, I don't want to, you know, I know that I'm in a Chittenden County bubble talking that way and that I'm not necessarily in communities that are struggling with attention, you know, quote UN quote.

45:15

But I wish I was more articulate about that, except that I think that as soon as we, as soon as we, as soon as we talk about it in that way, we're we're sort of already succumbing to the process rather than saying sort of along the lines that Laura was saying.

45:33

Like, you know, we're, we've made some amazing strides at recognizing that the underpinning of local democracy is full participation and that we are stronger as communities when we have and value the variety of voices and make sure those voices are building the table, not just at the table.

46:01

I've like been part of building the table and not just at the table.

46:05

And I, and well, I appreciate, I think, I think practicing inclusive language can be a good exercise for all of us.

46:14

So I, you know, like I, I hear we don't want to just write it to not sound ableist, but it also it's going to be helpful for all of us.

46:22

And I Yeah.

46:25

So thanks.

46:30

Thank you.

46:30

May I have found the sentence that you were talking about?

46:40

And yeah, maybe tensions the wrong word.

46:45

I do think there's this push pull that is in our group and push pulls probably the wrong word too of people saying we want to do that, but how do we do it?

46:58

How do we do it?

47:00

And that's something that has to be acknowledged, whether that's we don't have the money, we don't have the resources, we don't have the training, we don't have the people.

47:12

That's really true on the ground.

47:14

So it doesn't mean that that shouldn't be happening and it doesn't mean that I mean, it doesn't mean that it shouldn't be a mandate necessarily, but it it, it is the reality.

47:27

So I, I don't know how to reflect that.

47:31

And that is the, you know, that is feedback that we have received.

47:35

So Megan, your hand is still up or it's that OK, Kate.

47:48

OK, Thanks, Megan.

47:50

So as the authors, the primary authors of the report at the Secretary of State's office, lot of skilled attorneys there, lot of amazing writers, right.

48:03

You do have the power of framing and it is evident that that has happened in this report thus far.

48:09

So any both ancisms that we're seeing, yes, this but and rights, but also like as you go down that path, as Megan has so beautifully articulated, you're already framing it that way.

48:24

And the fact that it's coming from the Secretary of State's office is really concerning to me, right.

48:29

So the other places where I'm seeing this, it's actually throughout, but this one was really concerning.

48:36

The accommodation process can be daunting.

48:38

This is true for both municipalities and Vermonters with disabilities.

48:42

No, it's not the next place that that I really, the other thing that I really want to say is that just to take this out completely, the right of disabled people to vote is not the source of the tension.

48:55

I need to say that again, the right of disabled people to vote is not the source of the tension.

49:00

The accommodations for us to vote that cost money, that require staff members time, that require additional time in a process.

49:08



Again, it's we're not the problem, it's the systems in the process.

49:12

So I need the authors, the primary authors of the report to not just hear that, but to understand it, right?

49:18

To understand it, It's so, so important.

49:21

And then the last thing that I want to say, because I don't know how to even provide comments on this report without saying this.

49:27

Right now, me and my disabled peers around the state, the only thing keeping us from voting at Hybrid Town Meeting is the current policy guidance from your own Secretary of State's office.

49:44

That is why we cannot vote.

49:46

And so there needs to be either rescinded guidance from the 2023 Wilson and guidance that needs to be rescinded clearly in this report, or the Secretary of State needs to say something a little bit stronger than, hey, y'all, consult your town attorneys.

50:02

Not acceptable.

50:04

I can't vote.

50:05

Others can't vote because of the Secretary of State's office guidance.

50:08

That is something you could change immediately for March 2026, Kate.

50:18

What we are saying is that we believe that there needs to be a legislative change.

50:22

What legislative change, what laws, what needs to be changed.

50:27

Some of those are called out in the report.

50:29

I don't have them memorized right now, Kate, but they are in the report as laws that need to be changed and they're in a footnote.

50:39

They are called out and we think that there needs to be an analysis of the ripple effects of modifying the the definition of voting and and that's that we wanted to happen during this last year.

50:53

This is what this year was for Opportunity wasted.

51:02

I'm sorry you feel that way, Kate.

51:04

I really am, Laura.

51:08

I, I was just going to say we're, you know, 54 minutes into this meeting and we're only on page 4.

51:14

And I really feel like we need to look at this report collectively and make our comments and suggestions.

51:23

But also I, I feel like I need to say I do support Kate in this, you know, with, with regards to this SOS guidance.

51:32

I mean, if that's what's preventing hybrid participation, then please, there are towns and communities that are, are ready, willing and able to, to do hybrid without that guidance.

51:46

And so, you know, yeah, I just, I, I don't feel like it's doing maybe what what it was intended to do.

51:58

I think it's creating barriers, more barriers.

52:01

So, but also don't want to get off track, really do want to focus on getting through this report.

52:07

Sorry.

52:09

No, Laura, I I appreciate that.

52:14

What is the next topic that folks would like to go to?

52:19

Do people have more recommendations on the introduction?

52:23

Understanding the large piece of feedback about the ableism within the introduction.

52:32

Again, I, I, a lot of these comments are in conjunction with Jess, Jessica Rabert at ACLU and I see that she's in the meeting and, and so she may want to also make comment.

52:46

But on page 4, where where you state that public meeting bodies, it's midway through the page and functions of state and local governments are already subject to state public accommodations requirements.

53:03

I think that it's important to note there that the ADA implements itself, right?

53:09

And also and that the Public Accommodations Act is an independent source of law.

53:15

It provides, you know, other standards, but that it's important to add that the ADA is controlling as well.

53:26

OK, OK, next spot of feedback.

53:47

Oh, I should take my hand down.

53:49

So it gets confusing for me and Jessica, thank you for that case law in the in the corners.

53:56

I appreciate that.

54:01

OK, Susan.

54:05

Yeah.

54:06

And this is not a specific editing thing, but, and we talk about best practices.

54:09

And during, during our conversation about best practices, we raised the point that some things are, have have been studied and are well known to be best practices.

54:21

And those should those we've named a lot of those that should be in the best practice guide.

54:26

There are also some ideas that, that that places should try and they are good ideas and they might work in some places and not in others.

54:35

And I, I hesitate to call them best practice, but I like the idea of including them in the guide.

54:42

And we, we talked about promising practices.

54:44

So I just want to raise that as a way to expand the, the offering that that we could say, Hey, you could also do these things and, and, and not pretend that we have data to, to say that they are best, but that they might work in some places.

55:01

So that's one thing, promising practices as a as a possible add on.

55:05

And the other is just I, I want to make sure that we know how we're going to be reviewing the best practice guide while we're talking about best practices.



55:13
Thanks.

55:17
OK, I practices in this case around and some would be just Megan, it's hard to hear you all of a sudden.

55:32
A little bit lost.

55:33
Are we on page 4, difference between best practice and law?

55:38
Yes, we were just on page 4.

55:40
Susan was saying, and I think it's we can mention it in the report, but I think it's more in the best practices guide that there's things that are truly best practices, but then there's also things that are promising practices, which is something we've talked about that maybe don't have as much evidence behind them, but or but are things that are really useful or, or have the potential to be useful.

56:07
Yeah.

56:08
And that's best practices around running a meeting around just all just generally best practices for running effective and close meetings.

56:21
OK.

56:24
Yeah.

56:24
I mean, I think again Susan, maybe you're better suited to answer this question.

56:30
But there's there's some things that we've talked about that are best practices and known, widely known to be best practices.

56:39

And then there's other things that people are being innovative about and sort of on the cutting edge of the idea space about how to provide services or accessibility or effectiveness in a better way.

56:58

And those would be more in the promising practices group.

57:02

So I think in terms of process with best practices, you know, we had that.

57:13

Hi, Frank.

57:14

We had that chart that had all of the best practices that our office had seen and heard throughout the meetings.

57:25

So I will for those of you who are not here, Frank just brought a little Penguin and a Santa hat to the meeting.

57:33

So we bet as a working group member at this time.

57:36

Just kidding, not a working group member.

57:40

So I think recirculating, again, open to feedback.

57:48

Thinking on my feed here.

57:49

I think we need people to look at that spreadsheet and to add things.

57:55

But those are the things that if we miss something, you should add it.

58:01

But those are the things that we went through every meeting and listed as best practices and that we talked about.

58:12

So we can recirculate that.

58:15

And then in terms of voting or consensus drawing or a survey etcetera, open to how we deal that with that.

58:28

But we do need to have people's feedback on those practices.

58:36

And I do think that's a space where we actually have more agreement alignment than in other spaces.

58:44

So perhaps that's because it's easier.

58:47

But Megan.

58:53

Yeah.

58:54

So I had sent before we got this report, I had sent to the Secretary of State's office sort of at your request.

59:01

Can you?

59:01

I see Susan leaning in.

59:03

Can't hear me, huh?

59:05

No, we can't hear you very well.

59:07

Can you hear me?

59:07

If I am?

59:08

I like this.



59:09

Can you hear me better?

59:11

Yes.

59:12

OK.

59:12

I'm.

59:12

I'm literally leaning into my computer.

59:16

So I had sent to Kelly, Jenny and Lauren a report from the Vermont Access Network on technical best practices that that came probably a few, you know, when you were in the midst of already writing this report.

59:39

I want to know how, you know, I think there's some things in there that are important to include you.

59:44

We have some, I have, I put forth some specific requests for legislative recommendations.

59:52

You know, it's so I'm wondering how do I, how do we bring that in As for folks to look at and respond to?

1:00:01

I sent it to just the three of you at the request not to send things of material nature to the whole group.

1:00:10

But I but I'm, but I would like to not have that get lost.

1:00:14

And I think there's, you know, when I review it, I think that there's some useful language in there that so where, where does that belong in this process outside of the legislative changes?

1:00:32
Megan?

1:00:33
I think that that, so the way that, that the best practices guide is structured is the way that I would like to not recreate everybody else's best practices guide.

1:00:51
I would like to have those best practices guides linked into the best practices guide that our office and this will host that this working group produces in a way that keeps those references Evergreen.

1:01:09
So that as the resource changes and evolves, the, you know, the link or the we don't get broken documents is my hope.

1:01:21
And so I am thinking of it more like, I don't know what to call it, but like an indicator of where else to go to look for best practices as opposed to a regurgitation of other people's concepts of best practices.

1:01:41
With the exception of there may be some that we think are so important that we want to draw specific attention to, the best practices guide would not be where we would put legislative recommendations for change.

1:01:56
This report would be.

1:01:57
And so we can work on that.

1:02:04
If there's, you know, recommendations that one member of our group is making or that we're all making, we can work on putting those into the report.

1:02:16
Hi, Frank.

1:02:17
Maybe we could do a like a Level 1 and a Level 2 reference criteria of importance.

1:02:26
Yeah, classifications on them on in that area, what to do first.

1:02:33

Yeah, yeah.

1:02:34

OK.

1:02:35

Yeah, Megan, you can share that.

1:02:38

And maybe we need to think about specifically for the best practices guide, how to make a shared folder that people can contribute to and see all the resources that is beyond my current technical ability.

1:02:57

But there are people who have that technical ability and I will work with them.

1:03:02

And to be clear, it's not just best practices guys.

1:03:06

You know, we were I I responded to three of the questions specifically and we're, you know, we're sort of pushing for specific legislative changes and we name a few folks disability rights Vermont, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, others that need to be recognized and named as partners in the work through the Secretary of State's office.

1:03:33

So I think that's a piece where in this report, the Secretary of State, and maybe this is to your first question needs to name, if not designate name partners that the legislature needs to acknowledge and recognize formally as people that are helping to lead the way in this process and and are providing resources that help lift the burden, so to speak.

1:04:02

In the in meeting requirements, technical requirements, educational requirements, the functional requirements from from the state, but also put forth a, a specific request for a, a grant to fund the needed work.

1:04:28

It's this, you know, so I just, I did pin it in the chat and, you know, I want to acknowledge again, like I'm sending this in sort of this is I sent it in when I could send it in and it's sort of late in the process, but I would like to make sure that we have time to respond to it in some way.

1:04:47



Yeah, we will, Megan.

1:04:51

We will as, as I mean we did a draft of the report, gave it to all of you.

1:05:00

You have some of you have provided comments, some of you haven't had the moment to.

1:05:04

We'll continue to take everybody's comments and make modifications to the report and then send another one for reactions and responses.

1:05:15

So we know this is not done, Susan.

1:05:23

Yeah, I just really want to emphasize, re emphasize what what you and Megan have both said about not having the best practices guide rehashing or trying to rewrite or shorten or, or somehow like we've a lot of these groups have really carefully researched, really carefully crafted resource guides and resources available.

1:05:49

And so lifting those up and pointing people to them is a really valuable thing for this best practice guide to do, way more valuable than trying to rewrite it.

1:06:00

So yay on that and yay also on helping lifting up the names, the names and the contact information for groups that can help communities meet the requirements, whether it's translation or any of that, any of the, the kinds of things that we've talked about and point them to the resources and, and what they are.

1:06:22

Sort of it's like, look, look at this guy.

1:06:24

If it has, if you have these questions, you know, if you have questions about data, here are three places you can go for information.

1:06:31

If you have questions about that, you know, to, to help people make sense of it, I think that would be a really valuable gift to Vermont.

1:06:40

There's, there are resources available, People just don't know how to find them.



1:06:44

Yeah, Laura, just to add to that point, I, I think that the way that we can specifically identify this as, as, as our best practices guide is by naming the ways in which we are not meeting our best practices right now.

1:07:02

And the reasons why we need to add this as a best practice and reiterate a best practice as it applies to us here in Vermont.

1:07:10

And, and so, but also, yeah, there are already, we don't need to reinvent the wheel.

1:07:17

There are already a lot of really great informative, you know, resources that we can look to, but naming where we're not getting it right is is how we say This is why we need to do this in Vermont.

1:07:33

Yeah.

1:07:33

The framing is what I'm hearing, Laura, is the framing is really important from the very beginning of the.

1:07:39

The best practice is good, Frank.

1:07:42

That could be a preface when she's talking.

1:07:44

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

1:07:45

Easily or or the the framework for the entire best practice is good.

1:07:51

That is a constant strength throughout it.

1:07:54

Yeah.

1:07:58

OK.

1:07:59

Next phase of feedback is in.

1:08:05

I'm on page 5V1.

1:08:13

Does anyone have any specific feedback for hybrid local public meetings?

1:08:27

Who just made that most recent comment to go back to the chart at the bottom of four?

1:08:35

That was me about my fault that I'm not a member of the working group.

1:08:38

So I'm trying to just be quiet right here.

1:08:40

You, you don't have to be quiet.

1:08:42

We haven't, we haven't restricted commentary to only members of the working group and you that Grace has given to you too.

1:08:50

So go ahead.

1:08:52

Thank you, I appreciate it.

1:08:54

So I think it might be helpful in the chart to include that state and local governments have to remediate obvious barriers even before a request is made because there is the same feedback that Laura had at the beginning with the the way that we is that is that essentially the same thing Jessica like that, that there needs to be proactive work before the accommodation or before.

1:09:23

Yeah, yeah.

1:09:26

And then I don't know how it would.

1:09:28

I mean, maybe it doesn't belong in the chart, just a, you know, really important concept, I suppose, both in the chart when you're talking about universal design and everywhere else that in addition to the ADA, when we're looking at the fundamental right to vote, we should be looking at that in constitutional terms too.

1:09:47

And there's a lot of case law around, you know, doing an equal protection analysis for anything that's going to interfere with the right to vote.

1:09:56

And similarly, you can do that with the common benefits clause here in Vermont.

1:10:01

Lots of case law.

1:10:06

I concur.

1:10:07

And I think maybe it's not in this graph, but it could be better built in the laws as it currently exists and also when we get to voting sections of the report as well.

1:10:20

But I, I think your first point, which is very similar to Laura's point at the beginning about the affirmative duty, I put that in my notes on this report so that I can make sure that we're getting that and getting that right.

1:10:38

And whenever we're talking about the ADA and the common rights.

1:10:42

So, and I put it in a prior comment to you because there are, you know, notes about how maybe certain laws need to change.

1:10:50

The beauty of the ADA is that it Trump's those state and local laws.

1:10:57

Yeah.

1:10:58

So it doesn't matter if the law says here's the way you're supposed to do it.

1:11:02

Sometimes you need to do something different.

1:11:05

No pun intended there.

1:11:11

OK.

1:11:11

I just want to highlight what Jessica just said.

1:11:14

And I want to make sure that you all in the room who are who are editing the report.

1:11:18

Got that.

1:11:20

OK, Like this has been said many, many times over the many, many months, but I want to make sure like as a result of these comments, what are you changing?

1:11:30

OK, I feel like I, I really, I hear you and I, I feel like I've said what we are saying, which is that states, the state law, municipal law need to make sure that people's needs are met and that the ADA is followed.

1:11:50

That is essential.

1:11:52

It is in conflict with some of our laws that we have on the books right now and we need to fix that.

1:12:00

But we can't just fix it in this report or just from this office by changing a policy.

1:12:06

So, but did you hear the the other part that Jessica said about federal law trumping state laws?

1:12:12

And so in those cases, and I agree, I agree with that.

1:12:15

And that will be reflected in the report.

1:12:19

I believe that it is, but not as clearly as Jessica just articulated.

1:12:23

And yes, it will be reflected in the report because what I what this chart says, it could be done better.

1:12:31

But what this chart and what we were trying to say is that the ABA is the bare minimum that needs to be followed and then best practices stacked on top of that and universal design stacks on top of that.

1:12:44

But could we make the, that legal analysis more robust?

1:12:48

As Jessica said, yes, I will say there's a tension in how much legalese you get into in any of these reports.

1:12:56

But, but I think we can do better and I think we can.

1:13:01

I, I, I hear Jessica's feedback and I hear Laura's feedback and Kate, I hear your feedback that you really want to make sure that that is understood.

1:13:09

And we can, we can do that, Jessica, to round out that conversation.

1:13:18

I think, you know, to, to your point of what you were saying, I like it to be easy for people to follow the law.

1:13:27

And so if there's things that we could change in state law, you know, for instance, where undue burden is discussed or just sending things out as universally, this is what's going to be done.

1:13:42

Because this is the bare minimum under the requirements from both the ADA and from the equal protection clause and the common benefits clause, then we should go ahead and do that.

1:13:56

Because, you know, I think the more that it's clear, here's what the obligation is, who wants to have to go to court to figure this stuff out?

1:14:04

Or, you know, small towns don't want to be getting demand letters all the time.

1:14:08

And so having it be.

1:14:10

But that doesn't change anything about what they're required to do right now.

1:14:14

It's just we could change state law to make it more clear.

1:14:19

And that is what we are asking the legislature to do.

1:14:26

Yes.

1:14:30

Jessica, could you give an example of that?

1:14:33

Could you give a more specific example of that?

1:14:36

Like what is a law that we won't change that removes the burden, you know, removes that vagueness on a, on a town level.

1:14:49

Why do you think that in the law where it talks about accessibility and looking at whether or not it's an undue burden?

1:14:59

I, I don't, I don't see the, the undue burden analysis as being as basic as what you would do under a normal ADA request, because we're talking about the fundamental right to vote, because this also brings in the common benefits clause.

1:15:16

I also think it's really important for towns to understand how do you actually do that, right?

1:15:23

This isn't something that should be going to vote by the Select Board on whether or not someone gets a reasonable accommodation.

1:15:30

So even if under federal law, if a town has 50 or more employees and they have to have an ADA coordinator, right?

1:15:37

But we, we could decide in Vermont that, you know, because this is such an important interest that even if there isn't, you know, a person who's paid as an ADA coordinator like you might have for a big town, that it's part of a certain person's job, right?

1:15:58

That this is just going to go to one person and they've been trained and they know how to do this, right?

1:16:02

So that it doesn't interfere with folks or even, you know, things like when there are accessibility elements that are present in a, a, a meeting space, right?

1:16:19

That there, there has to be signage to let people know, oh, hey, there's a ramp, you know, at this, this other door.

1:16:24

It's not a, maybe you do this, it's a, it's a must do this.

1:16:29

And perhaps some of that would be done in regulations, but at least, you know, on that, especially on that undue burden and the bare minimums of of what we think are required.

1:16:40

I, I do think that a, a bare minimum is that people can participate even if they're not able to show up in person.

1:16:48

Yeah, I think to that point on page five of the report, there's sort of a in my mind a little pandering to this question of like challenges associated with hybrid meetings.

1:17:04

There can be a complex to manage.

1:17:06

I think for me, I would be, I would, I would prefer that we come out of the gate like hybrid meetings are here to stay and we're only going to make this work for folks.

1:17:19

We're we're going to, we're going to this, this is what exists.

1:17:23

This is where we're at with this and this is what we're going to do to make this better.

1:17:29

And so I think that, you know, and I think I tried to get at that with the van report a little bit was just like, here's the current state of the situation in Vermont.

1:17:40

It doesn't paint the full picture, but and here's what we could do to improve on this.

1:17:47

And here's what we need.

1:17:49

And here are the partners that we need to make that happen.

1:17:56

And that to me would be the the that would be what I want coming out of the Secretary of State's office.

1:18:03

Is that strong?

1:18:07

Sort of yeah.

1:18:08

And, and, and I, I really appreciate I am not bringing a legal perspective to it.

1:18:13

So I really appreciate the the legal, the legal language that helps point out where that is.

1:18:22

Yeah, well, just to be clear, we're one of many where this report is not the Secretary of State's report.

1:18:28

And so I want to make sure that everyone understands that as we move forward.

1:18:34

But yes, we can, we can work on that.

1:18:41

We want you all to lead the way 'cause people will listen to you in a different way than all of our voices.

1:18:46

I understand that.

1:18:47

And there's there's certain issues that we can and, and other issues that we may not be able to.

1:18:53

So and we have put in the report where we may have some difference than the consensus.

1:19:00

I heard Kate's asked for us to vote in a survey response.

1:19:06

It just felt like a bad use of time given everything else that we were doing to fill out that survey.

1:19:12

But but we can be clear about the Secretary of State's position on these topics as we move forward.

1:19:21

But if we have a disagreement with what is written in the report, we are mentioning it in the side comments at this time.

1:19:35

OK.

1:19:36

The next Susan, your hand is up still.

1:19:42

Yeah, yeah, I just wanted to.

1:19:44

I know Megan wants us to come out strong on hybrid meetings.

1:19:50

And I just want to point out that there's disagreement on that.

1:19:52

That's not something that this group is fully unanimous that hybrid meetings are the way to go in all cases.

1:19:59

And so that's just, that's the that's the thing the report has to say.

1:20:04

There's tensions.

1:20:06

There are, but absolutely we need more training.

1:20:10

And one of the things that I just wanted to suggest on Page 6, we talk about grant program for municipalities with the purpose of supporting technology upgrades.

1:20:20

I would add with the purpose of supporting staffing, training and technology upgrades, because if we have the technology, somebody's got to run it.

1:20:30

And who's that going to be?

1:20:32

And do they know what they're doing, which is which is often the the case.

1:20:35

And, and just to add a little bit of shine some light and hope on this conversation right now, I am missing a conference that I'm going to go to the rest of this afternoon.

1:20:45

That's called Reimagining rural capacity Summit.

1:20:50

And this is a place where rural communities are coming together with UVM, with the state, to look at ways that they can combine energies, that they can find resources to do all of these things better because a lot of our communities are very small and don't have resources.

1:21:04

So this is not a thing that small towns aren't aware of, and it's not a thing that they aren't trying to solve.

1:21:10

Just want to put that up there.

1:21:15

OK.

1:21:17

I like that bright spot.

1:21:18

Thank you, Laura.

1:21:25

Just getting back to the report, we were in Section 1, pages 5 and 6.

1:21:31

And I just wanted to comment that, you know, it says that there's this middle of page 6, an acknowledgement that hybrid meetings may not be feasible for all municipalities and in all cases due to technical and logistical constraints.

1:21:48

And I'm not sure that I understand where is the feasibility problem because unless a town has absolutely no Internet access, I don't know why it's not feasible.

1:22:03

And, and I, I'm, I'm, I again, it's more of that sort of negative framing, like we were already conceding defeat here that, that we're acknowledging that it's not feasible in all towns.

1:22:16

And so therefore we're not gonna mandate that like or or recommend a mandate for that.

1:22:23

I'm just not in agreement.

1:22:25

I'm not sure what the what the problem is.

1:22:27

What where's the lack of feasibility?

1:22:30

Well, that is something that came up in other people's survey results.

1:22:36

So that is a reflection of that.

1:22:38

That is also something that this office hears all the time, that hybrid meetings, that towns are really struggling with that.

1:22:49

That doesn't mean that it shouldn't shift Laura, but that is a struggle and there's a lot of people that to Megan's point about how Van is trying to help, there has been a lot of attention on trying to get communities more hybrid.

1:23:04

But when Act One passed in 23 when and this Act 133, there was a ton of testimony from small towns asking do not make every meeting required to be hybrid.

1:23:22

We don't have the staff to do that.

1:23:24

We can't do that.

1:23:26

There's a whole set of techniques of meetings that are not required to be hybrid under the law right now and I can just be remote.

1:23:36

So that's the acknowledgement of those comments and that state of the law, but, and the legislature would have to be the one to make it mandatory and navigate how to do that in a way that works for communities.

1:23:53

And, and so the intent of that, and I hear about the negative framing, but the intent of that sentence is you can make it mandatory, but that doesn't mean that it's possible without some structural support and guidance.

1:24:12

And, and the legislature absolutely could make all meetings required to be hybrid.

1:24:19

They will receive a lot of feedback on that, not just from people in this group, but from a lot of other groups.

1:24:27

But but there, there is an active conversation about that, Laura, because and this group could say that that they recommend that all groups, all public meetings are hybrid, except for the fact that not everybody in this group agrees with that.

1:24:46

So I mean, I feel, I feel like that they're, you know, that saying that our flexibility and support and implementing hybrid solutions are emphasized as a real soft pitch.

1:24:58

And I feel like we need to be way firmer on that being a goal.

1:25:04

And, and I think that it should be reflected that at this present moment, maybe towns are not, don't have the technical and training capabilities, but that, but there are solutions and that the intention should be absolutely not just that we're, you know, they're emphasized, but that they're, there will be required because it's the only way for there to be universal access.

1:25:34

And so anyway, and I hear what you're saying that there, there are dissenting opinions on that, but it's, I, I mean, I, I couldn't get behind something that didn't make that a priority.

1:26:01

OK.

1:26:04

I think we'll have to get everybody's comments and rework this and and see if we can come to some consensus or, or name who is disagreeing, which is still an open question for me.

1:26:20

But and to Megan's point in the comments, Kate, thank you.

1:26:27

Here is the tension in this report and this process for me.

1:26:32

So the Secretary of State's office is who was charged by the Legislature to convene this group and to facilitate and to be the lead author, right?

1:26:45

And the Secretary of State's office has obligations to meet state and federal law.



1:26:50

That's your obligation.

1:26:52

It is not an obligation to please all stakeholders.

1:26:56

And I feel like that's the tension in this report is that you're trying to middle of the road, please all stakeholders, right?

1:27:02

So here is my framing suggestion for this report.

1:27:05

Where there is consensus, great.

1:27:07

The report talks about the consensus, OK.

1:27:10

Where there's not consensus, as the lead author of the report and the convener of this group, the Secretary of State's office says, we've considered all working group opinions and state and federal law right and civil rights protections through our state constitution.

1:27:25

And here is the recommendations of the Secretary of State's office.

1:27:29

That is your obligation here.

1:27:31

And let me just finish this and here is the dissenting opinions.

1:27:38

Here's what the municipality member groups say in their section.

1:27:42

Here's what the legal and civil rights organizations say in their section.

1:27:47

But stop hiding within the report to be middle of the road on things that are not middle of the road.

1:27:54

These are actual civil rights laws.

1:27:57

And so that's what I think needs to happen for the report, for the framing.

1:28:01

I want to see what the Secretary of State's office is recommending and suggesting.

1:28:05

And thanks, because that's nowhere in this report.

1:28:11

Megan.

1:28:14

Oh, I had so many questions.

1:28:19

So I guess I'm a little lost about the dissenting opinions, unless it's the difference between the current law and recommending all meetings be hybrid to.

1:28:31

I think one of the things that we're trying to do in the van report is again, show a picture of where we're at today, how we've gotten there, you know, through the work of, you know, volunteers and, and non governmental organizations and advocates and activists.

1:28:54

And, and then what the gap is in terms of high specifically hybrid meeting, which also still needs a, a variety of accessibility comp complements to a hybrid meeting, right.

1:29:11

So making sure people understand how to use captioning, making sure that captioning is included, making sure that when you can have ASL signers in the room, how to make sure those folks are pinned and available, a whole bunch of stuff.

1:29:30

Right.

1:29:31

So, but so first of all, I'm just lost about I didn't realize that there were dissenting opinions on the hybrid.

1:29:36

Is that VLCT?

1:29:38

Is that so I see Susan laughing and maybe I'm just missing something.

1:29:45

Maybe I'm missing something.

1:29:48

No, it it it just blew up last year at the legislature.

1:29:51

That's why I'm laughing.

1:29:52

It was like not dissenting opinions.

1:29:54

Civil war.

1:29:55

Yeah, I know.

1:29:56

It's it's going to blow up, but I also think like we've done it, like if you look at the, the statistics I put like we actually have achieved it largely across the state in a large way.

1:30:07

And so change sucks for people.

1:30:10

People respond to change in a ***** way, right?

1:30:13

People are like, and so anyway, I just would hate to see us lose ground And I, and I know I understand why people, you know, I'm exhausted by meeting with you all on zoom as well.

1:30:31

But that's that's not that it's too bad.

1:30:35

Democracy is exhausting, right?

1:30:37

I mean, democracy is exhausting.

1:30:40

It is it's a it's the very best, worst form.

1:30:43

And if we're going to if we're going to pander to, you know, if we're going to pander to that, then we're going to basically going to we're going to give in to autocracy and old Arky sound very traumatic, but I think that's the truth.

1:30:59

And we have to Yeah.

1:31:02

So yeah, no problem.

1:31:08

Laura, I see your hand is up and I want to talk about next steps because I, I am looking at the time and I want to, I anticipate that we will have a lot of discussion about next steps.

1:31:22

So Laura, I want to hear your comment first, though.

1:31:28

Oh, you're on mute, Laura, I'm sorry.

1:31:32

Sorry about that.

1:31:33

I just wanted to say, like in, in notes provided by Jessica in our conversations about this, you know, she does point out that, you know, where tech advances, you know, considering whether tech advances can eliminate restrictions on voting, they have to be considered.

1:31:53

That's in the law, the case law.

1:31:55

And so it has to, we have to consider like we can't simply not consider them because there is a, a, a wall up by a number of dissenting, you know, parties.

1:32:09

They absolutely have to be considered.

1:32:11

We can't just, you know, say it.

1:32:14

It's too much of a challenge.

1:32:15

It's too difficult.

1:32:16

I mean, we have a legal obligation.

1:32:19

So where tech changes can eliminate restrictions of voting, we have to look at those.

1:32:27

Yes.

1:32:28

And I, I and participation in general.

1:32:32

Yeah.

1:32:35

Laura and Jessica, do you know if we have a copy of those documents that you're talking about or is that something you've shared internally among yourselves?

1:32:44

Because I, I, we do no, that's something that we, you know, it's, it's in our communications.

1:32:50

And so just a, it would be, I'm just going to say it would be helpful to have that as, as much as you feel comfortable.

1:32:59

And, you know, I really, it's hard.

1:33:01

We don't know, we aren't part of those conversations.

1:33:03

So they're not.

1:33:05

And that's why I'm sharing it with you now.

1:33:07

But I understand it's a lot to take in and absorb.

1:33:11

And like I said, you know, we, we do have, I, I know that, you know, gonna submit some, you know, written commentary and recommendations from our part.

1:33:20

But like, you know, we, we know we've had a limited amount of time to look at this document and get through it and, and consider all of the questions and concerns that we have.

1:33:29

But, but I'm, we'll provide you with real.

1:33:33

So let's just go right to that, Laura.

1:33:36

So what, how much time would people like to to provide written feedback, track changes, feedback, however you want to do it.

1:33:46

It's easier to receive in the Word document itself in terms of incorporating it, because then we can do a side by side and, and do a better job.

1:33:57

But how long do people want?

1:33:59

I know for me, I know for me that probably a week would be good because we've got the civil rights summit all weekend this weekend.

1:34:06

And so we don't even have extra time to work over hours on the weekend to work on this.

1:34:12

So maybe sometime in the beginning of the next week to compile all of our comments and and then get them to you.

1:34:21

OK.

1:34:23

And anyone, would anyone like more than a week?

1:34:31

Is the goal for these comments to be consensus or is the goal for us to start creating dissenting opinions where there seems to be dissenting opinions?

1:34:39

The goal is that I know what your opinion is, Kate, on certain sections of this document that that I know from every stakeholder and we can do a better job reflecting that in the report.

1:34:53

The perspectives from every single person.

1:34:56

And you don't know that already from the survey responses.

1:35:01

Well, but we do somewhat.

1:35:03

But I'm, I've used this, we use the survey responses to generate this and people are not happy with this.

1:35:11

So I, I do think we need to know what people, where people are or where people want the, the reflection of the report to be stronger or their position better articulated.

1:35:26

That's, that's our ask, Susan.

1:35:32

Well, I think you're going to run into the problem, the obvious problem that if, if, if some of this report is written to my liking and somebody else comes in and says I think it should be changed, all of a sudden you're going to have me not liking it.

1:35:48

So I don't know how you are going to do this back and forth without if, if you feel like this report reflects the surveys that we did, then we keep this report and we say, PS, there's a bunch of stuff that's not in this report because not everybody agreed.

1:36:09

And here are the voices of those people.

1:36:12

Otherwise we're literally going to be at this forever.

1:36:16

So I'm, I'm a little concerned about this proposing this process.

1:36:20

Yeah, I, I don't know.

1:36:28

I think, I think we should welcome addendums.

1:36:36

I propose that we welcome addendums and I propose that if there are significant positions that folks do not feel are adequately addressed in this report or framing issues that I'm that we received feedback on those issues.

1:36:58

And, and then we'll assess whether that's called out in the report or whether it's all in the addendum.

1:37:08

And, and, but I think to Megan's point earlier, you know, Megan, you would, I'm just going to say you would like the hybrid, the you would like a statewide mandate for hybrid meetings.

1:37:27

And the LCT does not want to statewide mandate for all public meetings to be hybrid.

1:37:36

And the Secretary of State's position on this that we've testified quite a bit is we don't want all remote meetings because we believe that hybrid or in person provides better access than all remote because people do not have Internet, not everybody has Internet access.

1:37:58

So that's been the Secretary of State's position on open meetings is not all remote, but perhaps specific carve outs, but in person or hybrid.

1:38:12

And we have supported hybrid with the acknowledgement that communities need support around how to do that.

1:38:22

So that's our position and it's in that's in this report.

1:38:25

But that that has been our position on hybrid.

1:38:31

So we could put those positions better in this report.

1:38:38

Obviously we can have addendums as well.

1:38:42

But if we're putting specific stakeholders opinions in the report, then I would like that to come from the stakeholders a little bit more firmly in response to what's in the report than the survey responses.

1:38:58

And that's a big ask in a week, Megan, then Jessica, then Frank.

1:39:08

Yeah.

1:39:08

So I mean one thing, I mean what, what what I tried to do with the van report to the to this working group was to address specific questions that we felt like we had some input and expertise on.

1:39:26

And so I'm wondering if that's also something that maybe that maybe people have weighed in that way enough.

1:39:33

But and and to be clear, I'm not sure if we're recommending, I mean, I, I personally would recommend that.

1:39:41

And the report that we gave gives options that are feasible potentially that are potentially feasible for all meetings to be hybrid using a variety of methods.

1:39:55

And I think, I think whether you, you stick with meetings of public bodies or you make it all meetings, which is, you know, I, I think I would, I would, I would probably lean towards all meetings.

1:40:10

I think that they're, I think it, I think we have to lay the path out forward for like, what does, what do we need to do to make that happen?

1:40:18

Not, oh, it's really hard to make it happen.

1:40:20

And so we're not sure where to go, but just that what do we need to do to make that happen?

1:40:27

And I, I don't know what to do with, with the fact that and, and I get it, like Vermont League of Cities and Towns has to come out against that because that may be what they're hearing from clerks and treasurers.

1:40:40

And I did, I, I did want to include Diana Vashon's information as well.

1:40:48

I know this report also doesn't talk about websites.

1:40:51

And I thought it was amazing to see in Diana Vashon's statistics, how many people actually do you have websites?

1:40:58

Whether they're accessible or not is another question.

1:41:00

But you know, I just think there's more we can do to point to say like how far we've come already and what's the gap we need to close and what's the you, what will that cost?

1:41:14

Year one, year 2, year 3, so that there's something that people can actually respond to pretty concretely.

1:41:27

I think some of that is possible in this report and some of it might be too much for this report to do.

1:41:32

But I hear what you're saying.

1:41:35

Just, I'm sorry, just to jump quick on that.

1:41:37

We, we do actually, I know it's noted it's a long report, but we, we do have a section on the report that we had prior to the, the VLCT pieces.

1:41:47

That was just a survey, not the full response, but I mean, not the VLCT from the, from, from Diana and the VMCTA.

1:41:53

We do, we do have a section though with the LCT data on the, the number of municipalities that have have websites and we have a little graph to that effect.

1:42:01

And OK, haven't gotten there yet.

1:42:03

Thank you.

1:42:08

Somebody's typing is very loud.

1:42:10

I don't know who's typing, but Jessica, your hand was up, but you took it down.

1:42:15

Do you still have a comment?

1:42:18

Yeah, that was just so that I wouldn't forget to take it down.

1:42:20

Sorry, these are just questions because I don't know what resources are available and just wanted to check in on that.

1:42:26

There were some things where I thought, I wonder if this already exists.

1:42:30

So 1 is how many questions do I have?

1:42:33

I think it's 5.

1:42:34

Is there already guidance available from city councils or other folks that are already doing hybrid meetings that exist?

1:42:45

Like are there already some sort of best practices things maybe the LCTS made or some of the other towns?

1:42:52

And then 2 is there also, and let me just blast through all of them, Is there already a guide on how moderators set up their reasonable procedures to ensure that only voters vote like for in person or places where they've tried to do hybrid voting?

1:43:13

Then three, I know that some of the town, like in all of Chinden County, they have this town meeting TV thing for meetings that are recorded, but I wasn't sure if that existed all over the state.

1:43:25

How and like if it is only in Chinden County, how did they do that?

1:43:30

Did they have to pay anything for it?

1:43:31

It would just be handy to know those things.

1:43:35

And then I know that the state has contracts for interpretation both by telephone and in person and for ALS interpretation and for translations.

1:43:47

Would that be a thing that could be potentially expanded to towns, right, Those sort of statewide contract like that there's some sort of way for towns to sort of get into that maybe at some reduced price.

1:44:01

And then from, oh, just a note also that for towns that do have websites, since there were so many of them, making sure that everybody knows that by April 2027, they have to be compliant with WCAG 2.1 A a.

1:44:19

And then do we know how the alternatives that were talked about in the report, alternatives to like different ways to to manage things like you know Jericho for



example, right, One sort of impact that had on the participation of people with disabilities, people who are incarcerated, people who are on house, people in safe at home, etcetera.

1:44:49

I have answers to some of those and I've lost some of them.

1:44:52

But I guess there's a guide for hybrid meetings, Yes, there's a guide for security around town meeting, yes.

1:45:01

I think there's guidance coming from the LCT on the accessibility.

1:45:07

That is a conversation that's happening very actively around communities.

1:45:12

Megan, the town meeting, TV question, it's in her.

1:45:17

She's got an analysis of how the van group is covering the state.

1:45:20

But there are pockets where not every meeting is covered.

1:45:26

Chittenden County is the most covered, not surprisingly, but there are pockets where that is not happening.

1:45:38

And then there's your 5th question.

1:45:40

I answered 1/2, 3:00 and 5:00, but your 4th 1 I lost.

1:45:47

So in the report was the statewide contracts.

1:45:53

Well, there was the statewide contracts.

1:45:54

And then also did we look at how the different models that were used during the pandemic impacted people's ability to participate different groups, people with disabilities, people in safe at home, etcetera?

1:46:07

Yeah, we did talk about that in that meeting.

1:46:12

But the and Susan, you can talk to this, but I just, I, I want to have this conversation, but I also just need to make sure that we have a process ironed out for our next steps because I don't want to get back into this substantial conversation because I need to walk out of here in less than 10 minutes.

1:46:34

And I want to make sure that we have a common understanding of where we are, where we are and where we're going.

1:46:39

So the so people would like more time and probably more than a week.

1:46:51

So can we get people's responses by the Monday before Thanksgiving?

1:47:00

That's a little more than a week, but not a lot more than a week.

1:47:05

I acknowledge that.

1:47:08

Kate, do you have a response to that timing question?

1:47:14

Nope.

1:47:14

That's not why my hand is up.

1:47:16

OK.

1:47:18

OK.

1:47:19

Susan, do you have a response to that timing question?

1:47:22

I yes, I do.

1:47:24

I already submitted my responses.

1:47:28

And so I guess my question is what happens when you get lots of responses?

1:47:35

How do we respond to that?

1:47:36

And it was the same question that I had before, but it's sort of like, what is this process going to look like?

1:47:41

Because I have the feeling I'm going to have responses to the responses.

1:47:44

Yes, I know, me too.

1:47:47

We, what I know to be true is we cannot have a live document that we all are in actively editing at the same time or providing commentary on the same time.

1:47:57

So what we are going to have to do is take people's responses, put them in comments or track changes or I don't know how we're going to do it, but we're going to do it.

1:48:10

And and then bring it back to this group for people's responses to people's responses, which is completely painful, but that is where we are because I think that's what we need to do based on the feedback I'm hearing.

1:48:31

So, and I think my original question of do specific stakeholders want to be named in the report as having their opinions, I didn't hear to my memory, I didn't hear anyone's position on that.

1:48:52

But I think that's going to have to be done.

1:48:55

And I think that in the executive summary, we're going to have to acknowledge that there were places where there was a diversity of opinion and that and that that where possible is noted in the report, but that people should also read the addendums provided.

1:49:17

So to call people's attention to that right from the outset.

1:49:21

But in I think in getting the feedback from people, I don't see how we're going to modify this report without putting people's positions in it to get to a place where people feel heard, like their opinion is seen and and that it's fully discussed.

1:49:50

Certainly any addendum that is submitted by anyone will have their name on it.

1:49:55

And if those addendums are attached to the report, then people will have self identified, Yes.

1:50:05

And as we receive feedback and I think we'll put that put that specific feedback in the report as well just right now.

1:50:18

But I, I, you know, I don't know the flavor and 10 and tenor and I want to make sure that the report is flowing and has some things that are concrete and things that are clearly identified as needing more discussion.

1:50:32

And there's a lot here that needs more discussion and a policy decision to be made.

1:50:40

So, Kate, thank you.

1:50:43

Yeah, and I just I, I maybe that got lost, but like I did have a suggestion about it.

1:50:48

So yes, addendums, I think that's where the the substantive comments need to go now is group specific addendums and that the actual report be the Secretary of State's position after hearing from the different groups, right.

1:51:04

So that would be my suggestion and go.

1:51:10

And then the other things that I needed to mention, and this is a Secretary of State framing thing.

1:51:16

On pages 14 and 15 right now, there's data about the towns that have Australian ballots that needs to be flipped.

1:51:24

We need to have the data where the actual current voter suppression is happening.

1:51:28

So that data that's shared needs to be the towns that require in person voting for budgets, town officers and public questions.

1:51:35

And it also needs to include the school board budgets, town officers and public questions for that as well.

1:51:42

So that needs to be in there.

1:51:44

And then under the ADA request for access to floor annual town meeting section, right now there is a mention by the Secretary of State's office about the task force work groups that are starting to be gathered.

1:51:58

I think that needs to be removed because it's actually not at all relevant to that section.

1:52:03

We've actually been told that if anything it will be a cursory mention of this issue in the task task forces, but that the focus of these task forces are really on statewide voting.

1:52:13

So I don't think that's relevant or germane to that section and should be removed.

1:52:18

OK, I'm going to go back to next steps in timing.

1:52:23

Frank, I'm with you on that.

1:52:27
OK.

1:52:27
Is the last round of amendments was confusing and it was a catch up game trying to interpret it, you know, non advisory advisory, all that stuff goes away with this one I assumed now what we're doing is we're ahead of the game.

1:52:41
We're advising the legislature to all the options, everything it's looking at because they're elected representatives are going to be looking at this, not this body, not this working group.

1:52:51
And so the ADA comes in now, which probably wasn't in before.

1:52:56
So Legislative Council is going to be advising the committees.

1:53:01
And so when they're going to be looking at the ADA and plus all the active groups here are going to have access to the representatives of those committees and can communicate directly with those representatives during the process that when the legislature is working on this, all right, directly.

1:53:18
So then that process when you have the statute and the policies and procedures on another advisory level, OK, that goes gets distributed with resources.

1:53:31
Then towns maybe advises the Secretary of State's office has stated, is there maybe an advisory that goes out to towns that recommends or advises pick a word that towns go to their own attorney and get an interpretation of what the ADA means relative to whatever comes out the other end after the Legislature's done.

1:54:01
So the problem is, is the problem is that our we had attorney attorney advise us on the previous one and it could be interpreted to be an incorrect interpretation of of the statute because of the I'm going to interrupt you because I really I need to go to the web portal or meeting.

1:54:19
But but I understand.

1:54:20

But the but what we if, if everybody can keep it in that context where this isn't the end all be all, we're all good.

1:54:26

This this is not the end all be all right there.

1:54:29

There's work to be done after this report.

1:54:32

Yeah, that's for sure understood by our office and and in fact asked for by our office.

1:54:39

Yes, Monday, November 24th.

1:54:41

Please provide specific feedback either on specific sections or it would be helpful, I think to have the addendum letters if or drafts of the addendum letters then too, so that people can be aware of where people are coming from and, and I will work on, we will work on a public place that everyone can have access to for resources sharing.

1:55:12

That's those are the action items.

1:55:14

Then I think we need a meeting to regroup and I want to, if we have the responses by the 24th, our office is going to need at least a week and a half.

1:55:29

I think about that whole week.

1:55:32

I, I know you're out, so I should help do this.

1:55:40

Looking at the calendar.

1:55:50

So the 24th, I think we'll provide it to the group.

1:56:00

Sorry, 20, 24th, we will not be able to provide this to the group until the week of the 8th.

1:56:13

So and then so we will have our next meeting on the 18th or 19th of December because people need a week to review what we provide.

1:56:31

So that so I think reasonably in order for us to absorb and make provide something productive, we're going to need a week that's not included of the week of Thanksgiving does do people and the goal.

1:56:54

The goal was before Thanksgiving, Jessica, but that's not going to happen.

1:56:58

So given where we are.

1:57:01

So I want it done, but there's more work that I still I still don't see how what's going to I don't see how this report is going to reflect the input on on November 24th.

1:57:15

You're going to put, you're going to get feedback from people who don't like what's in the report right now.

1:57:23

And and then we are all going to look at it and people who do like what's in the report right now are going to have responses.

1:57:33

So again, it's, it's going to be this constant back and forth that feels endless to me.

1:57:39

And I feel like at some point it might be now we cut bait and say basically use this report as a place to say there were significant differences of opinion, see addendums.

1:57:52

There were significant differences of opinion, see addendums.

1:57:56

And I don't disagree with you, Susan, except for I've received really good feedback that I want to incorporate in this report.

1:58:03

And we've only on page 5.

1:58:05

So I need to to hear that so that I can make sure that the report isn't able as that we're covering all the law we need to cover.

1:58:13

Like there's some really substantial things that I have heard that aren't totally different than people's opinions about a specific topic.

1:58:22

So I just think in order, and I completely disagree with Kate, This is not the Secretary of State's report.

1:58:31

This is this working group's report.

1:58:33

That never was the task that the Secretary of State would hear from people and we would author the report that the legislature, first of all, I would have objected to that language being cast on us.

1:58:43

But also that was never the goal of this.

1:58:45

It was that this was a working group that created this report together.

1:58:49

This report right now does not reflect the opinion of everybody in the way that they would like it to be.

1:58:56

And and I want to do a better job at that.

1:58:59

So I agree with you.

1:59:00

We're not going to get to we're never going to get to consensus, but I think we can call out people's opinions in a better way and make make do that in a better way.

1:59:13

And I'd like to try to do that so that people I'd like to try to do that.

1:59:21

Laura, if you want to actually hear from us and have a discussion about this report, maybe we should meet again even before the 24th, like on the 20th or the 21st in order to like be able to give you our feedback verbally if that's helpful to you.

1:59:44

But also still have a deadline for addendums and anything additional that people might want to include in writing and maybe don't want to speak to in the meeting meeting.

1:59:55

But at least I mean, if, if you're saying having our feedback in the meeting is, is helpful and could be helpful in finishing this report or getting a report that you can submit.

2:00:13

I mean, I, I don't, I can't speak for everybody, but if we've got it any time between now and Thanksgiving to do that, I be.

2:00:23

Game and willing to continue to give the feedback in person.

2:00:29

I think there's value in in person feedback.

2:00:36

I'm not confident that there's value in doing it as a group.

2:00:40

So I think if folks want, and I'm, I'm being really candid here, I think that if groups want to provide feedback to us in a meeting, I would really welcome that.

2:00:51

Laura, I, your feedback has been really helpful and, and I would like to meet with you, but I don't know, we have not moved productively through this report together.

2:01:04

I'm not confident that we're going to be able to do that as a group right now.

2:01:11

So, but if people would like to meet with us, you know, I, I struggle to find when that will happen in next week, but I will make it try to do that and or before you know, it can happen the week after Thanksgiving too.

2:01:34

And I am available on Monday and Tuesday of the week of Thanksgiving.

2:01:39

And I really have to go.

2:01:41

I'm a voting member on a board that I'm not at right now.

2:01:43

So I'm really sorry.

2:01:47

They might be able to do.

2:01:50

I can't say this to you.

2:01:50

Is the meeting.

2:01:53

Thank you all.

2:01:55

Is the meeting over?

2:01:57

I think you close the.

2:01:58

Well, yeah, I mean, I have to go, but I don't have to 830.

2:02:03

But yeah, we should close the meeting.

2:02:05

But in terms of communication, just appreciate, I appreciate hearing from folks in person And also I did submit comments to Lauren Kelly and Jenny privately, but I haven't heard back from folks.

2:02:22

So I'm worried about like being sort of sidelined to just unless I'm going to hear back from folks and know that that's either reflected or or told that it's not going to be reflected, that's fine too.

2:02:35

But Yep, so that's the, the only thing of like a side conversation is that one, I'm learning a lot from, from other folks that are participating, but two, I don't want my comments to be sidelined or ignored.

2:02:52

And I understand people are busy.

2:02:53

They've got a lot going on.

2:02:55

But there's that Megan, we received your comments.

2:02:59

We're, I mean, we're working on assimilating everything that's coming in in real time.

2:03:03

And so I'm sorry we didn't respond and let you know that we received the things that you said we did.

2:03:09

And we're trying to get everything from everyone compiled in a way that we can figure out how to articulate it better in the report.

2:03:18

And we're continuing to do that.

2:03:21

So I am going to end this meeting.

2:03:22

We are over time and I also need to get to my next meeting.

2:03:26

If anyone would like to set up individual meetings with folks at SOS to talk with verbal feedback, please do that.

2:03:32

You can do that through Kelly or me and we can we can try to find some time.

2:03:37

And thank you so much for putting in the time here.

2:03:40

I know it's not been easy.

2:03:41

Thank you.

2:03:42

I'd like all the comments to be shared with all members moving forward on e-mail.

2:03:46

Now that we're there's going to be separate meetings, there won't be discussion about it.

2:03:50

So I don't think it will infringe upon open meeting law.

2:03:53

But if people could send their comments to everyone, that would allow us all to have the ability to read everyone's comments.

2:04:00

Thank you.

2:04:02

So if if we do that, the open meeting law requirement is the reply all problem, right.

2:04:08

We just need to be really respectful.

2:04:10

If those are going to send out comments to the whole group, then we don't respond back to reply all in substantive way outside of a meeting.

2:04:19

That's the that's the that's the concern.

2:04:20

Yeah.

2:04:21

OK.

2:04:21

Thank you all.

2:04:23

Thank you.