

5/16/05

VPA LEGISLATIVE REPORT #17

New Bills:

Four new bills appeared on the Legislative Council Web site since last week. One of these, H. 542 is a Transportation Committee bill establishing a new Vermont Rail Authority. This bill differs somewhat from an earlier proposal, H. 322, described in my Legislative Report of 3/7/05, which amended the VT Transportation Authority into a VT Rail Authority. The new bill has added several elements and the proposal appears to be moving: It is on the Tuesday May 17th House Calendar as a Notice Calendar item, meaning it will be taken up in the next day or so on Second Reading.

On the Senate Calendar Tuesday May 17th:

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

Second Reading

H. 524 Universal access to health care in Vermont.....	1017
Health & Welfare Committee Report.....	1017
Finance Committee Report.....	1055 Appropriations 1090
Senator Mullin amendment.....	1092
Senator Mullin amendment.....	1092
Senator Mullin amendment.....	1095
Senator Shepard amendment.....	1096

Selected Committee Agenda items:

HOUSE AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, May 17, 2005 11:00 a.m. **Definition of Farmer, Ways and Means Proposal**

H.540

2:30 p.m. **Water Quality** Mike O'Grady, Legislative Council

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS

Wednesday, May 18, 2005 9:30 a.m. **Rail Authority bill** Rep. Howard, Transportation Committee Rep. Allaire, Transportation Committee Jeb Spaulding, State Treasurer Brian Searles, St. Albans City Manager

HOUSE COMMERCE

Tuesday, May 17, 2005 9:45 a.m. **S.31 - Predatory Pricing - Amendments** Sam Burr, Legislative Counsel

11:15 a.m. **S.165 - Vermont Economic Progress Council** Dan Towle, Financial Services George Phillips, Department of Taxes (Financial Services) George Phillips, Department of Taxes (Brownfields) Curt Carter, Dept. of Economic Development (Brownfields) 11:00 a.m. **S.165 - Vermont Economic Progress Council** George Desch, Agency of Natural Resources (Brownfields) Charlie Merriman, Department of Taxes (Brownfields) John Kessler, Attorney, Agency of Commerce & Community Development (Brownfields) Kevin Dorn, Secretary, Agency of Commerce & Community Development (Wood) George Phillips, Department of Taxes (Wood)

Wednesday, May 18, 2005 9:00 a.m. **H.334 - Ancient Roads** Lee Suskin, Court Administrator Forest, Parks and Recreations David Stevens, Chittenden 1:00 p.m.

5:00 - 7:00 p.m. **H.334 - Ancient Roads** *Joint Hearing with House Transportation and House Government Operations, Camel Middle School, Richmond*

Thursday, May 19, 2005 9:00 - 12:00 a.m. **H.496 - Environmental Covenants** Anne Whiteley, Attorney, DEC, Agency of Natural Resources Matt Chapman, Attorney, DEC, Agency of Natural Resources John Sayles, Agency of Natural Resources George Desch, Agency of Natural Resources, Attorney General's

Office Tom Candon, Deputy Comm. of Banking, BISHCA , Mortgage Lenders Chris D'Elia, Ex. Director, VT Bankers' Association Stephen Kimbell, Lobbyist, Title Insurance Co. Chris Rice, Lobbyist, Real Estate Association 1:00 p.m.

6:00 - 8:00 p.m. **H.334 - Ancient Roads** *Joint Hearing with House Transportation and House Government Operations, Brown Public Library, Northfield*

HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES & ENERGY

Tuesday, May 17, 2005 11:00 a.m. **Dry Cask** Bill Sherman, Department of Public Service 2:30 p.m. **Dry Cask** Bill Sherman, Department of Public Service

Wednesday, May 18, 2005 9:00 a.m. **Dry Cask** Committee Discussion 2:30 p.m. **Dry Cask** Committee Discussion

Thursday, May 19, 2005 9:00 - 12:00 noon **S.56 - Agency of Natural Resources Reorganization** 2:30 p.m. **S.56 - Agency of Natural Resources Reorganization** Committee Discussion and Possible Vote

HOUSE WAYS & MEANS

Tuesday, May 17, 2005 9:00 am **H.504, Education Finance, Senate Amendments Recommendation** After **H.539, Mining Waste Vote** 4:00 pm **H.540, Definition of Farmer**

SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES & ENERGY

Tuesday, May 17, 2005 10:30 a.m. **Committee discussion**

Wednesday, May 18, 2005 9:00 a.m. **Dry Cask Storage at Vermont Yankee**

Update on House bill Al Boright, Legislative Counsel

10:00 a.m. **To be announced**

FROM A VLCT LEGISLATIVE ALERT – ANCIENT ROADS BILL HEARINGS:

The House Commerce and Government Operations Committees are holding two public hearings this week on H. 334, a bill that would discontinue all town highways and rights of way not on the most recent state highway map. The two public hearings are:

- Wednesday, May 18 at the Camels Hump Middle School, 173 School St. in Richmond from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM; and
- Thursday, May 19 at the Brown Public Library, 93 South Main St. in Northfield from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

Municipal officials concerned about the potential loss of municipal highways and rights of way should plan to attend and testify. Recipients of this e-mail should share this information with other individuals in town that might be affected by H. 334 including recreational users and individuals with property on Class IV roads that might have public access to their land eliminated. For the most thorough treatment of VLCT's take on the bill, please refer to our Weekly Legislative Report #7, February 18, 2005, which can be downloaded at http://www.vlct.org/legreports/wlr05_07.pdf.

H. 334 was introduced in February and referred to the Commerce Committee. The Committee took an initial round of testimony in March and has continued to consider it in fits and starts throughout the session. The Transportation Committee has also heard some introductory testimony on the bill, the issue it attempts to address and background information on town highway law. The Government Operations Committee is joining the Commerce Committee in the public hearings, as it is likely H. 334 will be referred to it for its consideration as well sometime in the future.

Even though the committees are taking more testimony and holding public hearings, the future of the bill is still very uncertain. It is late in the session this year, and consensus around a potential solution acceptable to all parties is nowhere in sight yet. We expect that there may be more

public hearings held elsewhere in the state as well, if not during the remainder of the session, over the summer and fall.

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