



VPA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE #11

April 14, 2009

Highlights from Last Week:

Several key bills emerged from committee last week and are on the move (or not) including:

- The **FY09 Budget Adjustment Bill** (H.232) which came out of conference committee two weeks ago and was then passed by the Senate, was held up in the House last week - in large part because the Administration's recommended \$925,000 cut in this year's state aid for town highways, which was not included in either the House or Senate version of the bill, somehow showed up in the conference committee bill. Today, at the request of the Senate, the House sent the bill back to them.
- The **Miscellaneous Tax Bill** (H.442) - the companion revenue bill to the FY10 budget - was finally voted out of House Ways & Means and landed in House Appropriations. A 3-year "tax surcharge" on personal income tax, expected to bring in \$25 million, is proposed to help balance the budget. It passed the House today 84-53 on second reading, and is scheduled for a final vote tomorrow. On the Senate side, Senator Shumlin has indicated his intent to combine this bill with the **FY10 Budget Bill** (H.441), now in Senate Appropriations, and work on the combined bills over the next two weeks. Another gubernatorial veto may be in the works...
- The **FY10 Capital Bill** (H.445) was voted out of committee and fast tracked through a floor vote in the House on Friday. It now resides in Senate Institutions. It authorizes the issuance of nearly \$70,000,000 and includes ARRA funding for infrastructure other than transportation projects, which are included in the transportation bill (H.438). It also authorizes a one-time, \$11.8 million "**Vermont Investment Program**," including "**Community Capacity Grants**" for capital improvements, VHCB funding for housing and downtown projects, and telecommunications infrastructure funding, that is intended to support Vermont tradespersons and artisans.
- The **Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Bill** (H.446) to provide additional incentives for the development of renewable energy was voted out of House Natural Resources & Energy (9-2) and was sent over to Ways & Means.
- **FY09 Transportation Budget Adjustments** (H.450), authorizing use of federal ARRA funds in this fiscal year for initial stimulus projects, was voted out of House Transportation and is on the notice calendar for tomorrow.

Meanwhile:

- The **Smart Growth Committee's Act 250 bill** (S.99), scheduled for several subsequently postponed third readings, is being held up (held hostage?) in Senate Economic Development. It was once again passed over today...
- The **Vermont Recovery and Reinvestment Act** (S.137) remains in Senate Finance and in Senate Natural Resources. Word has it that the telecom facility restrictions, still under review in the Senate, have been stripped from its companion bill in the House.
- Senate Transportation has reportedly removed the 5-cent fuel tax that supported a proposed \$120 million revenue bond from their versions of the **FY10 Transportation Bill** (H.438), and is instead considering a variety of motor vehicle fees which, according to the Joint Fiscal Office, will not even raise enough revenue to match available federal formula funds.

- The **Clean Energy Assessment District Bill** (S.54), which came out of Senate Natural Resources a couple of weeks ago, has stalled in the Senate after several amendments recommended by Senate Finance to assuage the banking community failed to do the trick.
- The **elimination of ACCD** has shown up in the platform of the state employees union, who ended their negotiations with the Administration yesterday over proposed staff cuts. It looks like the Legislature will have to intervene to save state jobs...

Council on the Future Vermont

The Council on the Future of Vermont presented its final report, “**Imagining Vermont: Values and Vision for the Future**” to the Legislature last Thursday. The full report is available on-line at: <http://futureofvermont.org/Report> , and will be the topic of a **May 11th Summit** at the UVM Dudley Davis Center, open to everyone, and a series of regional presentations throughout the summer. For more information check out the Council’s web site.

This Week at the State House

(<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/schedule/schedule2.cfm> - schedules are subject to change without notice)

Committee schedules are becoming increasingly sporadic and subject to change...and it’s now mostly all about the budget. House Appropriations continues to look at base budget reductions, just in case - new projections are due out on April 24th. Senate Appropriations is marking up the FY10 budget and (soon) the revenue bill passed by the House. Senate Finance is reviewing a number of bills with Legislative Counsel and JFO staff for their affect on state finances - including the revenue bill, Vermont Yankee decommissioning (H.436), and the Vermont Recovery and Reinvestment Act (S.137).

Senate Transportation continues its mark up of the transportation bill (H.438), while House Transportation considers a proposal from South Burlington (Paul Connor) and the Burlington Airport to improve access to the airport via another I-89 exit (Exit 12B) to be financed through a new type of public/private partnership; and also takes a closer look at rest area closings, and commercial vehicle operation on interstates (S.93).

House Fish, Wildlife & Water Resources, having finished up its work on the wetlands bill last week, is scheduled to take up the salvage yard bill (S.47) passed by the Senate. Senate Natural Resources & Energy is scheduled for bill markups, presumably including S.137. House Natural Resources & Energy will be hearing from Efficiency Vermont this week.

Bills Introduced:

(<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/database/database2.cfm>)

Bills "released for introduction": House – 450, Senate- 143. Of note:

H.445 Capital Bill

H.446 Miscellaneous Tax (Revenue) Bill

H.447 Wetlands Bill

H.450 FY09 Transportation (ARRA) Adjustments Bill

S.147 Residency requirement for planning commissioners

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