



VPA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE #8

March 8, 2016

Vermont Legislature: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/>
Streaming, Floor: <http://digital.vpr.net/online-streams#stream/>
Committees: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/list/2016/>
Bills: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/search/2016>

Weekly Update

As of town meeting break last week, 457 bills have been introduced this year, but only 5 passed in both the House and Senate, and were enacted into law. This week, the agenda for the rest of the session is set... Given Friday's cross-over deadline for all but money bills, this week will be an especially busy one in House and Senate standing committees, and for those of us tracking and responding to legislation. All bills advancing this year that haven't hit the floor must be voted out of their committee of origin by Friday. The committee schedule, showing bills scheduled for markup and vote, offers a good indication of what legislation will remain in play, come next week.

Here's a very quick mid-session update on key legislation we're tracking:

10-Year Planning Bill (H.367). This passed the House in 2015, and isn't expected to be taken up in S. Natural Resources and Energy until after cross-over. ***Get ready—it will soon be time to contact your Senators...***

Regional COG Bill (H.249). This passed the House before break as a strike-all, as reported in my last update. It's also expected to be taken up in the Senate following cross-over.

Forestry/117 Bills (H.H.789/H.851). H. Natural Resources divvied up their forestry bill (H.584) into several smaller committee bills, voted out before break. Proposed 117 language that would extend silviculture/AMP exemptions to "forestry operations" is now included in [H.851](#), scheduled for a Wednesday floor vote in the House. More extensive 117 policy and plan element changes related to forest fragmentation, as included in H.789 ([draft 5.1](#)), is scheduled to be voted out of H. Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources today, but has met with some resistance from forest industry folks. VPA has been collaborating with VNRC on this one...

Ag Enterprises/117 (H.779) – Following an initial meeting and discussion w/Ag Agency staff, VPA is working on a response to the bill as introduced for submission to H. Agriculture this week. The committee is taking testimony on the bill through Wednesday, but it's unclear whether they intend to vote anything out this week. It's been suggested that H.779 was introduced as a starting point for discussion, for legislation next year. This would give us all more time to work out the kinks. In the meantime, the committee is also getting strong feedback on proposed RAPs—especially from small farmers. ***Many thanks to everyone who's been working on VPA's response—especially to Brandy Saxton and Rod Francis who have done the heavy lifting on this one.***

Energy Siting Bill (S.230). S. Natural Resource and Energy is devoting all their time this week to their siting bill, scheduled for a vote on Friday. This legislation is intended to implement Siting Task Force recommendations—including related energy/land use planning recommendations. VPA has participated and testified as a member of the Siting Task Force; and at committee request, in

consultation with Department staff, supplied proposed language for a working group to develop more specific guidance, in the form of best siting practices. Not sure what will end up in the bill as voted out on Friday—or how it will fare in the House, given past history—but they’re trying hard to come up with something reasonable. H. Natural Resources and Energy will be reviewing siting legislation introduced in the House on Thursday.

New bills to watch out for... There are several unnumbered committee bills in the works, in markup this week, that are currently available only in draft form (if that). Some include 117 stuff, or may otherwise affect what we do—including [telecom](#) (Section 248) and [economic development](#) bills in H. Commerce, and a housing bill in H. General, Housing and Military. More to come...

Weekly Calendar Highlights

(Subject to Change; Full committee schedule: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/meetings/2016>)

Tuesday

9:30	Joint Meeting—Lake Champlain, Dartmouth, Rm 47	H. Committees
9:30, Floor	S.169 Farm-to-School	S. Agriculture
10:00, Floor	H.779 Ag Enterprises/117—Committee Discussion	H. Agriculture, Forest Operations
10:00	S.230 Siting Bill—<i>amendments due</i>	S. Natural Resources, Energy
10:30	H.610 Clean Water, RLFs	H. Corrections, Institutions
11:00, 2:30	H.580 Conservation Easements	H. Natural Resources, Energy
2:15	Misc Economic Development	H. Commerce
2:15	H.522 RTE Species— <i>mark-up, vote</i>	H. Fish, Wildlife, Water Resources
2:30	Housing Bill	H. General, Housing, Military
2:30	Ratepayer Advocacy Report—DPS	S. Finance
3:15	H.789 Forestry/117—<i>mark-up, vote</i>	H. Fish, Wildlife, Water Resources

Wednesday

9:00	S.230 Siting Bill—<i>mark-up</i>	S. Natural Resources, Energy
9:00	Transportation Bill—statewide parcel mapping	S. Transportation
9:30	Joint Hearing—Required Agricultural Practices, Rm 11	H./S. Committees
9:30	Telecommunications Bill	H. Commerce
10:45	H.522 RTE Species— <i>mark-up, vote</i>	H. Fish, Wildlife, Water Resources
1:00, Floor	H.779 Ag Enterprises/117—Ag Agency, VNRC	H. Agriculture, Forest Operations
1:00, Floor	Misc Economic Development	H. Commerce
3:30	Housing Bill	H. General, Housing
6:30	Misc Economic Development	H. Commerce

Thursday

9:00	Telecommunications Bill	H. Commerce
9:00	H.522 RTE Species— <i>mark-up, vote</i>	H. Fish, Wildlife, Water Resources
9:00	House energy siting bills (H.596, 597, 598, 599, 762)	H. Natural Resources, Energy
9:00	S.230 Siting Bill—<i>mark-up</i>	S. Natural Resources, Energy
10:30	Misc Economic Development	H. Commerce
10:45	H.851 Forestry Operations—walk-through	H. Judiciary
11:00	H.569 Blighted Properties—Springfield	H. Government Operations
1:00, Floor	Misc Economic Development	H. Commerce
3:45	E-911 Board	S. Institutions

Friday

9:00

S.230 Siting Bill—*mark-up, vote*

S. Natural Resources, Energy

1:00

Capital Bill—VT Housing & Conservation Coalition

S. Institutions

Dates and Deadlines

Mar 11 Cross-over reporting deadline, committee bills

Mar 18 Cross-over reporting deadline, bills referred to Appropriations, Finance, Ways & Means

Bill Tracking List

(Bills: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/search/2016>), highlighted are currently active)

Note: *once updated, this will be forwarded as a separate attachment...*

Legislative Reports

Legislative Reports: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/reports-and-research/find/2016>

No new reports posted.

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