

1 S.253

2 An act relating to building energy codes

3 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

4 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

5 The General Assembly finds:

6 (1) According to the 2020 State of Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emissions
7 Inventory Update and Forecast, home and business heating and cooling is the
8 second largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Vermont.

9 (2) Under 10 V.S.A. § 578, the State has an obligation to meet named
10 GHG reduction requirements. In order to attain these reductions, GHG
11 emissions from the thermal sector, that is, the heating and cooling of homes
12 and businesses, must be reduced.

13 (3) One method of reducing thermal sector emissions is to increase the
14 energy efficiency of Vermont's homes and businesses through building to an
15 energy-efficient building energy standard.

16 (4) Vermont established the Residential Building Energy Standards
17 (RBES) in 1997 and the Commercial Building Energy Standards (CBES) in
18 2007. The Department of Public Service is responsible for adopting and
19 updating these codes regularly but does not have the capacity to administer or
20 enforce them.

1 (5) The RBES and CBES are mandatory, but while municipalities with
2 building departments handle some aspects of review and inspection, there is no
3 State agency or office designated to interpret, administer, and enforce them.

4 (6) The Division of Fire Safety in the Department of Public Safety is
5 responsible for development, administration, and enforcement of building
6 codes but does not currently have expertise or capacity to add administration or
7 enforcement of energy codes in buildings.

8 (7) Studies in recent years show compliance with the RBES at about
9 54 percent and CBES at about 87 percent, with both rates declining. Both
10 codes are scheduled to become more stringent with the goal of “net-zero
11 ready” by 2030.

12 Sec. 2. ENERGY CODE COMPLIANCE; WORKING GROUP

13 (a) Creation. There is created the Building Energy Code Working Group to
14 recommend strategies for increasing compliance with the Residential Building
15 Energy Standards (RBES) and Commercial Building Energy Standards
16 (CBES).

17 (b) Membership. The Working Group shall have 15 members with
18 applicable expertise, to include program design and implementation, building
19 code administration and enforcement, and Vermont’s construction industry.

20 The Committee on Committees shall appoint one Senator. The Speaker of the

1 House shall appoint one member of the House. The remaining members shall
2 be the following:

3 (1) the Commissioner of Public Service or designee;

4 (2) the Director of Fire Safety or designee;

5 (3) a representative of Efficiency Vermont;

6 (4) a representative of American Institute of Architects–Vermont;

7 (5) a representative of the Vermont Builders and Remodelers

8 Association;

9 (6) a representative the Burlington Electric Department;

10 (7) a representative of Vermont Gas Systems;

11 (8) a representative of the Association of General Contractors of

12 Vermont;

13 (9) a representative of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns;

14 (10) a representative from a regional planning commission;

15 (11) a representative from the Vermont Housing and Conservation

16 Board;

17 (12) a representative of the Office of Professional Regulation; and

18 (13) a representative from the Vermont Association of Realtors.

19 (c) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall:

1 (1) recommend strategies and programs to increase awareness of and
2 compliance with the RBES and CBES, including the use of appropriate
3 certifications for contractors trained on the energy codes;

4 (2) develop plans and recommendations for a potential transition to a
5 comprehensive program for the RBES and CBES at the Divisions of Fire
6 Safety, including potential funding sources; and

7 (3) consider whether or not the State should adopt a statewide building
8 code.

9 (d) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative,
10 technical, and legal assistance of the Department of Public Service. The
11 Working Group may hire a third-party consultant to assist and staff the
12 Working Group, which may be funded by monies appropriated by the General
13 Assembly, or any grant funding received.

14 (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2025, and annually until 2030, the
15 Working Group shall submit a written report to the Senate Committee on
16 Natural Resources and Energy and the House Committee on Environment and
17 Energy with its findings and recommendations for legislative action.

18 (f) Meetings.

19 (1) The Department of Public Service shall call the first meeting of the
20 Working Group to occur on or before July 15, 2024.

1 (2) The Working Group shall elect a chair from among its members at
2 the first meeting.

3 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

4 (4) The Working Group shall cease to exist on February 15, 2030.

5 (g) Compensation and reimbursement.

6 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
7 Assembly, a legislative member of the Working Group serving in the
8 legislator's capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation
9 and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than
10 eight meetings in fiscal year 2025.

11 (2) Other members of the Working Group who are not otherwise
12 compensated by their employer shall be entitled to per diem compensation and
13 reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more
14 than eight meetings in fiscal year 2025.

15 (3) The payments under this subsection shall be made from monies
16 appropriated by the General Assembly or any grant funding received.

17 Sec. 3. 30 V.S.A. § 51(c) is amended to read:

18 (c) Revision and interpretation of energy standards. The Commissioner of
19 Public Service shall amend and update the RBES by means of administrative
20 rules adopted in accordance with 3 V.S.A. chapter 25. On or before January 1,
21 2011, the Commissioner shall complete rulemaking to amend the energy

1 standards to ensure that, to comply with the standards, residential construction
2 must be designed and constructed in a manner that complies with the 2009
3 edition of the IECC. After January 1, 2011, the Commissioner ~~shall ensure~~
4 ~~that appropriate revisions are made promptly~~ may direct the timely and
5 appropriate revision of the RBES after the issuance of updated standards for
6 residential construction under the IECC. The Department of Public Service
7 shall provide technical assistance and expert advice to the Commissioner in the
8 interpretation of the RBES and in the formulation of specific proposals for
9 amending the RBES. Prior to final adoption of each required revision of the
10 RBES, the Department of Public Service shall convene an Advisory
11 Committee to include one or more mortgage lenders, builders, building
12 designers, utility representatives, and other persons with experience and
13 expertise, such as consumer advocates and energy conservation experts. The
14 Advisory Committee may provide the Commissioner with additional
15 recommendations for revision of the RBES.

16 * * *

17 Sec. 4. 30 V.S.A. § 53(c) is amended to read:

18 (c) Revision and interpretation of energy standards. On or before January
19 1, 2011, the Commissioner shall complete rulemaking to amend the
20 commercial building energy standards to ensure that commercial building
21 construction must be designed and constructed in a manner that complies with

1 ANSI/ASHRAE/IESNA standard 90.1-2007 or the 2009 edition of the IECC,
2 whichever provides the greatest level of energy savings. ~~At least every three~~
3 ~~years after January 1, 2011, the~~ The Commissioner of Public Service shall
4 amend and update the CBES by means of administrative rules adopted in
5 accordance with 3 V.S.A. chapter 25. The Commissioner ~~shall ensure that~~
6 ~~appropriate revisions are made promptly~~ may direct the timely and appropriate
7 revision of the CBES after the issuance of updated standards for commercial
8 construction under the IECC or ASHRAE/ANSI/IESNA standard 90.1,
9 whichever provides the greatest level of energy savings. Prior to final adoption
10 of each required revision of the CBES, the Department of Public Service shall
11 convene an Advisory Committee to include one or more mortgage lenders;
12 builders; building designers; architects; civil, mechanical, and electrical
13 engineers; utility representatives; and other persons with experience and
14 expertise, such as consumer advocates and energy conservation experts. The
15 Advisory Committee may provide the Commissioner of Public Service with
16 additional recommendations for revision of the CBES.

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18 Sec. 5. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING CONTRACTOR REGISTRY;

19 WEBSITE UPDATES

1 (a) As part of its application to register with the residential building
2 contractor registry administered by the Vermont Secretary of State, the Office
3 of Professional Regulation shall require that a registrant:

4 (1) designate the geographic areas the registrant serves;

5 (2) designate the trade services the registrant offers from a list of trade
6 services compiled by the Office; and

7 (3) acknowledge that compliance with 30 V.S.A. §51 (residential
8 building energy standards) and 30 V.S.A. § 53 (commercial building energy
9 standards) is required.

10 (b) On or before January 1, 2025, the Office of Professional Regulation
11 shall update the website for the residential building contractor registry
12 administered by the Vermont Secretary of State to:

13 (1) regularize usage of the term “residential contractor,” or another term
14 selected by the Office, across the website to replace usages of substantially
15 similar terms, such as “builder,” “contractor,” or “residential building
16 contractor”;

17 (2) publish a registrant’s designations under subdivisions (a)(1) and
18 (a)(2) of this section in the registrant’s listing on the website;

19 (3) implement a search feature to enable consumers to filter registrants
20 by trade service provided, geographic area served, voluntary certification, or
21 any other criteria the Office deems appropriate; and

1 (4) add a clear and conspicuous notice that a residential contractor is
2 required by law to comply with State building energy standards.

3 Sec. 6. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING CONTRACTOR CONTRACT

4 TEMPLATES

5 The Office of Professional Regulation shall update any contract template
6 the Office furnishes for residential building contracting to provide that the
7 residential contractor is required to comply with 30 V.S.A. § 51 (residential
8 building energy standards) and 30 V.S.A. § 53 (commercial building energy
9 standards).

10 Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

11 This act shall take effect on passage.