

No. R-264. Joint resolution supporting the administration's efforts to examine and provide recommendations for improving and increasing the effectiveness of Vermont's state and municipal environmental protection process.

(J.R.H.19)

Offered by: Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

Whereas, our environment is the sum of everything around us, our beautiful mountains and valleys, our streams and lakes, the air we breathe and the winter's snow and summer's green grass, and

Whereas, to date, Vermont has managed to preserve many aspects of the state's environment, but this protective process could be administered more effectively and with greater certainty and transparency, and

Whereas, since 1970, Vermont's system of state and municipal environmental and land use regulation has grown and changed, resulting in overlapping laws and programs under the administrative jurisdiction of multiple state offices that do not always share the same regulatory objectives or coordinate in an optimal fashion, and

Whereas, the state of Vermont and local municipalities should be encouraging appropriate development at specific locations, and

Whereas, for example, attempts to effectively enforce water quality standards in Lake Champlain, promote a settlement pattern of compact urban and village centers surrounded by a rural, working landscape, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions have not resulted in achieving compliance with

statutory goals and not infrequently have resulted in contentious disputes and litigation, and

Whereas, project developers and citizens concerned about projects often voice complaints expressing confusion about the specific permits required for a given project and objecting that the regulatory process can be expensive, daunting, and time-consuming and that it needs to be predictable, and

Whereas, Vermont must ensure that its permitting process appropriately utilizes the benefits of new technology to improve efficiency while simultaneously achieving protection of the natural environment, and

Whereas, Governor Shumlin has directed the chair of the natural resources board and the secretary of natural resources to review Vermont's environmental and land use permitting system and to provide recommendations for improving the system and increasing its effectiveness, and

Whereas, the General Assembly continues to propose policies that improve environmental permitting and ensure that development protects Vermont's working landscape and natural environment, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly supports the administration's efforts to examine and provide recommendations for improving and increasing the effectiveness of Vermont's environmental protection process, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly requests that the chair of the natural resources board and the secretary of natural resources, in consultation with other state permitting officials including representatives of the agencies of agriculture, food and markets, commerce and community development, transportation, and the environmental division of superior court, and municipal permitting officials, and invite public input through public meetings, the use of the Internet, and other forms of outreach, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly requests that the chair of the natural resources board and the secretary of natural resources regularly meet and consult with the chairs of the House and Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy and the House Committee on Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources during this review process, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly requests that the chair of the natural resources board and the secretary of natural resources develop recommendations intended to maintain standards assuring the environmental quality so important to Vermonters while making Vermont's land use and environmental permit process more efficient, more effective, more user-friendly, more open, more predictable, better coordinated, and quicker for applicants and citizens, and be it further

Resolved: That the General Assembly requests the chair of the natural resources board and the secretary of natural resources to report to the chairs of the House and Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy and the

House Committee on Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources by January 15, 2012
with recommendations to meet the intent of this resolution, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this
resolution to the chair of the natural resources board and the secretary of
natural resources.