

S.129

An act relating to workers' compensation liens.

The House proposes to the Senate to amend the bill by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 21 V.S.A. § 7 is added to read:

§ 7. POWERS OF COMMISSIONER

In addition to all other powers granted the Commissioner by this title, the Commissioner or designee may, upon presenting appropriate credentials, at reasonable times and without disrupting critical business operations, enter and inspect any place of business or employment, question any employees, and investigate any facts, conditions, or matters necessary and material to the administration of chapters 9 and 17 of this title. The Commissioner shall inform the employer of his or her right to refuse entry. If entry is refused, the Commissioner may apply to the Civil Division of the Superior Court of Washington County for an order to enforce the rights given the Commissioner under this section.

Sec. 2. 21 V.S.A. § 397 is added to read:

§ 397. WORKPLACE POSTINGS AND EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS

(a) The Department of Labor shall develop and include in its workplace posters information regarding the rights of employees to unemployment compensation, workers compensation, wages and overtime pay, workplace

safety and protections, and misclassification of employees. The information shall also contain contact information for individuals to inquire about their rights and obligations and to file complaints or inquire about employment classification status. This information shall be provided in English or other languages required by the Commissioner. The posters shall be posted by employers in a conspicuous location at the worksite.

(b) Employers who violate this section shall be subject to an administrative penalty of up to \$100.00 per violation.

Sec. 3. 21 V.S.A. § 643a is amended to read:

§ 643a. DISCONTINUANCE OF BENEFITS

Unless an injured worker has successfully returned to work, an employer shall notify both the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner and the employee prior to terminating benefits under either section 642 or 646 of this title. The notice of intention to discontinue payments shall be filed on forms prescribed by the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner and shall include the date of the proposed discontinuance, the reasons for it, and, if the employee has been out of work for 90 days, a verification that the employer offered vocational rehabilitation screening and services as required under this chapter. All relevant evidence, including evidence that does not support discontinuance in the possession of the employer not already filed, shall be filed with the notice. The liability for the payments shall continue for seven days after the notice is received by the

~~commissioner~~ Commissioner and the employee. If the claimant disputes the discontinuance, the claimant may file with the Commissioner an objection to the discontinuance and seek an extension of the seven-day limit. The Commissioner may grant an extension up to seven days. The request for an extension shall be specific as to the number of days needed and the reason for the extension and must be received by the Commissioner prior to the end of the seven-day limit. A copy of the request for an extension shall be provided to the employer at the time the request is made to the Commissioner. Those payments shall be made without prejudice to the employer and may be deducted from any amounts due pursuant to section 648 of this title if the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner determines that the discontinuance is warranted or if otherwise ordered by the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner. Every notice shall be reviewed by the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner to determine the sufficiency of the basis for the proposed discontinuance. If, after review of all the evidence in the file, the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner finds that a preponderance of all the evidence in the file does not reasonably support the proposed discontinuance, the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner shall order that payments continue until a hearing is held and a decision is rendered. Prior to a formal hearing, an injured worker may request reinstatement of benefits by providing additional new evidence to the ~~department~~ Department that establishes that a preponderance of all evidence now supports the claim. If the

~~commissioner's~~ Commissioner's decision, after a hearing, is that the employee was not entitled to any or all benefits paid between the discontinuance and the final decision, upon request of the employer, the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner may order that the employee repay all benefits to which the employee was not entitled. The employer may enforce a repayment order in any court of law having jurisdiction.

Sec. 4. 21 V.S.A. § 655 is amended to read:

§ 655. PROCEDURE IN OBTAINING COMPENSATION; MEDICAL  
EXAMINATION; VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDING

After an injury and during the period of disability, if so requested by his or her employer, or ordered by the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner, the employee shall submit to examination, at reasonable times and places, by a duly licensed physician or surgeon designated and paid by the employer. The employee may make a video or audio recording of any examination performed by the insurer's physician or surgeon or have a licensed health care provider designated and paid by the employee present at the examination. The employer may make an audio recording of the examination. The right of the employee to record the examination shall not be construed to deny to the employer's physician the right to visit the injured employee at all reasonable times and under all reasonable conditions during total disability. If an employee refuses to submit to or in any way obstructs the examination, the

employee's right to prosecute any proceeding under the provisions of this chapter shall be suspended until the refusal or obstruction ceases, and compensation shall not be payable for the period which the refusal or obstruction continues. The physician shall provide a report of the examination to the employee at the same time any report is provided to the employer.

Sec. 5. 21 V.S.A. § 678 is amended to read:

§ 678. COSTS; ATTORNEY FEES

(a) Necessary costs of proceedings under this chapter, including deposition expenses, subpoena fees, and expert witness fees, shall be assessed by the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner against the employer or its workers' compensation carrier when the claimant prevails. The ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner may allow the claimant to recover reasonable ~~attorney~~ attorney's fees when the claimant prevails. Costs shall not be taxed or allowed either party except as provided in this section.

(b) In appeals to the ~~superior or supreme courts~~ Superior or Supreme Court, if the claimant prevails, he or she shall be entitled to reasonable ~~attorney~~ attorney's fees as approved by the ~~court~~ Court, necessary costs, including deposition expenses, subpoena fees, and expert witness fees, and interest at the rate of 12 percent per annum on that portion of any award the payment of which is contested. Interest shall be computed from the date of the award of the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner.

\* \* \*

Sec. 6. 21 V.S.A. § 692 is amended to read:

§ 692. PENALTIES; FAILURE TO INSURE; ~~STOP WORK~~ STOP-WORK  
ORDERS

(a) Failure to insure. If after a hearing under section 688 of this title, the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner determines that an employer has failed to comply with the provisions of section 687 of this title, the employer shall be assessed an administrative penalty of not more than \$100.00 for every day for the first seven days the employer neglected to secure liability and not more than \$150.00 for every day thereafter. In addition to any other remedies and proceedings authorized by this chapter, the Commissioner may bring an action in the Civil Division of the Superior Court. The remedies available in a civil action, including attachment and trustee process, shall be available for the collection of any fines, penalties, and amounts assessed under this chapter

(b) Stop-work orders. If an employer fails to comply with the provisions of section 687 of this title after investigation by the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner, the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner shall issue an emergency order to that employer to stop work until the employer has secured workers' compensation insurance. If the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner determines that issuing a stop-work order would immediately threaten the safety or health of the public, the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner may permit work to continue until the immediate

threat to public safety or health is removed. The ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner shall document the reasons for permitting work to continue, and the document shall be available to the public. In addition, the employer shall be assessed an administrative penalty of not more than \$250.00 for every day that the employer fails to secure workers' compensation coverage after the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner issues an order to obtain insurance and may also be assessed an administrative penalty of not more than \$250.00 for each employee for every day that the employer fails to secure workers' compensation coverage as required in section 687 of this title. When a stop-work order is issued, the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner shall post a notice at a conspicuous place on the work site of the employer informing the employees that their employer failed to comply with the provisions of section 687 of this title and that work at the work site has been ordered to cease until workers' compensation insurance is secured. The stop-work order shall be rescinded as soon as the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner determines that the employer is in compliance with section 687 of this title. An employer against whom a stop-work order has been issued is prohibited from contracting, directly or indirectly, with the ~~state~~ State or any of its subdivisions for a period of up to three years following the date of the issuance of the stop-work order, as determined by the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner in consultation with the ~~commissioner of buildings and general services or the secretary of~~

~~transportation~~ Commissioner of Buildings and General Services or the Secretary of Transportation, as appropriate. Either the ~~secretary or the commissioner~~ Secretary or Commissioner, as appropriate, shall be consulted in any contest of the prohibition of the employer from contracting with the ~~state~~ State or its subdivisions.

(c) The Commissioner may issue an order of conditional release from a stop-work order upon a finding that the employer has secured the required workers' compensation coverage and has agreed to remit periodic payments to satisfy any penalties assessed under this chapter pursuant to a written payment arrangement approved by the Commissioner. If the Commissioner issues an order of conditional release, the employer's failure to meet any term or condition of the order or to make periodic payments shall result in the immediate reinstatement of the stop-work order and the entire unpaid balance of the penalty shall become due immediately.

(d) A stop-work order issued against an employer shall apply to any successor employer that has substantially common ownership, management, or control as the employer on whom the stop-work order was issued and is engaged in the same or similar trade or activity.

(e) The Commissioner may bring an action in the Civil Division of the Superior Court of Washington County or in the county in which the employer has its principal office or is continuing to work in violation of the stop-work

order to enjoin any employer from violating a stop-work order until the employer establishes that it is in compliance with this chapter and has paid any penalty assessed by the Commissioner.

(f) Penalty for violation of stop-work order. In addition to any other penalties, an employer who violates a stop-work order described in subsection (b) of this section is subject to:

(1) A civil penalty of not more than \$5,000.00 for the first violation and a civil penalty of not more than \$10,000.00 for a second or subsequent violation; or

(2) A criminal fine of not more than \$10,000.00 or imprisonment for not more than 180 days, or both.

Sec. 7. 4 V.S.A. § 1102 is amended to read:

§ 1102. JUDICIAL BUREAU; JURISDICTION

\* \* \*

(b) The ~~judicial bureau~~ Judicial Bureau shall have jurisdiction of the following matters:

\* \* \*

(20) ~~Violations of 21 V.S.A. § 692(e)(1).~~ [Deleted.]

\* \* \*

Sec. 8. 21 V.S.A. § 1253 is amended to read:

§ 1253. ELIGIBILITY

The ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner shall make all determinations for eligibility under this chapter. An individual shall be eligible for up to 26 weekly payments when the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner determines that the individual voluntarily left work due to circumstances directly resulting from domestic and sexual violence, provided the individual:

(1) Leaves employment for one of the following reasons:

\* \* \*

(D) The individual is physically or emotionally unable to work as a result of experiencing domestic or sexual violence as certified by a medical professional. The certification shall be reviewed by the Commissioner every six weeks and may be renewed until the individual is able to work or the benefits are exhausted.

\* \* \*

Sec. 9. 21 V.S.A. § 1254 is amended to read:

§ 1254. CONDITIONS

An individual shall be eligible to receive payments with respect to any week, only if the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner finds that the individual complies with all of the following requirements:

- (1) ~~Files~~ files a claim certifying that he or she did not work during the week;
- (2) ~~Is~~ is not eligible for unemployment compensation benefits; and
- (3) ~~Is taking steps to become employed~~ is working with the Department to determine work readiness and taking reasonable steps as determined by the Commissioner to become employed.

Sec. 10. 21 V.S.A. § 1255 is amended to read:

§ 1255. PROCEDURES

(a) The ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner or designee shall review all claims for payment and shall promptly provide written notification to the individual of any claim that is denied and the reasons for the denial.

(b) Within 30 days after receipt of a denial, the individual may appeal the determination to the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner by requesting a review of the decision. On appeal to the Commissioner the individual may provide supplementary evidence to the record. The ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner shall review the record within seven working days after the notice of the appeal is

filed and promptly notify the individual in writing of the ~~commissioner's~~  
Commissioner's decision. The decision of the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner  
shall become final unless an appeal to the ~~supreme court~~ Supreme Court is  
taken within 30 days of the date of the ~~commissioner's~~ Commissioner's  
decision.

Sec. 11. 21 V.S.A. § 1314a is amended to read:

§ 1314a. QUARTERLY WAGE REPORTING; MISCLASSIFICATION;  
PENALTIES

\* \* \*

(g) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, the ~~commissioner~~  
Commissioner may where practicable require of employing units ~~with 25 or~~  
~~more employees~~ that the reports required to be filed pursuant to subsections (a)  
through (d) of this section be filed in an electronic media form.

Sec. 12. 21 V.S.A. § 1325 is amended to read:

§ 1325. EMPLOYERS' EXPERIENCE-RATING RECORDS;  
DISCLOSURE TO SUCCESSOR ENTITY; ~~EMPLOYEE PAID~~  
~~\$1,000.00 OR LESS DURING BASE PERIOD~~

\* \* \*

(d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the following shall apply to assignment of rates and transfers of experience:

(1) If an employer transfers its trade or business, or a portion thereof, to another employer and, at the time of the transfer, there is substantially common ownership, management, or control of the two employers, the ~~employment~~ unemployment experience attributable to the transferred trade or business shall be transferred to the employer to whom such business is so transferred. The rates of both employers shall be recalculated and made effective immediately upon the date of the transfer of trade or business.

\* \* \*

Sec. 13. 21 V.S.A. § 1451 is amended to read:

§ 1451. DEFINITIONS

~~For the purpose of this subchapter~~ As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Affected unit” means a specific plan, department, shift, or other definable unit consisting of not less than five employees to which an approved short-time compensation plan applies.

(2) “Defined benefit plan” means a plan described in 26 U.S.C. § 414(j).

(3) “Defined contribution plan” means a plan described in 26 U.S.C. § 414(i).

(4) “Short-time compensation” or “STC” means the unemployment benefits payable to employees in an affected unit under an approved short-time

compensation plan as distinguished from the unemployment benefits otherwise payable under the conventional unemployment compensation provisions of this chapter.

~~(3)~~(5) “Short-time compensation plan” means a plan of an employer under which there is a reduction in the number of hours worked by employees of an affected unit rather than ~~temporary~~ layoffs. The term “~~temporary~~ layoffs” for this purpose means the total separation of one or more workers in the affected unit ~~for an indefinite period expected to last for more than two months but not more than six months.~~

~~(4)~~(6) “Short-time compensation employer” means an employer who has one or more employees covered by an approved “Short-Time Compensation Plan.” “Short-time compensation employer” ~~includes~~ means an employer with ~~experience-rating records~~ an experience rating record ~~and~~ or an employer who makes payments in lieu of ~~tax~~ contributions to the unemployment compensation trust fund and that meets all of the following criteria:

(A) ~~Has~~ has five or more employees covered by an approved short-time compensation plan;

(B) ~~Is~~ is not delinquent in the payment of contributions or reimbursement, or in the reporting of wages; and

(C) ~~Is~~ is not a negative balance employer. For the purposes of this section, a negative balance employer is an employer who has for three or more consecutive calendar years immediately prior to applying for the STC plan paid more in unemployment benefits to its employees than it has contributed to its unemployment insurance account. In the event that an employer has been a negative balance employer for three consecutive years, the employer shall be ineligible for participation unless the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner grants a waiver based upon extenuating economic conditions or other good cause.

~~(5)(7)~~ (7) “Usual weekly hours of work” means the normal hours of work for full-time ~~and regular~~ or part-time employees in the affected unit when that unit is operating on its ~~normally full-time basis not less than 30 hours and~~ regular basis not to exceed 40 hours and not including hours of overtime work.

~~(6)(8)~~ (8) “Unemployment compensation” means the unemployment benefits payable under this chapter other than short-time compensation and includes any amounts payable pursuant to an agreement under any federal law providing for compensation, assistance, or allowances with respect to unemployment.

~~(7)(9)~~ (9) “Fringe benefits” means benefits, including health insurance, retirement benefits, paid vacations and holidays, sick leave, and similar benefits that are incidents of employment.

~~(8)~~(10) “Intermittent employment” means employment that is not continuous but may consist of intervals of weekly work and intervals of no weekly work.

~~(9)~~(11) “Seasonal employment” means employment with an employer who experiences at least a 20-percent difference between its highest level of employment during a particular season and its lowest level of employment during the off-season in each of the previous three years as reported to the ~~department~~ Department, or employment with an employer on a temporary basis during a particular season.

Sec. 14. 21 V.S.A. § 1452 is amended to read:

§ 1452. CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL

(a) An employer wishing to participate in an STC program shall submit a ~~department of labor~~ Department of Labor electronic application or a signed written short-time compensation plan to the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner for approval. The ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner may approve an STC plan only if the following criteria are met:

\* \* \*

(3) ~~the plan outlines to the commissioner the extent to which fringe benefits, including health insurance, of employees participating in the plan may be reduced, which shall be factored into the evaluation of the business plan for resolving the conditions that lead to the need for the STC plan~~

provides that if the employer provides fringe benefits, including health benefits and retirement benefits under a defined benefit plan or contributions under a defined contribution plan, to any employee whose workweek is reduced under the program, that the benefits will continue to be provided to employees participating in the short-time compensation program under the same terms and conditions as though the workweek had not been reduced. However, reductions in the benefits of short-time compensation plan participants are permitted to the extent that the reductions also apply to nonparticipant employees;

\* \* \*

(5) the plan certifies that the aggregate reduction in work hours is in lieu of ~~temporary total~~ layoffs of one or more workers which would have resulted in an equivalent reduction in work hours and which the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner finds would have caused an equivalent dollar amount to be payable in unemployment compensation;

\* \* \*

(7) the identified workweek reduction is applied consistently throughout the duration of the plan unless otherwise approved by the ~~department~~ Department. The plan shall not subsidize seasonal employers during the off-season;

\* \* \*

(11) the plan certifies that the collective bargaining agent or agents for the employees, if any, have agreed to participate in the program. If there is no bargaining unit, the employer specifies how he or she will notify the employees in the affected group and work with them to implement the program once the plan is approved; ~~and~~

(12) ~~in addition to subdivisions (1) through (11) of this section, the commissioner shall take into account any other factors which may be pertinent to the approval and proper implementation of the plan~~ the plan describes the manner in which the requirements of this section will be implemented and where feasible how notice will be given to an employee whose workweek is to be reduced and an estimate of the number of layoffs that would have occurred absent the ability to participate in the short-time compensation program and any other information that the U.S. Secretary of Labor determines is appropriate; and

(13) the employer certifies that the plan is consistent with employer obligations under applicable state and federal laws.

(b) In the event of any conflict between any provisions of sections 1451–1460 of this title, or the regulations implemented pursuant to these sections, and applicable federal law, the federal law shall prevail and the provision shall be deemed invalid.

Sec. 15. 21 V.S.A. § 1457 is amended to read:

§ 1457. ELIGIBILITY

(a) An individual is eligible to receive STC benefits with respect to any week only if, in addition to eligibility for monetary entitlement, the ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner finds that:

(1) the individual is employed during that week as a member of an affected unit under an approved short-time compensation plan which was in effect for that week;

(2) the individual is able to work and is available for the normal work week with the short-time employer;

(3) notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter to the contrary, an individual is deemed unemployed in any week for which remuneration is payable to him or her as an employee in an affected unit for less than his or her normal weekly hours of work as specified under the approved short-time compensation plan in effect for the week;

(4) notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter to the contrary, an individual shall not be denied STC benefits for any week by reason of the application of provisions relating to availability for work and active search for work with an employer other than the short-time employer.

(b) Eligible employees may participate, as appropriate, in training, including employer-sponsored training or worker training funded under the

Workforce Investment Act of 1998, to enhance job skills if the program has been approved by the Department.

Sec. 16. 21 V.S.A. § 601 is amended to read:

§ 601. DEFINITIONS

Unless the context otherwise requires, words and phrases used in this chapter shall be construed as follows:

\* \* \*

(14) “Worker” and “employee” means an individual who has entered into the employment of, or works under contract of service or apprenticeship with, an employer. Any reference to a worker who has died as the result of a work injury shall include a reference to the worker’s dependents, and any reference to a worker who is a minor or incompetent shall include a reference to the minor’s committee, guardian, or next friend. The term “worker” or “employee” does not include:

\* \* \*

(I) An individual who receives foster care payments excluded from the definition of gross income under Section 131 of Title 26 of the Internal Revenue Code.

\* \* \*

Sec. 17. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION; INDEPENDENT  
CONTRACTOR STATUS

The Commissioner shall conduct a comprehensive information and education campaign regarding independent contractor status. The campaign shall address the tests for determining independent contractor status under Vermont law, the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees under Vermont law, including wage and hour laws, workers' compensation and unemployment compensation requirements, information regarding the misclassification and miscoding laws, including the requirements for employers to comply with those laws and the penalties for failing to do so, and other information the Commissioner determines is necessary and appropriate.

Sec. 18. STUDY; UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION; WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION; JOB TRAINING

(a) The Department of Labor in consultation with interested parties shall evaluate and make recommendations regarding:

(1) whether the principles of fairness, equity, proportionality, affordability, and fiscal responsibility embodied in 2010 Acts and Resolves No. 124 would be affected if any changes are made to the act. Specifically, the Department shall study the potential impacts to employers, employees, and the trust fund if changes are made to certain aspects of the unemployment compensation system, including the earnings disregard, the one-week waiting

period, the weekly benefit amount, and the taxable wage base. The Department shall study these potential impacts as they relate to paying off the trust fund debt and establishing the fund's solvency.

(2) whether the annual report on trust fund solvency required by 21 V.S.A. § 1309 is providing appropriate and sufficient information regarding the long-term health and solvency of the unemployment compensation trust fund, or whether further measures are required to provide information necessary to achieve and maintain solvency.

(3) whether any structural, administrative, or procedural changes should be made to the workers' compensation system, including changes that would increase the affordability and regional competitiveness of workers' compensation insurance for employers while ensuring fairness for beneficiaries.

(4) whether the agencies and departments of state government are in compliance with required workers' compensation and unemployment compensation coverage related to their contracts with designated agencies and other subcontractors.

(5) whether the current workers' compensation system can better incentivize and promote healthy and safe work environments through information, education, and collaboration with employers, insurers, and

employees; and whether private and public training programs and enforcement divisions could be better utilized to achieve improved safety in workplaces.

(6) the benefits and feasibility of developing and implementing a job training program for persons collecting unemployment benefits in Vermont that allows the Department to place persons collecting unemployment into job sites for job training and skill development in order to enhance the individual's job prospects and career development. The Department shall examine conformity issues with federal and state unemployment and wage and hour laws. The Commissioner shall solicit public input and engage interested parties from the business and labor communities in determining the benefits of a job training program.

(7) how workers' compensation cases are resolved under 21 V.S.A. § 624(e), including whether the operation of workers' compensation liens may or may not result in an equitable distribution of third party payments to the employer and employee, and the equities and appropriateness of using third party payments as an advance on any future workers' compensation benefits.

(8) whether there should be any limitations placed on how independent medical examinations are conducted, including their timing and location.

(9) whether school district employees who are not federally exempted from unemployment compensation should be included in Vermont's

unemployment compensation system and be eligible for benefits during periods of layoff.

(b) The Department shall examine whether existing state and federal laws would allow a student who is under the age of 18 and enrolled at a regional technical center to gain practical working experience outside the classroom setting. The Department shall make recommendations to enhance the learning experience of students enrolled at regional technical centers by providing practical work experiences while also maintaining adequate health and safety protections.

(c) The Department, in consultation with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and interested parties, shall evaluate and make recommendations regarding whether the current workers' compensation system and other relevant employment laws are suited to the needs of an evolving workforce. As part of the evaluation, the Department shall consider Vermont's growing knowledge-based economic sector, the future of the Vermont economy, and changing workforce habits. The Department shall make recommendations regarding how to modernize the employment laws to meet employer and employee needs while maintaining employee protections.

(d) The Department shall report its findings and any recommendations to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committee on Finance on or before December 15, 2013.

Sec. 19. WORKERS' COMPENSATION PREMIUMS

The Department of Financial Regulation in consultation with the Department of Labor shall study the issue of workers' compensation premiums increasing as a result of an employee completing a job-related safety course. The Department of Financial Regulation shall investigate how workers' compensation premiums can be decreased or kept at a steady rate for employers who are providing approved safety and health training to employees. The Department of Financial Regulation shall report its findings and any recommendations to the House Committees on Agriculture and Forest Products and on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on Finance on or before January 15, 2014.

Sec. 20. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2013.