

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee today.

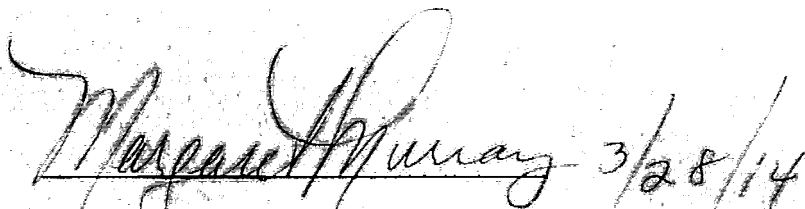
My name is Margaret Murray. I live at 150 Elm Street, Montpelier, Vermont, which is a duplex I have owned for 38 years. I also own a single family home in Burlington, and have been involved in a protracted legal conflict with the City of Burlington. Thus, my testimony is based upon my experiences with the cities of Montpelier and Burlington.

So much of our legislature has noble goals and good intentions. A prime example is "Act 250," an attempt in the 1970's to reign in the explosive development across Vermont's land and citizens. Unfortunately in 2014, citizen input and protection by the Vermont legislature is needed now more than ever. The millions of dollars being spent annually by municipalities throughout the state without clear and constant citizen involvement expedited by the 236 options allowed under Vermont's public records laws. The H. 809 bill being considered, seeks to remove the protections from development guaranteed under "Act 250" while further shrouding the activities of municipalities and their close bonds with private investors.

The current court case in Burlington about a "misplaced" \$17 million highlights more than mere words the need for accountability, public scrutiny, and basic auditing principles. Two years ago, Montpelier had a \$380,000 "error" in the form of an overpayment to a contractor. These are just two examples of major misplacements of public funds, and of public trust, that happened to be in the two Vermont cities which I own property.

Part of H. 809 is also outlining the Tax Incentive Financing (TIF) funding, which MI1bl
Montpelier, Burlington, and Barre had millions owed to the state coffers last year.
Their collective response ranged from Milton's "not paying a dime" to Montpelier's
lament "the tax regulations were confusing."

To my knowledge, I have been the only private citizen to testify to date in this
matter. I follow 15 individuals representing various offices and agencies, who all stand
to benefit directly or indirectly by shortcuts and faster reviews of the expenditure of
Vermont taxpayers` monies. What I ask of this committee is to strengthen, not exempt
"Act 250" for the conVenience of faster, denser, and more spontaneous development
with Vermonters footing the bill. More citizen inut, not less.


M rga Murray 3/28/14

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