

RDC's of Vermont President Bob Flint, of Springfield Regional Development Corporation, testimony to Vermont House Commerce Committee – 2/25/16

As always, on behalf of the RDC's of Vermont, I appreciate the committee's time, consideration and hard work on behalf of economic development issues in the state. At first review, the draft e/d bill has a lot of items of interest to the RDC's:

- VEDA – I believe this is the bill that the committee had already been working on? The proposed language would allow VEDA to be more flexible and respond more quickly. The various changes make sense and would enable VEDA to continue to be one of our strongest partners on the ground as we work to serve our existing businesses as well as cultivate new development.
- Change from Contracts back to Grants – I testified about this a few weeks ago and the RDC's continue to support this proposal from ACCD. It would maintain the same need for performance measures, but would be very helpful, administratively, to process our agreements and associated payments.
- VTP – We support the proposal to allow VTP funds to be used for work-based learning opportunities. I just finished Chairing a WIB meeting in our region and will be Chairing the RVTC Annual Meeting tonight. Expanding career awareness into middle schools (and younger) is something that is a topic of every one of those meetings and this would be a great tool to enable that to continue, and expand.
- VEGI – At first glance, the “plain language” tweaks appear to allow the program to run, as it has, while cleaning up the wording that governs it. Our highest priority for this session is allowing any sunset to either be eliminated entirely, or, at the very least, extended for another 5 years.
- Creative Network – The RDC's are going to be briefed on this at our next meeting (on March 4<sup>th</sup>). We have not discussed this, as a group, yet, but I suspect this is something we will be happy to support.
- Employee Ownership – Several of the RDC's have had positive experiences working with Don Jamison and the Vermont Employee Ownership Center. SRDC had one company complete the process last year and we are working with another one that's about to move forward. We appreciate the interest in allowing more Vermont companies to explore this option as it ensures continuity and stability, as well as providing long-term economic opportunity for Vermont employees.