

Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight. 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 many of our legislators have noble goals and good intentions. A prime example is "Act 250," an attempt in the 1970's to reign in the explosive development assaulting Vermont's land and citizens. Unfortunately in 2015, citizen input and protection by the Vermont legislature is needed now more than ever. Yet often it becomes NO HEARING, NO HEADACHES. The spending of millions of dollars annually by municipalities throughout the state without clear and constant citizen involvement is hidden by the exemptions allowed under Vermont's public records laws.

S.138 bill seeks to remove protections from development under "Act 250", while shrouding the activities of municipalities, and their close bonds with private investors and private banks. This bill limits the citizen's power, with a long and expensive appeal to the already overburdened Supreme Court. All people not cozy with political power, wealth and lawyers, will be out in the dark.

Under the guise of Economic Development, with multiple incentives, this law will make

funneling federal and state monies faster and easier by reducing, if not totally eliminating, citizen oversight. Citizen Advisory Boards, appointed politically, and/or because of their funding mechanisms often rubber stamp approvals not in the taxpayers' best interest. Vermonters will not benefit, when we allow the fox to guard the chickens.

Major misplacements of public funds and of public trust were clearly visible in the Governor's race this past election.

Prior to a public hearing on Thursday, April 23, 2015, only 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, have testified to different committees. What I ask of this committee is to strengthen, not exempt, "Act 250" to resist the temptation to weaken Act 250 and the public records law.

Vermont taxpayers should not be the last to know how their monies are being spent.

 4/23/15  
Margaret Murray

P.s. I am also concerned about the 14 year tax credits.