

Written Testimony on H.584 received February 18, 2016 via e-mail

I am a 6th generation Vermonter whose family has harvested wood off our land for our winter fuel and for occasional sale. I was just asked by my uncle to look into this bill. I have read the entire bill and am not savvy when reading proposed laws. It is difficult to understand each component within the 48 page document. I am hoping you can answer a few questions and hope for your patience as we try to understand the possible implications on our family and our traditional practice.

Can you speak to how this bill came to be. I read it was to protect habitat, natural resources, and climate change.

My family has questions about the 10,000 board feet of harvest/less than 20 cord of harvest. Our calculations do not agree that 10,000 board feet and 20 cord are equivalent. How was that figure determined? Does this mean you can sell 10,00 board feet and then not use the remaining limbs/tops for firewood? Is that stated in the bill?

We also currently have 5 family members who work weekends together to harvest wood off a single property each year. It exceeds the 20 cord limit your bill sets. I think if I read the bill accurately, the process for getting a permit and alerting the appropriate people seems unreasonable and quite extensive. We are not in business or out to make money, rather give it to family members.

In the past we have sold logs and harvested firewood within the same year. We haul wood all winter in pickup truck loads and 1 ton dump truck loads. We already cut and load it by hand. The permit process seems lengthy and to work against family harvest. We all work full time jobs during the week and it just feels annoying that we would have to find time during the week to get a permit to cut firewood on Saturday morning.

As I stated, I am simply looking for clarification. Our family is generational and takes pride working hard to harvest material on our own property to keep our family warm during the winter months. Is there substantial evidence that loggers or home owners are harvesting too much? Or could the bill state something like, x cords for sale plus x cords for personal use?

As I said, there are 5 family members harvesting anywhere between 5-9 cord (each... or a total of 25+ cords) a year off rotating properties, but one property a year. Does that make sense? We own a large quantity of acreage between us, pay our share in taxes and are anxious that we will now be asked to pay more.

The bill also identifies the need for transportation tags. Does this mean that each truckload has to be tracked? Including brush and stumps being removed? It seems as if there would be more important things to keep track of. Maybe you can speak to this.

We've worked hard to achieve what we own and have struggled to keep our assets in a changing economy. We continually feel it is harder and harder to be a Vermonter and live an honest day. We hope the new laws that are created benefit all Vermonters, even the small ones that feel like a financial gain is spending weekends cutting firewood, rather than pushing a button and paying for fuel oil.

Thank you for your time. I am sure you will be able to clarify our concerns.

Jennifer Larocque