

S.180

An act relating to the Vermont Fair Repair Act

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds:

(1) Manufacturers can make it difficult or impossible—whether inadvertently or intentionally—for consumers or independent repair technicians to fix their consumer electronic products, even for such minor repairs as replacing a battery or screen.

(2) Manufacturers may limit access to information or parts to correct defects to only those customers who are under warranty; may refuse access to information or parts for owners of older models; and may refuse to stock or sell parts at fair and reasonable prices. Consequently, consumers are often left with few options other than to buy new.

(3) Modern repairs involve electronics: any product that can have embedded electronics will eventually have embedded electronics. Repairing those electronics requires information, parts, firmware access, and tooling specifications from the product designers.

(4) The knowledge and tools to repair and refurbish consumer electronic products should be distributed as widely and freely as the products themselves.

In contrast to centralized manufacturing, reuse must be broadly distributed to achieve economies of scale.

(5) Many manufacturers have made commitments to sustainability, repair, and reuse, and the innovation economy of Vermont and the United States has had many positive economic and environmental impacts. Legislation that further promotes extending the lifespan of consumer electronic products can create jobs and benefit the environment.

(6) As demonstrated by Massachusetts's experience with a right to repair initiative concerning automobiles in 2014, which resulted in a compromise between manufacturers and independent repair providers to adopt a voluntary nationwide approach for providing diagnostic codes and repair data available in a common format by the 2018 model year, legislative action to secure a right to repair can achieve positive benefits for manufacturers, independent businesses, and consumers.

Sec. 2. RIGHT TO REPAIR TASK FORCE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Right to Repair Task Force.

(b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following five members:

(1) one current member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(2) one current member of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on Committees;

(3) the Attorney General or designee;

(4) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or designee; and

(5) the Secretary of Digital Services or designee.

(c) Stakeholder engagement. The Task Force shall solicit testimony and participation in its work from representatives of relevant stakeholders, including authorized and independent repair providers, and consumer, environmental, agricultural, medical device, and other trade groups having an interest in consumer or business electronic product repairs.

(d) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall review and consider the following issues relating to potential legislation designed to secure the right to repair consumer electronic products, including personal electronic devices such as cell phones, tablets, and computers:

(1) the scope of products to include;

(2) economic costs and benefits, including economic development and workforce opportunities;

(3) effects on the cost and availability to consumers of new and used consumer electronic products in the marketplace, including diminished availability of refurbished products for secondary users;

(4) consequences or impacts for intellectual property and trade secrets;
(5) environmental and economic costs of a “throw-away” economy;
(6) legal issues, including potential for alignment or conflict with federal law, and litigation risks;

(7) issues relating to privacy and security features in electronic products; and

(8) any other issues the Task Force considers relevant and necessary to accomplish its work, including regulation of business consumer products or other products the Task Force finds appropriate.

(e) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, legal, and fiscal assistance of the Office of Legislative Council and the Joint Fiscal Office. Relevant agencies and departments within State government shall provide their technical and other expertise upon request of the Task Force.

(f) Report. On or before December 15, 2018, the Task Force shall submit a written report to the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action, including specific findings and recommendations concerning personal electronic devices such as cell phones, tablets, and computers.

(g) Meetings.

(1) The Office of Legislative Council shall call the first meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before August 1, 2018.

(2) The legislative members of the Task Force shall serve as co-chairs.

(3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on December 15, 2018.

(h) Compensation and reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Task Force serving in his or her capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 406 for not more than five meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General Assembly.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.