



Vermont Technology Alliance  
The Voice for Technology in Vermont

## **Testimony on S.85 An act relating to simplifying government for small businesses**

**House Commerce and Economic Development Committee - March 29, 2018**

**Jeff Couture, Executive Director, Vermont Technology Alliance**

The Vermont Technology Alliance Supports the goal of S.85: to create an easily navigable portal for businesses, entrepreneurs, and citizens to access information about starting and operating a business in Vermont.

The Vermont Technology Alliance is made up of more than 200 businesses, ranging from individual entrepreneurs to large companies; however the majority of our members are small to medium businesses.

As executive director, I have often heard frustration or confusion from our members with the overall ease of use of state systems and confusion about where to find business-related information. While much of the information that businesses need are no doubt available on line, our members would like a “one-stop” source to find all information about doing business in Vermont. The Secretary of State’s office has made good progress over the last few years in streamlining its site and business registration processes. However, more can be done simplify and consolidate the key information that businesses need, particularly those that are starting up or are small, with limited staff and time to search and research information.

Such a portal could provide efficiencies for state agencies, position Vermont as business-friendly, and ideally be a digitally sophisticated site (which can be helpful to organizations such as ours that work to attract tech businesses, employees and entrepreneurs to the state).

Here are some additional observations:

- Include listings of steps for starting and maintaining a business in Vermont with links to additional information.

- Survey and compare what other states do and adopt best practices.
  
- Include all business registrations, payments and renewals in one place, and if possible include a renewal reminder service so businesses know when to make updates and payments.
  
- Use the site to market Vermont as a place where you want to do business and where it is easy to do business: include or link to economic development marketing information.
  
- Include links to other organizations and resources, including business associations such as the Vermont Technology Alliance.
  
- Related, encourage business associations like the vtTA to share and provide links to the one-stop source.
  
- There were items that were included in S.220, the economic development bill passed during the 2014-2015 session, that called for a “One Stop Shop Web Portal” all of which I do not believe were fully implemented. These could be in this new portal. They include:
  - A clear guide to resources and technical assistance for all phases of business development;
  - A directory of financial assistance, including grants, funding capital, tax credits, and incentives;
  - A directory of workforce development assistance, including recruiting, job postings, and training;
  - A link to centralized business services available from the Secretary of State, the Department of Labor, the Department of Taxes, and others
  
- Make sure it is easy to find and is featured on Vermont.gov.
  
- Provide an opportunity for Vermont Tech companies to bid on the contract to develop the portal.