

Thomas Hughes
Senate Appropriations Committee
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Good afternoon. My name is Tom Hughes and I am the campaign coordinator for Energy Independent Vermont – a broad coalition that includes Vermont businesses, low-income advocates, , academic institutions, the interfaith community, environmentalists, and student groups.

We are working to strengthen the economy, help *all* Vermonters transition to a clean energy future, and reduce the pollution causing global warming.

I'm here today to encourage you to retain Section C.110 – the climate action portion of the House budget, and in particular the JFO study of “regulatory and market decarbonization mechanisms.”

As the Trump administration abandons the United States' leadership in the war against climate change, it is imperative that individual states step up where the federal government has retreated. Vermont has a role to play – and this study is part of it.

The JFO study will provide legislators a road map to meeting Vermont's bipartisan commitments to reduce carbon pollution.

Most recently the Senate resolved – in S.R. 10 from last June – to “identify and implement the policies, programs, and approaches annually required to achieve the State's greenhouse gas reduction commitments.”

This study is a recommendation of the Climate Action Commission, and supported by the Mayors Coalition, the Climate Economy Action Team, the Vermont Climate & Health Alliance, the Sierra Club, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, and the General Assembly's Climate Solutions Caucus. They all support this non-partisan, independent analysis by the highly-respected Joint Fiscal Office.

CEOs from businesses employing over 1,000 Vermonters and responsible for over \$1 billion in annual commerce have a letter in today's paper calling for this study.

And next Thursday, hundreds of students will converge on the State House to demand this study's completion, along with other climate action.

The study should look at some of the most promising opportunities to use market forces to drive down carbon pollution. Those include, but are not limited to, these five approaches:

1. An expansion of the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#) to transportation and heating fuels;
2. A new regional cap-and-invest program, such as the one under consideration by the [Transportation & Climate Initiative](#);
3. Joining California and Quebec in their emissions trading program;
4. [The Vermont Case for Carbon Dividends](#), as proposed in [H.531](#); and
5. [The ESSEX Plan](#), a fee-and-rebate model proposed in [H.791](#) and [S.284](#);

To be sure, the study by itself will not reduce pollution. It can, however, provide the Legislature the non-partisan, baseline information you will need to devise a decarbonization strategy in the future. For that reason, we encourage you to retain this section of the budget as is.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and for your good work.