



Vermont Association of Realtors®

To: The House Committee on Energy and Technology

From: Nancy T. Lynch, Government Affairs Director, Vermont Association of Realtors



Date: May 22, 2019

RE: H.63

Mr. Chairman and distinguished committee members:

Please see below my listed reasons for offering this testimony today and the salient points of our position on H. 63 in its current form.

1. The Vermont Association of Realtors (VAR) has worked well with representatives in the energy conservation world, most notably Efficiency Vermont, for several years. Our goal has always been to work in partnership with them and others to make Vermont a great place to live and work, and to balance the tensions that sometimes exist between energy efficiency goals and the reality of Vermont's aging housing stock. It is one of the reasons we spearheaded the first Green Housing Symposium in 2015 and this fall are holding our third one. This symposium brings together stakeholders from all over to address this very issue and discuss the emerging trends in the industry.
2. It was in this vein that in March, our CEO testified to the fact that we would support the working groups, with the caveat that a commercial realtor be added to the commercial working group.
3. During Ms. Hossley's verbal testimony, she stated firmly to Senator Bray, when asked, that VAR would never support mandated labeling as it would clearly put older homes at a disadvantage in the marketplace. It is true that in her written testimony, because of our efforts to be good partners, Ms. Hossley did ask for a postponement of any considerations of mandatory labeling, but in no way indicated any support thereof.
4. In May, when the bill we originally testified on was swept into H.63, I testified in the Senate Finance Committee on the newer version of H.63. At that time, I did not submit written testimony, but I did send along the testimony that VAR/Helen Hossley had submitted to the Senate Natural Resources Committee, mostly so the Senate Finance committee could see the pamphlets that were made in concert with Efficiency Vermont. These pamphlets are handed out by realtors at the time of the signing of the purchase and sales agreement. I also pointed out that there are at least three occasions during

the real estate process that prospective buyers are given factual information about the home they are considering.

- a. First, working with Efficiency Vermont and the New England Real Estate Network, (NEREN), **green fields were added to the MLS listing forms, where sellers can put any information regarding energy efficiencies and upgrades (not just new windows, but more advanced efficiencies) that they have made to their home, and we are the first in the country to do so.** So, if a buyer comes to a realtor seeking an older home with upgraded efficiencies, the realtor can find a home that would meet those needs.
 - b. Second, the **seller disclosure includes the costs associated with running the home so the prospective buyer has a true cost to consider when making their homebuying decision.**
 - c. Third, when the purchase and sales contract is signed, **the buyer is provided with this pamphlet that explains available information on where and how to improve the energy efficiency of their new home. They also check a box affirming they have been given this information.**
5. I indicated in my verbal testimony in Senate Finance that we did not see the need for the committees, since it is my understanding that 1) they do not meet on a regular basis, 2) they seem to still have more unanswered questions than suggestions, and 3) our partnerships with groups like Efficiency Vermont are strong, with both groups taking a balanced approach to this issue. However, I did ask that if those committees were to be re-vitalized, that they not only needed to meet regularly and do the work assigned, **but that a commercial realtor be added to the commercial working group.**
6. When the committee voted 5-1-1 to strike sections 1-5 from the bill, removing the committees from the bill, VAR was firmly in support of that move. That is what brings me here today.
- We support expanded weatherization programs for moderate income homeowners and buyers, since 80% of our housing stock is more than 40 years old, and new homeowners are not in a position to put out that additional money to weatherize the home, and often cannot do so for many years, if at all.
 - We support the version of H.63 that passed out of Senate Finance 5-1-1, with no working groups and an increase to the weatherization program to the Vermonters who meet 80-140% of median income.
 - And finally, if you insist on moving forward the working committees, we ask that included in the recommendations that come out of that group, you **add language into the bill requiring an analysis of the recommendations would have on the already tight housing market and the economic/financial implications their final recommendations would place on Vermont's current homeowners and prospective buyers.**

Respectfully submitted by,



Nancy T. Lynch, Government Affairs Director, VAR

Energy Upgrades In Your New Home

The first few years of living in your home are a great time to invest in energy efficiency upgrades. Not only can it make your home more affordable, but it can make it more comfortable and increase the resale value. If you're building a new home, there are ways to build efficiency right into it.

The best first step is to contact Efficiency Vermont by calling 888-921-5990 or visiting www.encyvermont.com. There you can find:

- Listings for BPI Certified Energy Efficiency Network contractors
- Technical assistance and incentives for energy-efficient new construction
- Rebates on the purchase of efficient equipment such as kitchen appliances, heat pump heating and cooling systems, water heating systems, and more
- Cash back incentives on air sealing and insulation projects through the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program
- DIY videos and online resources
- Guidance on financing and energy efficiency projects
- Resources on renewable energy systems



Other Resources

Vermont Gas Systems • 802-863-4511 | www.vermontgas.com

Burlington Electric Department • 802-865-7342 | www.burlingtonelectric.com

Vermont's Weatherization Program • www.dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/weatherization

Renewable Energy Resource Center • <http://www.erc-vt.org/>

The Vermont Home Energy Profile pilot is a project of the Vermont Residential Energy Labeling Working Group:
publicservice.vermont.gov/energy_efficiency/buildingenergy_labeling

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**Efficiency
Vermont**
VR-073 Rev. A

How will your new home use energy?

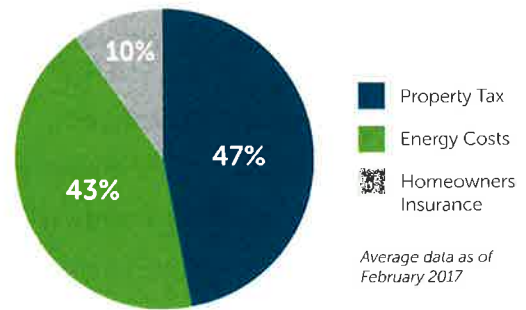
Home Energy Information



Your home is a system, and understanding how it consumes all types of energy (like electricity, wood, oil or natural gas), can help you determine how energy-efficient it is, and how much your monthly energy bills will be.

On average, **Vermonters spend over \$3,000 on their energy bills** every year, but once you know how your home uses energy, you can tackle projects that will improve its efficiency and reduce your energy burden. These projects have additional benefits like eliminating cold drafts and reducing air-borne allergens like mold, making your home more **affordable, healthy, and comfortable**. Plus, by increasing the efficiency and adding renewable energy systems, you can reduce your carbon footprint, making Vermont a better place for future generations.

Comparison of Average Annual Costs for a Vermont Home



Average data as of February 2017

The Vermont Home Energy Profile

The Vermont Home Energy Profile is an independent, unbiased assessment that evaluates the expected energy efficiency of a home through three key metrics: estimated annual energy usage, estimated annual costs, and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Home Energy Score.

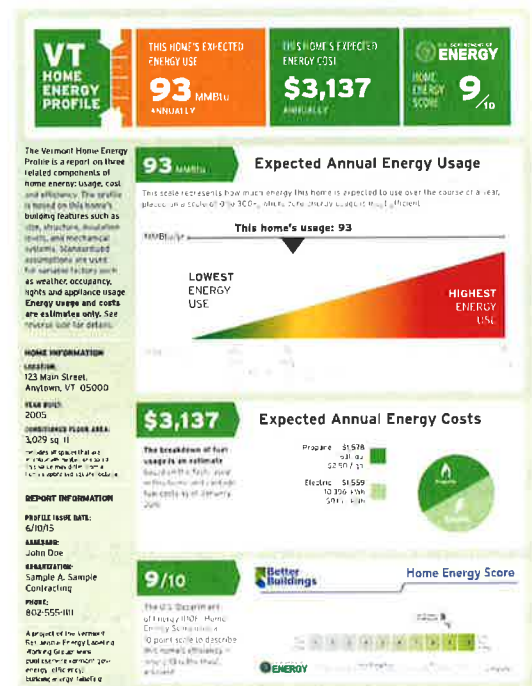
A DOE Qualified Assessor will produce a Vermont Home Energy Profile by performing a 1-2 hour home walk-through. Your Assessor will recommend upgrades to improve your home's energy efficiency like:

- Air sealing gaps or holes in the ceilings, or walls
- Increasing insulation levels
- Replacing old or inefficient equipment or appliances

These types of improvements can **save you up to 20% on your annual heating bills** – not only this year, but every year going forward – making the investment worth the cost. Efficiency Vermont also offers rebates to complete this work, and there are lenders that provide energy efficiency project financing, so you can **roll the cost of improvements into your mortgage**.

The price of a Vermont Home Energy Profile varies, but is generally \$200 or less. For more information or to find a DOE Qualified Assessor, **call Efficiency Vermont at 888-921-5990 or visit www.encyvermont.com/HomeEnergyProfile**.

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VR-073 Rev. A