

H.688 · As Passed by House  
“Vermont Global Warming Solutions Act of 2020”

Cause of Action

Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Energy

MAY 27, 2020

LUKE MARTLAND, DIRECTOR & CHIEF COUNSEL

# How Law Would Work / Key Steps

GHG reduction requirements  
(2025, 2030, 2050)

Vermont Climate Council

Vermont Climate Action Plan

ANR Rulemaking to implement plan &  
achieve GHG reductions

Cause of action if ANR fails to engage in  
rulemaking / rules fail to achieve GHG reductions

# Cause of action; 10 V.S.A. § 594

- (a) Scenario: ANR fails to adopt or update rules
  - Rule 75
  - Time frame & notice
  - Remedy
- (b) Scenario: ANR adopts rules, but fail to achieve GHG reductions
  - Time frame & notice
  - Remedy, “substantial cause”, “prompt and effective” action to comply
- (c) Awarding of costs & fees
- (d) Does not limit existing remedies

# Remedies Current Law

- Participation in rulemaking process
- 3 V.S.A. § 806: Person may submit a written request that an Agency adopt, amend, or repeal a rule. Within 30 days Agency must adopt, amend, or repeal the rule or deny request in writing
- Action Pursuant to Rule 75
- 3 V.S.A. § 807: Declaratory judgment on validity or applicability of rule

# Remedies Current Law: Rule 75

(a) Availability of Review. **Any action or failure or refusal to act by an agency of the state** or a political subdivision thereof ... may be reviewed in accordance with this rule ...

(b) Mode of Review. Proceedings under this rule shall ... be governed by the Rules of Civil Procedure as modified by this rule. **The complaint and summons shall be served upon the agency and all parties in accordance with the provisions of Rule 4. The complaint shall include a concise statement of the grounds upon which the plaintiff contends the plaintiff is entitled to relief, and shall demand the relief to which the plaintiff believes the plaintiff to be entitled. No responsive pleading need be filed** unless required by statute or by order of the court....

(c) Time Limits; Stay. The time within which review may be sought shall be as provided by statute, except that **if no time limit is specified by statute, the complaint shall be filed within 30 days** after notice of any action or refusal to act of which review is sought unless the court enlarges the time in accordance with Rule 6(b), and, in the event of a failure to act, **within six months after expiration of the time in which action should reasonably have occurred....**

(d) Trial or Hearing; Judgment. Any question as to which there is a right to trial by jury shall be tried to a jury if one is demanded ... Otherwise all questions ... shall be tried to the court. **The judgment of the court shall affirm, reverse, or modify the decision under review as provided by law.**

(e) Review by the Supreme Court. Unless by statute or otherwise the decision of the superior court is final, **review by the Supreme Court shall be by appeal ...** and no other method of appellate review shall be permitted.

# Remedies Current Law: 3 V.S.A. § 807

- 3 V.S.A. § 807: Declaratory judgment on validity or applicability of rule
  - “The validity or applicability of a rule may be determined in an action for declaratory judgment in the Washington Superior Court if it is alleged that the rule, or its threatened application, interferes with or impairs, or threatens to interfere with or impair, the legal rights or privileges of the plaintiff....”

# Current Law: 3 V.S.A. § 807

- Grounds Court invalidate a rule:
  - Rule exceeds legislative grant of authority
  - Rule contrary to legislative intent
  - Arbitrary, unreasonable, contrary to law
- Arbitrary, unreasonable, or contrary to law
  - Statutory definition arbitrary & case law

# Differences H.688 [§ 594 (a)] & Rule 75

- § 594(a)(1) expressly refers to Rule 75
- Time to bring action:
  - Rule 75: 30 days after notice; for failure to act w/in 6 mos.
  - § 594(a)(2): 1 year
- Notice provision in § 594(a)(2)



# Differences H.688 [§ 594 (b)] & 3 V.S.A. § 807

- Time period to bring action
  - 3 V.S.A. § 807: Within 1 year effective date of rule (3 V.S.A. § 846(e))
  - § 594(b)(2): 1 year after filing Emissions Inventory; also has notice provision
- § 594(b) perhaps more limited than § 807; requires “substantial” cause & “prompt and effective” action

# Take - aways

- Is § 594 necessary?
  - Remedies already exist as to both scenarios
  - Standing & particularized harm would still need to be established regardless of 'vehicle'
  - Certainty
- (d) makes clear all of current remedies remain available
- Therefore, a “menu” of options & multiple causes of action / alternative pleadings

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