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H.435

Introduced by Representatives Cina of Burlington, Sheldon of Middlebury,
Buss of Woodstock, Chesnut-Tangerman of Middletown
Springs, Christie of Hartford, Cole of Hartford, Cordes of
Lincoln, Farlice-Rubio of Barnet, Headrick of Burlington,
Hooper of Randolph, LaMont of Morristown, Logan of
Burlington, McCann of Montpelier, McGill of Bridport,
Mulvaney-Stanak of Burlington, Patt of Worcester, Priestley of
Bradford, Satcowitz of Randolph, Small of Winooski,
Surprenant of Barnard, and Toleno of Brattleboro

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Government; economic development; climate change; regenerative
economy

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the
State to develop a plan for a regenerative economy by 2026.

An act relating to a regenerative economy

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

2 Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

3 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to build a regenerative
4 economy. A regenerative economy is an economic system that works to
5 regenerate natural and human resources. The world is facing climate
6 emergencies, mass extinction, and ecological collapse as a consequence of
7 human economic activity over the past 400 years. These activities did not
8 account for the full impact of the economy on the environment and on society.
9 In order to survive these changes, Vermont must build resiliency and create a
10 roadmap for a just transition from an extractive economy to a new economy
11 that repairs and restores the Earth.

12 (b) In developing a regenerative economy, Vermont will engage persons in
13 their local communities to solve problems and find ways to combine solutions
14 for existing statutory goals, such as universal recycling, greenhouse gas
15 reduction, and wastewater management. Present and future economic
16 development should always account for social equity and environmental
17 protection and the ecological and social well-being of all persons and all life.

18 (c) A regenerative economy will transition away from practices that engage
19 in unsustainable extraction of natural resources and will instead advance
20 ecological restoration and protect biodiversity by both protecting and
21 regenerating natural resources. The dynamics of the workforce and the

1 workplace will shift from exploitation to cooperation as human potential is
2 nurtured and human resources are regenerated. By relocalizing most
3 production and consumption, an economy will be built that can withstand and
4 adapt to environmental, social, and technological changes.

5 (d) Economic control should be rooted in local communities, and persons
6 should have increased power over the decisions that affect their lives. The
7 regenerative economy should retain and restore cultures and traditions, while
8 recognizing that some cultural practices have been harmful and may need to
9 adapt for the greater good. There will not be economic justice without racial
10 justice and social equity, and the new economy must recognize and rectify the
11 intersection of systemized oppressions. Vermont must build the foundation of
12 new economic and social systems that create economic opportunity and a high
13 quality of life for all persons, that build public assets and the commons, and
14 that empower persons to exercise self-determination and freedom. All can live
15 well in balance with one another.

16 Sec. 2. 1 V.S.A. chapter 27 is added to read:

17 CHAPTER 27. REGENERATIVE ECONOMY PLAN

18 § 951. REGENERATIVE ECONOMY

19 The purpose of this chapter is to facilitate Vermont's transition to a
20 regenerative economy. A regenerative economy is an economic system that
21 works to regenerate natural and human resources. Vermont shall achieve a

1 90 percent regenerative economy on or before December 31, 2046. In order to
2 build a regenerative economy by 2046, Vermont needs the Regenerative
3 Economy Roadmap. This Roadmap shall be built from the ground up by
4 People’s Assemblies and shall be based on regional and State regenerative
5 economy plans. Local communities need to assess and regularly monitor their
6 strengths, needs, challenges, and goals. The State shall assist local
7 communities in the coordination of plans and shall appropriate resources in
8 ways that support regenerative economy plans and the Regenerative Economy
9 Roadmap. All State investments shall be considered in relation to the
10 Regenerative Economy Roadmap, and funding streams should be adjusted over
11 time to achieve a just transition to a new economy based on the Roadmap.

12 § 952. REGIONAL REGENERATIVE ECONOMY PLANS

13 (a) The State shall be divided into 11 regions based on the geographic areas
14 of the regional planning commissions. Each region shall create a regenerative
15 economy plan. Each region shall form a People’s Assembly to draft the plan.

16 (b) Each of the 11 regional planning commissions shall assist their
17 respective region by facilitating the People’s Assembly. The regional planning
18 commission shall use a robust public process in the People’s Assembly,
19 engaging all aspects of local communities, including businesses, advocates,
20 activists, nonprofits, government officials, health and human services
21 organizations, education groups, and others.

1 (c) The plan shall:

2 (1) Assess the strengths, weaknesses, needs, and resources of the region.

3 (2) Rectify the impact of systemic oppression and create racial and
4 social equity in the local and State economy by empowering and centering
5 historically marginalized racial, ethnic, and social groups, including Black,
6 Indigenous, and other Persons of Color; LGBTQ persons; and persons with
7 disabilities.

8 (3) Create incentives for the development of regenerative agriculture
9 that engages and empowers farmers in building healthy soils and integrating
10 solutions for reducing carbon emissions, creating zero waste, and cleaning up
11 waterways.

12 (4) Cultivate food justice and universal access to healthy local food by
13 addressing food production so that Vermont will be able to feed the State year-
14 round by increasing the productivity of existing land, eliminating food waste,
15 promoting the recycling of food, and developing indoor growing facilities.

16 (5) Prevent waste from being generated in every sector of the economy.

17 (6) Incentivize sustainable design through materials management
18 systems that create products that allow the return of component materials back
19 into the manufacturing stream once their useful life is over, with a preference
20 for highest and best uses.

1 (7) Minimize reliance on waste disposal, landfilling, and incineration
2 and improve waste management plans.

3 (8) Reduce energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and other
4 adverse environmental impacts.

5 (9) Encourage local, publicly owned energy generation and associated
6 waste containment with plans to transition from fossil fuels to renewable
7 energy sources.

8 (10) Support the achievement of existing statutory goals regarding
9 environmental protection.

10 (11) Guide local and State agencies to make all policy and purchase
11 decisions through the lens of reaching the State Comprehensive Energy Plan
12 goal of 90 by 50.

13 (12) Move beyond the Universal Recycling Law.

14 (13) Build a circular economy by providing economic and other
15 incentives for the colocation of businesses and manufacturers in designated
16 areas to share resources, reduce waste, and allow more productive use of waste
17 and by-products.

18 (14) Encourage the adoption of biologically inspired production
19 processes and materials.

20 (15) Develop land use policy that utilizes old sites first before creating
21 new ones.

1 (16) Restore ecosystems whenever possible.

2 (17) Minimize the waste of human resources and potential by increasing
3 opportunities for meaningful employment; providing flexible pathways for
4 education, training, and employment; and identifying underutilized segments
5 of the workforce.

6 (18) Consider ways to improve population health and provide universal
7 access to health care and wellness support, including a healthy physical,
8 mental, emotional, and social environment.

9 (19) Create universal child care options that maximize child
10 development and are financially and physically accessible to all families.

11 (20) Support universal eldercare options that maximize quality of life
12 for persons as they age and that are financially and physically accessible for all
13 families.

14 (21) Support a robust, lifelong public education system, with
15 opportunities for retraining and reskilling that respond to ongoing workforce
16 and workers' needs.

17 (22) Assess ongoing workforce development and education needs for
18 the region and explore ways to guarantee jobs for all who are willing and able
19 to work in the region.

20 (23) Upgrade and weatherize all existing housing stock before building
21 new units, use all available housing stock before building new units, use land

1 more efficiently while protecting ecosystems, prevent waste in housing
2 infrastructure, and build systems of housing to the highest environmental
3 standards that ensure access to housing that is affordable based on income
4 level.

5 (24) Develop transportation options with minimum harm and maximum
6 benefit to the environment and to persons.

7 (25) Demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to rapid social, ecological,
8 and technological changes.

9 (26) Prepare for the impact of climate and other ecological emergencies
10 through review of existing disaster planning and through development of
11 greater local resilience.

12 (27) Suggest priorities for State spending and investment of State
13 resources into a regenerative economy and recommend ways to move towards
14 participatory budgeting on the local, regional, and State levels. As used in this
15 section, “participatory budgeting” means a citizen engagement process through
16 which community members decide how to allocate a portion of a public
17 budget.

18 (28) Explore strategies for government agencies at all levels to divest
19 their holdings of fossil-fuel-related investments.

20 (29) Identify possible revenue streams and ways to fund the transition to
21 a regenerative economy, including public banking options.

1 (30) Create possible incentives to increase productivity, efficiency, and
2 resilience of the local and State economy.

3 (31) Recommend clear benchmarks to measure progress, with deadlines
4 for various steps.

5 (32) Take into account existing plans, like regional energy plans and
6 hazard mitigation plans, and consider ways to maximize existing federal
7 benefits and subsidies to build local resilience and independence.

8 (d) The plan shall identify how the goals will be met on schedule, including
9 achieving a 30 percent regenerative economy by 2030, a 60 percent
10 regenerative economy by 2039, and a 90 percent regenerative economy by
11 2046.

12 (e) The plan may be amended at any meeting that has been properly noticed
13 upon a majority vote of Assembly members.

14 (f) The plan shall either be readopted or amended as part of the regional
15 planning process established in 24 V.S.A. chapter 117.

16 § 953. PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

17 (a) Each of the 11 regions shall form a People's Assembly. The People's
18 Assembly shall be open to anyone in the region who wants to participate, and it
19 shall be grounded in the principles of direct democracy. Technology shall be
20 used to make the meetings as inclusive as possible. Amenities such as food
21 and child care shall be offered, and scheduling shall include options for

1 participation by those with different work schedules. The local regional
2 planning commission shall staff the People’s Assembly and facilitate and lead
3 each meeting in a way that centers on the persons in the region, serving as
4 professional support for a community-driven process. Membership of the
5 Assembly shall be open to all residents of the region. The following shall
6 participate as nonvoting advisors to the People’s Assembly:

7 (1) a representative from local solid waste districts in the regions;

8 (2) a representative from the regional development corporation in the
9 region; and

10 (3) a representative from each municipality in the region.

11 (b) Each People’s Assembly shall hold public meetings in order to develop
12 the regenerative economy plan for the region. Notice of each meeting shall be
13 posted for two weeks before the meeting.

14 (c) The Assembly shall provide notice of each meeting to each of the
15 following: the local District Environmental Commission, the local water
16 districts, the local municipal energy planning committees, business owners in
17 the region, school boards in the region, faith communities in the region,
18 nonprofit organizations in the region, and community groups in the region.

19 (d) The Assembly shall meet at least nine times before December 31, 2024
20 and at least once per year starting in 2025.

1 (e) The Assembly shall post drafts of the plan to be inspected and reviewed
2 by the public on the website of the local regional planning commission.

3 (f) The Assembly shall engage in the planning process under section 954 of
4 this title.

5 (g) The Assembly shall adopt its own rules for conducting meetings, which
6 shall meet the following criteria:

7 (1) ensure that all voices are heard and that historically marginalized
8 persons have power;

9 (2) maximize accessibility and provide accommodations to prevent
10 barriers to participation;

11 (3) use principles of participatory decision making and budgeting to the
12 greatest extent possible; and

13 (4) the final vote on the plan shall include at least two weeks' public
14 notice and shall allow for in-person and remote voting over the course of
15 several days.

16 § 954. STATE AGENCY REGENERATIVE ECONOMY PLANS

17 (a) Every State agency shall create a regenerative economy plan. The plan
18 shall address the same issues as the regional regenerative economy plans as
19 required under subsection 952(c) of this title.

20 (b) Each agency shall hold at least two public hearings on the plan.

1 (c) On or before January 15, 2025, each agency shall submit a draft plan to
2 the House Committees on Appropriations and on Ways and Means and the
3 Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Finance for review and
4 consideration as part of the budget process.

5 § 955. REGENERATIVE ECONOMY ROADMAP

6 (a) The Regenerative Economy Roadmap shall be created by the Vermont
7 Association of Planning and Development Agencies. The Roadmap shall be a
8 20-year plan, and it shall guide all State investment so that the State obtains a
9 90 percent regenerative economy by 2046.

10 (b) The Roadmap shall address the same criteria as the regenerative
11 economy plans as established in subsection 952(c) of this title.

12 (c) The Roadmap shall be consistent with all of the regional and State
13 agency regenerative economy plans.

14 (d) The General Assembly shall consider the Roadmap as part of its budget
15 process. The General Assembly shall explore ways to move towards processes
16 of participatory budgeting and include the People's Assemblies and their
17 ongoing reassessment of regional regenerative economy plans.

18 § 956. REGENERATIVE ECONOMY GRANT PROGRAMS

19 (a) The Chair of the Natural Resources Board shall establish the Circular
20 Economy Grant Program. This Program shall provide grants to encourage site
21 sharing and the development of circular manufacturing.

1 (b) The Secretary of Natural Resources shall establish the Systems
2 Transformation Grant Program. The Program shall provide grants to State
3 agencies to develop public and private partnerships to solve Vermont's greatest
4 social and ecological problems.

5 (c) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall
6 establish the Regenerative Economy Grant Program. This Program shall
7 provide grants to businesses that plan to address the regenerative economy
8 criteria established in subsection 952(c) of this title.

9 (d) On or before July 1, 2025, the Chair of the Natural Resources Board,
10 the Secretary of Natural Resources, and the Secretary of Commerce and
11 Community Development shall adopt procedures for the content of the grant
12 applications and criteria for making awards for the grants established under
13 this section.

14 (e) The following sums of money are appropriated from the General Fund
15 in fiscal year 2024 for the grants established in this section:

16 (1) \$1,000,000.00 to the Chair of the Natural Resource Board for the
17 Grant Program established in subsection (a) of this section;

18 (2) \$1,000,000.00 to the Secretary of Natural Resources for the Grant
19 Program established in subsection (b) of this section; and

1 (3) \$1,000,000.00 to the Secretary of Commerce and Community
2 Development for the Grant Program established in subsection (c) of this
3 section.

4 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

5 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.