

1 S.253

2 An act relating to building energy codes

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

4 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

5 The General Assembly finds:

6 (1) According to the 2020 State of Vermont Greenhouse Gas Emissions  
7 Inventory Update and Forecast, home and business heating and cooling is the  
8 second largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Vermont.

9 (2) Under 10 V.S.A. § 578, the State has an obligation to meet named  
10 GHG reduction requirements. In order to attain these reductions, GHG  
11 emissions from the thermal sector, that is, the heating and cooling of homes  
12 and businesses, must be reduced.

13 (3) One method of reducing thermal sector emissions is to increase the  
14 energy efficiency of Vermont's homes and businesses through building to an  
15 energy-efficient building energy standard.

16 (4) Vermont established the Residential Building Energy Standards  
17 (RBES) in 1997 and the Commercial Building Energy Standards (CBES) in  
18 2007. The Department of Public Service is responsible for adopting and  
19 updating these codes regularly but does not have the capacity to administer or  
20 enforce them.

1           (5) The RBES and CBES are mandatory, but while municipalities with  
2           building departments handle some aspects of review and inspection, there is no  
3           State agency or office designated to interpret, administer, and enforce them.

4           (6) The Division of Fire Safety in the Department of Public Safety is  
5           responsible for development, administration, and enforcement of building  
6           codes but does not currently have expertise or capacity to add administration or  
7           enforcement of energy codes in buildings.

8           (7) Studies in recent years show compliance with the RBES at about  
9           54 percent and CBES at about 87 percent, with both rates declining. Both  
10           codes are scheduled to become more stringent with the goal of “net-zero  
11           ready” by 2030.

12       Sec. 2. ENERGY CODE COMPLIANCE; WORKING GROUP

13           (a) Creation. There is created the Building Energy Code Working Group to  
14           recommend strategies for increasing compliance with the Residential Building  
15           Energy Standards (RBES) and Commercial Building Energy Standards  
16           (CBES).

17           (b) Membership. The Working Group shall have 15 members with  
18           applicable expertise, to include program design and implementation, building  
19           code administration and enforcement, and Vermont’s construction industry.

20           The Committee on Committees shall appoint one Senator. The Speaker of the

1 House shall appoint one member of the House. The remaining members shall  
2 be the following:

3 (1) the Commissioner of Public Service or designee;

4 (2) the Director of Fire Safety or designee;

5 (3) a representative of Efficiency Vermont;

6 (4) a representative of American Institute of Architects–Vermont;

7 (5) a representative of the Vermont Builders and Remodelers

8 Association;

9 (6) a representative the Burlington Electric Department;

10 (7) a representative of Vermont Gas Systems;

11 (8) a representative of the Association of General Contractors of

12 Vermont;

13 (9) a representative of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns;

14 (10) a representative from a regional planning commission;

15 (11) a representative from the Vermont Housing and Conservation

16 Board;

17 (12) a representative of the Office of Professional Regulation; and

18 (13) a representative from the Vermont Association of Realtors.

19 (c) Powers and duties. The Working Group shall:

1           (1) recommend strategies and programs to increase awareness of and  
2           compliance with the RBES and CBES, including the use of appropriate  
3           certifications for contractors trained on the energy codes;

4           (2) develop plans and recommendations for a potential transition to a  
5           comprehensive program for the RBES and CBES at the Divisions of Fire  
6           Safety, including potential funding sources; and

7           (3) consider whether or not the State should adopt a statewide building  
8           code.

9           (d) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative and  
10           technical assistance of the Department of Public Service. The Working Group  
11           shall have the legal assistance of the Department of Public Service as to  
12           matters of procedure, the Working Group's powers and duties, existing State  
13           programs, existing legal requirements or obligations, and the drafting of  
14           proposed legislation. The Working Group may hire a third-party consultant to  
15           assist and staff the Working Group, which may be funded by monies  
16           appropriated by the General Assembly or any grant funding received.

17           (e) Report. On or before November 15, 2024 and November 15, 2025, the  
18           Working Group shall submit a written report to the Senate Committee on  
19           Natural Resources and Energy and the House Committee on Environment and  
20           Energy with its findings and recommendations for legislative action.

21           (f) Meetings.

1           (1) The Department of Public Service shall call the first meeting of the  
2           Working Group to occur on or before July 15, 2024.

3           (2) The Working Group shall elect a chair from among its members at  
4           the first meeting.

5           (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

6           (4) The Working Group shall cease to exist on July 1, 2026.

7           (g) Compensation and reimbursement.

8           (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General  
9           Assembly, a legislative member of the Working Group serving in the  
10           legislator's capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation  
11           and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23 for not more than  
12           eight meetings in fiscal year 2025.

13           (2) Other members of the Working Group who are not otherwise  
14           compensated by their employer shall be entitled to per diem compensation and  
15           reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more  
16           than eight meetings in fiscal year 2025.

17           (3) The payments under this subsection shall be made from monies  
18           appropriated by the General Assembly or any grant funding received.

19           Sec. 3. 30 V.S.A. § 51(c) is amended to read:

20           (c) Revision and interpretation of energy standards. The Commissioner of  
21           Public Service shall amend and update the RBES by means of administrative

1 rules adopted in accordance with 3 V.S.A. chapter 25. On or before January 1,  
2 2011, the Commissioner shall complete rulemaking to amend the energy  
3 standards to ensure that, to comply with the standards, residential construction  
4 must be designed and constructed in a manner that complies with the 2009  
5 edition of the IECC. After January 1, 2011, the Commissioner ~~shall ensure~~  
6 ~~that appropriate revisions are made promptly~~ may direct the timely and  
7 appropriate revision of the RBES after the issuance of updated standards for  
8 residential construction under the IECC. The Department of Public Service  
9 shall provide technical assistance and expert advice to the Commissioner in the  
10 interpretation of the RBES and in the formulation of specific proposals for  
11 amending the RBES. Prior to final adoption of each required revision of the  
12 RBES, the Department of Public Service shall convene an Advisory  
13 Committee to include one or more mortgage lenders, builders, building  
14 designers, utility representatives, and other persons with experience and  
15 expertise, such as consumer advocates and energy conservation experts. The  
16 Advisory Committee may provide the Commissioner with additional  
17 recommendations for revision of the RBES.

18 \* \* \*

19 Sec. 4. 30 V.S.A. § 53(c) is amended to read:

20 (c) Revision and interpretation of energy standards. On or before January  
21 1, 2011, the Commissioner shall complete rulemaking to amend the

1 commercial building energy standards to ensure that commercial building  
2 construction must be designed and constructed in a manner that complies with  
3 ANSI/ASHRAE/IESNA standard 90.1-2007 or the 2009 edition of the IECC,  
4 whichever provides the greatest level of energy savings. ~~At least every three~~  
5 ~~years after January 1, 2011, the~~ The Commissioner of Public Service shall  
6 amend and update the CBES by means of administrative rules adopted in  
7 accordance with 3 V.S.A. chapter 25. The Commissioner ~~shall ensure that~~  
8 ~~appropriate revisions are made promptly~~ may direct the timely and appropriate  
9 revision of the CBES after the issuance of updated standards for commercial  
10 construction under the IECC or ASHRAE/ANSI/IESNA standard 90.1,  
11 whichever provides the greatest level of energy savings. Prior to final adoption  
12 of each required revision of the CBES, the Department of Public Service shall  
13 convene an Advisory Committee to include one or more mortgage lenders;  
14 builders; building designers; architects; civil, mechanical, and electrical  
15 engineers; utility representatives; and other persons with experience and  
16 expertise, such as consumer advocates and energy conservation experts. The  
17 Advisory Committee may provide the Commissioner of Public Service with  
18 additional recommendations for revision of the CBES.

19 \* \* \*

1 Sec. 5. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING CONTRACTOR REGISTRY;

2 WEBSITE UPDATES

3 (a) As part of its application to register with the residential building  
4 contractor registry administered by the Vermont Secretary of State, the Office  
5 of Professional Regulation shall ask a registrant to provide the following data:

6 (1) the geographic areas the registrant serves; and

7 (2) the trade services the registrant offers from a list of trade services  
8 compiled by the Office.

9 (b) As part of its application to register with the residential building  
10 contractor registry administered by the Vermont Secretary of State, the Office  
11 of Professional Regulation shall require that a registrant acknowledge that  
12 compliance with 30 V.S.A. § 51 (residential building energy standards) and 30  
13 V.S.A. § 53 (commercial building energy standards) is required.

14 (c) On or before January 1, 2025, the Office of Professional Regulation  
15 shall update the website for the residential building contractor registry  
16 administered by the Vermont Secretary of State to:

17 (1) regularize usage of the term “residential contractor,” or another term  
18 selected by the Office, across the website to replace usages of substantially  
19 similar terms, such as “builder,” “contractor,” or “residential building  
20 contractor”; and



1           (2) add a clear and conspicuous notice that a residential contractor is  
2           required by law to comply with State building energy standards.

3           Sec. 6. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING CONTRACTOR CONTRACT  
4           TEMPLATES

5           The Office of Professional Regulation shall update any contract template  
6           the Office furnishes for residential building contracting to include a statement  
7           acknowledging that the project is required to comply with 30 V.S.A. § 51  
8           (residential building energy standards).

9           Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

10          This act shall take effect on passage.