

Key Points

AIAVT advocates that a study committee for energy code enforcement be implemented.

This bill is important for two reasons:

first, it is in support of a major grant application to the Dept. of Energy (DOE), and second, it provides a backup plan if the grant money is not received.

AIAVT Position on H.332: An act relating to a building energy code study committee

AIAVT strongly supports H.332 and encourages the General Assembly to pass it this session.

Vermont's energy codes – Commercial Building Energy Standards (CBES) and Residential Building Energy Standards (RBES) – lack authority to administer, adjudicate, and enforce. While the standards become more stringent with each amendment, compliance is dropping in Vermont.

There are further inherent problems with the current statute: There is no coordination between Vermont's energy codes and other building codes which has resulted in significant conflicts on some job sites. There is no plan for reaching all municipalities in the state, either with education or administration of the codes.

This is a national problem, although Vermont's situation is extreme. The Department of Energy recently announced a \$225 million *Cost-Effective Codes Implementation for Efficiency and Resilience* funding opportunity. A broad group of committed Vermont partners -- from State and municipal entities to builders, contractors, and architects, to regional planning commissions and utilities – submitted an initial proposal in January 2023 and have been encouraged by the Department of Energy (DOE) to submit a full application for funds in March.

In response to this grant opportunity, and with the realization that Vermont must address these problems with or without the grant, over thirty Vermont legislators have sponsored Bill H.332. If passed, this bill would establish the study committee outlined in the DOE grant application to establish the best system of authority in Vermont, along with funding sources.

H.332 will require a written report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2023. It further provides funding of \$125,000 for the study committee.

Passing H.332 will prove to the DOE that energy code improvements have broad Vermont support and specifically support from the General Assembly, who will later be called upon to enact the study committee's recommendations.

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