

March 14, 2024

Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) Testimony to House Committee on Judiciary
H. 284- An Act Relating to Regulating Drones Above Privately-Owned Real Property

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding H.284 in follow up from our March 12, 2024 letter.

VEC is the second largest electric utility in Vermont and is a non-profit member owned cooperative. VEC serves over 35,000 Vermonters in 75 towns and 8 counties. Our system is very rural with approximately 14 meters/mile (41,000 meters and 2,880 miles of line). We are committed to serving our members reliably, safely, environmentally, and cost effectively.

VEC supports the intentions of H. 284 and we are requesting the addition of clarifying language to ensure that the use of drones for our reliability and resiliency work is not unintendedly obstructed.

Drone technology is proving to be an effective and cost-saving tool in our reliability work, especially in our most rural parts of our service territory. Utilities are increasingly using drones for routine system monitoring, inspections, and maintenance. This technology can be used proactively to catch issues before they cause damage at considerable cost savings.

We are also looking to use drones in our resiliency work, helping field crews identify issues to expedite outage restoration. For example, obtaining details about an outage in advance of sending line crews can help identify the location of the problem and what types of equipment and crews are needed in the field to make the repair. This will directly reduce restoration time and cost.

This technology also provides important safety benefits. Use of drones will mean less time sending crews up in buckets, less time on the ground in difficult terrain to assess poles, and less time in manned helicopters for survey work.

Here is a potential language addition for Section 1 of H.284.

(f) Use of drones by distribution and transmission utilities or their contractors for the purposes of system reliability and resiliency are exempt from this section.

Thank you very much for your consideration.



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Vermont Electric Cooperative

