

1 H.718

2 Introduced by Representative Campbell of St. Johnsbury

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Public service; building energy; contractors; contractor registry;

6 building energy standards; Residential Building Energy Standards;

7 Commercial Building Energy Standards

8 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to direct the
9 Division of Fire Safety to adopt a residential building code, establish a task
10 force on improving the contractor registry, require contractors to disclose their
11 criminal record, update the energy education requirements for regulated
12 professionals, and grant municipalities the authority to administer and enforce
13 the Residential Building Energy Standards and the Commercial Building
14 Energy Standards.

15 An act relating to building energy efficiency

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

17 * * * Findings * * *

18 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

19 The General Assembly finds that:

1 (1) Recommendations by stakeholders and building efficiency experts in
2 the 2023 Building Energy Code Study Committee and the 2024 and 2025
3 Building Energy Code Working Group consistently find that Vermont's
4 mandatory energy codes, the Residential Building Energy Standards (RBES)
5 and the Commercial Building Energy Standards (CBES), are a subset of
6 building construction codes and should eventually be administered by the
7 Division of Fire Safety, which administers all other building codes.

8 (2) Vermont has not adopted a residential building construction code,
9 which means there is no administrative infrastructure or enforcement
10 mechanism for implementing energy codes consistently and effectively. Lack
11 of a residential building code also means Vermont lacks a standard-of-care
12 reference for the public, builders, designers, insurance companies, or the
13 courts, and such lack also may limit the State's ability to access certain federal
14 funding.

15 (3) Lack of consistent and effective implementation and enforcement of
16 the RBES in particular has resulted in low compliance rates, according to
17 studies by the Department of Public Service.

18 (4) Recommendations of the 2024 and 2025 Working Group include
19 leveraging the Office of Professional Regulation's (OPR's) residential
20 contractor registry to provide market incentives to contractors to register and

1 obtain voluntary certifications, including in energy codes. However, the
2 registry has not so far proved effective for the public, contractors, or OPR.

3 (5) OPR does not have adequate resources to make substantial
4 improvements to the registry. The 2025 Working Group recommended
5 convening a Task Force and appropriating funding to assist OPR.

6 (6) While the RBESs do apply to single-family residences, the
7 Department of Public Service has advised the General Assembly that enabling
8 legislation does not provide clear authority for municipalities to administer and
9 enforce the RBES at the local level. Some municipalities do wish to have that
10 authority.

11 * * * Residential Building Code * * *

12 Sec. 2. ADOPTION OF RESIDENTIAL BUILDING CODE;

13 APPROPRIATION; POSITION

14 (a) The Division of Fire Safety shall adopt a residential building code to
15 take effect on January 1, 2028. The residential building code shall be based on
16 the International Residential Code.

17 (b) The establishment of one permanent, exempt full-time residential
18 building code administrator in the Division of Fire Safety is authorized for
19 fiscal year 2027.

1 Sec. 3. GRANT FUNDING FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENTIAL
2 BUILDING CODE

3 The Commissioner of Public Safety shall seek grant funding to facilitate the
4 development and adoption of a residential building code pursuant to Sec. 2 of
5 this act. The Commissioner shall seek funding from both federal and private
6 grant programs.

7 * * * Task Force * * *

8 Sec. 4. RESIDENTIAL CONTRACTOR REGULATION TASK FORCE;
9 REPORTS

10 (a) Creation. There is created the Residential Contractor Regulation Task
11 Force to improve the existing residential contractor registry and expedite the
12 creation of certain voluntary certifications. The Task Force shall act in an
13 advisory capacity to Office of Professional Regulation.

14 (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following
15 members:

16 (1) one member appointed by the Secretary of State;

17 (2) one member appointed by the Commissioner of Public Safety;

18 (3) one member appointed by the Vermont Builders and Remodelers
19 Association;

20 (4) one member appointed by the American Institute of Architects
21 Vermont;

1 (5) one member appointed by the Secretary of Education;

2 (6) one member appointed by the Chancellor of the Vermont State

3 Colleges System;

4 (7) one member appointed by Vermont Works for Women;

5 (8) one member appointed by ReSOURCE;

6 (9) one member appointed by Efficiency Vermont;

7 (10) one member appointed by the Commissioner of Public Service; and

8 (11) one member appointed by the Secretary of Natural Resources.

9 (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall:

10 (1) address shortcomings in the existing residential contractor registry,

11 including:

12 (A) improving public-facing web presence;

13 (B) identifying cost-efficient marketing strategies to the public and

14 residential contractors;

15 (C) identifying and creating lists of trade specialties; and

16 (D) clarifying the relationship between business-based registrations

17 and individual-based certifications;

18 (2) expedite the creation of voluntary certifications, including

19 identifying, vetting and recommending credentialing entities, with initial

20 certifications in the following or similar subject areas:

- 1 (A) construction site supervisor;
2 (B) basic energy code, both residential and commercial; and
3 (C) high-performance building; and
4 (3) assess whether the regulating entity for residential building
5 contractors should be transferred from the Office of Professional Regulation to
6 the Division of Fire Safety.
7 (d) Assistance.
8 (1) The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical, and legal
9 assistance of the Office of Professional Regulation.
10 (2) The Division of Fire Safety and Department of Public Services shall
11 provide informational assistance and technical expertise to the Task Force
12 regarding issues related to building codes and energy performance.
13 (e) Reports. The Task Force will submit annual reports on or before
14 November 1 beginning in 2026 to the Office of Professional Regulation, the
15 House Committees on Energy and Digital Infrastructure and on General and
16 Housing, and the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Housing and
17 General Affairs and on Natural Resources and Energy with its findings and any
18 recommendations for legislative action.

1 (f) Meetings.

2 (1) The Secretary of State, or designee, shall call the first meeting of the
3 Task Force to occur on or before August 1, 2026, and the Task Force shall then
4 meet at least monthly through July 2027 and then thereafter at least bimonthly.

5 (2) The Task Force shall select a chair from among its members at the
6 first meeting.

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

8 (4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on June 30, 2029.

9 (g) Compensation and reimbursement.

10 (1) Members of the Task Force who are not otherwise compensated by
11 their employer for attendance at meetings shall be entitled to per diem
12 compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A.
13 § 1010.

14 (2) Payments to members of the Task Force authorized under this
15 subsection shall be made from monies appropriated to the Office of
16 Professional Regulation.

17 (i) Appropriation. The sum of \$5,500.00 is appropriated to the Office of
18 Professional Regulation from the General Fund in fiscal year 2026 for per
19 diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses for members of the Task
20 Force.

* * * Contractor Disclosure * * *

Sec. 5. 26 VSA § 5509 is amended to read:

§ 5509. REQUIREMENTS OF REGISTRANTS

* * *

(d) Adverse background. A person registered under this chapter shall, prior to executing a contract pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, provide a client with a written disclosure of any prior criminal convictions, adverse civil judgments, and violations pursuant to section 5510 of this title.

* * * Energy Education * * *

Sec. 6. 3 V.S.A. § 138 is amended to read:

§ 138. REQUIRED EDUCATION FOR SPECIFIED LICENSEES; STATE
ENERGY GOALS

* * *

(b) The Office shall require each of the licensees described in subsection (a) of this section to complete an education module regarding the State's energy goals and how each licensee's specific profession can further those goals.

(1) The education module ~~shall be not more than two hours and~~ shall be required as a condition of initial licensure and each license renewal. The module shall explain how the work of the profession or trade intersects with the energy codes and affects the energy, air flow, and moisture management

1 dynamics of the building as an integrated system and include education on any
2 State or utility incentives relevant to the profession.

3 ~~(A) The education module for initial licensure shall provide general~~
4 ~~information regarding the State's energy goals.~~

5 ~~(B) The education module for license renewal shall provide any~~
6 ~~updates on the State's energy goals and any updates regarding corresponding~~
7 ~~State energy programs applicable to the profession.~~

8 * * *

9 Sec. 7. 20 V.S.A. § 2731 is amended to read:

10 § 2731. RULES; INSPECTIONS; VARIANCES

11 (a) Rules.

12 (1) The Commissioner is authorized to adopt rules regarding the
13 construction of buildings, maintenance and operation of premises, and
14 prevention of fires and removal of fire hazards, and to prescribe standards
15 necessary to protect the public, employees, and property against harm arising
16 out of or likely to arise out of fire.

17 (2)(A) The Commissioner shall require each of the following certificants
18 to complete an education module regarding the State's energy goals and how
19 each certificant's specific profession can further those goals:

20 * * *

1 dynamics of the building as an integrated system and include education on any
2 State or utility incentives relevant to the profession.

3 ~~(A) The education module for initial authorization shall provide~~
4 ~~general information regarding the State's energy goals.~~

5 ~~(B) The education module for authorization renewal shall provide any~~
6 ~~updates on the State's energy goals and any updates regarding corresponding~~
7 ~~State energy programs applicable to the profession.~~

8 * * *

9 Sec. 9. 26 V.S.A. § 905 is amended to read:

10 § 905. APPLICATION; EXAMINATIONS, EDUCATION, AND FEES

11 * * *

12 (g) Pursuant to qualifications and procedures determined by the
13 Commissioner, the Board shall, upon request, waive application fees for
14 qualified military members and military spouses.

15 (1) The education module shall be ~~not more than two hours and shall be~~
16 required as a condition of initial licensure and license renewal. The module
17 shall explain how the work of the profession or trade intersects with the energy
18 codes and affects the energy, air flow, and moisture management dynamics of
19 the building as an integrated system and include education on any State or
20 utility incentives relevant to the profession.

~~(B) The education module for license renewal shall provide any updates on the State's energy goals and any updates regarding corresponding State energy programs applicable to the profession.~~

* * *

§ 2193. APPLICATIONS; EXAMINATIONS, EDUCATION, AND FEES

* * *

(1) The education module shall be ~~not more than two hours and shall be~~ required as a condition of initial licensure and license renewal, except that master and journeyman plumbers who complete this education module shall not be required to complete this education module for any additional specialty license. The module shall explain how the work of the profession or trade intersects with the energy codes and affects the energy, air flow, and moisture

1 management dynamics of the building as an integrated system and include
2 education on any State or utility incentives relevant to the profession.

3 ~~(A) The education module for initial licensure shall provide general~~
4 ~~information regarding the State's energy goals.~~

5 ~~(B) The education module for license renewal shall provide any~~
6 ~~updates on the State's energy goals and any updates regarding corresponding~~
7 ~~State energy programs applicable to the profession.~~

8 * * *

9 Sec. 11. ENERGY PROFESSIONALS REGULATION REPORT

10 The Office of Professional Regulation shall conduct a sunrise process to
11 assess whether Home Energy Rating Systems raters and energy professionals
12 should be professions regulated by the Office. The Office shall also assess
13 whether the regulation of residential building contractors should be transferred
14 from registration to certification or licensure. On or before July 1, 2027, the
15 Office shall submit a report with its recommendations to the House
16 Committees on Energy and Digital Infrastructure and on Government
17 Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Economic
18 Development, Housing, and General Affairs and on Natural Resources and
19 Energy.

* * * Energy Code Enforcement * * *

Sec. 12. 30 V.S.A. § 51 is amended to read:

§ 51. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING ENERGY STANDARDS; STRETCH
CODE

* * *

(j) Municipal enforcement. A municipality may administer and enforce the
RBES within the municipality in compliance with this section.

Sec. 13. 30 V.S.A. § 53 is amended to read:

§ 53. COMMERCIAL BUILDING ENERGY STANDARDS

* * *

(h) Municipal enforcement. A municipality may administer and enforce
the CBES within the municipality in compliance with this section.

* * * Appropriations * * *

Sec. 14. APPROPRIATIONS

(a) In fiscal year 2027, the sum of \$200,000.00 is appropriated from the
Fuel Efficiency Fund to the Department of Public Service for the purpose of
funding, as part of the energy efficiency utilities' 2027–2029 Demand
Resource Plans, consultation and technical support to municipalities that elect
to adopt and enforce the Residential Building Energy Standards and the
Commercial Building Energy Standards.

6 * * * Effective Date * * *

8 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.