

1

H.942

2 An act relating to miscellaneous agricultural subjects

3 The Senate proposes to the House to amend the bill as follows:

4 First: In Sec. 3, 6 V.S.A. chapter 37, in section 681, after subdivision (3),

5 by adding a new subdivision (4) to read as follows and by renumbering the

6 remaining subdivisions to be numerically correct:

7 (4) “Convenience store” means a type of retail establishment that sells a
8 limited number of everyday items such as motor fuel, tobacco products, made-
9 to-order food, snacks, and beverages that serve as a quick, accessible retail
10 option for consumers who typically purchase a small number of products, and
11 that does not offer a sufficient quantity of consumer commodities to make unit
12 pricing as useful to consumers. “Convenience store” does not include a
13 grocery store, drug store, dollar store, or any other type of store. The Secretary
14 has the discretion to determine whether a retail establishment is a convenience
15 store.

16 Second: In Sec. 3, 6 V.S.A. chapter 37, in section 686, by striking out
17 subsection (a) in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (a)
18 to read as follows:

19 (a) The unit price requirements of this chapter shall not apply to ~~sales of~~
20 consumer ~~commodities~~ commodity sales as follows:

1 (1) At a retail store with less than 7,000 square feet of floor space
2 dedicated to the sale of consumer commodities. This ~~exception~~ exemption
3 shall not apply to ~~the sales agencies or instrumentalities~~ retail establishments of
4 a company having two or more sales ~~agencies or instrumentalities~~ locations as
5 parts of that company.

6 (2) ~~For use or consumption on the premises where sold~~ Convenience
7 stores.

8 (3) When different brands or products are commingled in one receptacle
9 for a limited-time one-priced sale.

10 (4) When commodities are individually marked with a clearance or sale
11 tag and are located in a clearance or limited-time sale section of the store.
12 Clearance or limited-time sale sections may be on a shelf or multiple shelves,
13 or in another defined area of the store.

14 (5) When the unit price is identical to the total selling price.

15 (6) When the item falls into one of the following categories:

16 (A) seasonal decorations; or

17 (B) beverages subject to the Federal Alcoholic Administration Act
18 packing and labeling requirements.

19 Third: By striking out Sec. 4, effective date, and its reader assistance
20 heading in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Sec. 4 and reader
21 assistance heading to read as follows:

1 Sec. 4. EQUINE FARMING AND USE VALUE APPRAISAL STUDY;
2 REPORT

3 (a) The Commissioner of Taxes shall study and provide recommendations
4 for including equine farming in the Use Value Appraisal Program. The
5 Commissioner shall submit the recommendations to the House Committees on
6 Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and on Ways and Means and the
7 Senate Committees on Agriculture and on Finance on or before December 15,
8 2026. The Commissioner’s recommendations shall include an analysis of the
9 potential fiscal impact of permitting agricultural land and farm buildings that
10 are used for equine farming to enroll in the Use Value Appraisal Program.

11 (b) As used in this section:

12 (1) “Agricultural land” has the same meaning as in 32 V.S.A. § 3752(1).

13 (2) “Equine farming” means the raising, feeding, or management of four
14 or more equines owned or boarded by a farmer for gain or profit, including
15 training, showing, and providing instruction and lessons in riding, training, and
16 the management of equines.

17 (3) “Farm buildings” has the same meaning as in 32 V.S.A. § 3752(14).

18 (4) “Farmer” has the same meaning as in 32 V.S.A. § 3752(7).

19 Fourth: By adding a reader assistance heading and one new section to be

20 Sec. 5 to read as follows:

1 * * * Community Development Initiatives * * *

2 Sec. 5. 10 V.S.A. § 325m is amended to read:

3 § 325m. RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

4 (a) Definitions. As used in this subchapter:

5 (1) “Rural area” means a county of the State designated as “rural” or
6 “mostly rural” by the U.S. Census Bureau in its most recent decennial census.

7 (2) “Small town” means a town in the State with a population of less
8 than 5,000 at the date of the most recent U.S. Census Bureau decennial census.

9 (3) “Community development initiatives” means priority projects
10 located throughout the State that support agriculture, historic preservation,
11 outdoor recreation, and other critical economic development needs, which may
12 be supported when State resources or staffing assistance is not available.

13 (b) Establishment. There is created the Rural Economic Development
14 Initiative to be administered by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
15 for the purpose of promoting and facilitating community economic
16 development in the small towns and rural areas of the State, and supporting
17 community development initiatives. The Rural Economic Development
18 Initiative shall collaborate with municipalities, businesses, regional
19 development corporations, regional planning commissions, and other
20 appropriate entities to access funding and other assistance available to small

1 towns and businesses primarily in rural areas of the State when existing State
2 resources or staffing assistance is not available.

3 (c) Services; access to funding. The Rural Economic Development
4 Initiative shall provide the following services to small towns and businesses
5 primarily in rural areas:

6 (1) identification of grant or other funding opportunities that facilitate
7 business development, infrastructure development, or other economic
8 development opportunities; or

9 (2) technical assistance in writing grants, accessing other funding,
10 coordination with providers of grants or other funding, strategic planning for
11 the implementation or timing of activities funded by grants or other funding,
12 and compliance with the requirements of grant awards or awards of other
13 funding.

14 (d) Priority. In providing services under this section, the Rural Economic
15 Development Initiative shall give first priority to projects that have received
16 necessary State or municipal approval and that are ready for construction or
17 implementation.

18 (e) Priority projects. The Rural Economic Development Initiative shall
19 ~~seek to assist~~ include the following priority types of projects:

20 (1) milk plants, milk handlers, or dairy products, as those terms are
21 defined in 6 V.S.A. § 2672;

- 1 (2) outdoor recreation and equipment enterprises;
- 2 (3) value-added food and forest products enterprises;
- 3 (4) farm operations, including phosphorus removal technology for farm
- 4 operations;
- 5 (5) coworking or business generator and accelerator spaces;
- 6 (6) commercial composting facilities; and
- 7 (7) restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings in community
- 8 centers.

9 (f) Coordination. In providing services under this section, the Rural
10 Economic Development Initiative shall coordinate with the Secretary of
11 Commerce and Community Development, regional development corporations,
12 and regional planning commissions.

13 (g) Report. Beginning on January 31, 2019, and annually thereafter, the
14 Rural Economic Development Initiative shall submit to the Senate Committees
15 on Agriculture and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
16 and the House Committees on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and
17 on Commerce and Economic Development a report regarding the activities and
18 progress of the Initiative as part of the report of the Vermont Farm and Forest
19 Viability Program. The report shall summarize the Initiative's activities in the
20 preceding year; evaluate the effectiveness of the services provided by the
21 Initiative; provide an accounting of the grants or other funding that the

1 Initiative facilitated or helped secure; and recommend any changes to the
2 program to further economic development in small towns and rural areas of the
3 State.

4 Fifth: By adding a reader assistance heading and one new section to be Sec.
5 6 to read as follows:

6 * * * Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund * * *

7 Sec. 6. 6 V.S.A. § 4643(e) is amended to read:

8 (e) All administratively complete applications shall be evaluated by the
9 Review Board. Within 15 days following receipt of an administratively
10 complete application, the Review Board by majority vote shall recommend to
11 the Secretary whether to issue a payment to the applicant. ~~If the Review Board~~
12 ~~recommends an award under this section, the~~ The Secretary shall issue the
13 ~~award~~ make a final award determination within 15 days following the date of
14 the Review Board's recommendation.

15 Sixth: By adding a reader assistance heading and one new section to be
16 Sec. 7 to read as follows:

17 * * * Effective Date * * *

18 Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

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