

Tuesday 2/17

Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs

S. 328 - An act relating to housing and common interest communities

*Richard Wobby, Executive Vice President, Director of Safety Training and Member Services,
Associated General Contractors of Vermont*

*Larry Moquin, Representative, Vermont Building & Construction Trades Council, Laborers'
Local Union 668*

Matt Glavin, President, Vermont Building and Construction Trades Council

Summary: S.328 proposing adding a 20% density bonus to construction projects that use union labor. There was opposition from Richard Wobby that the vast majority of construction in Vermont is done by non-unions. There was support from the other witnesses arguing that union jobs are more efficient and argued for supporting the benefits of unions.

Committee Response/Sentiment: Mixed sentiment about specific union support. General consensus of finding a solution that promotes high density developments.

Senate Committee on Education

S. 313 - An act relating to transforming Vermont's career technical education system

Jay Ramsey, Director of Workforce Development, Vermont Department of Labor

Zoie Saunders, Secretary, Agency of Education

Ruth Durkee, State Director of Career Technical Education, Agency of Education - Invited

Summary: Data presentation on CTE & comments from DOL. Showed enrollment data trends and interest in specific programs, waitlists, salary information, system pain points, education quality standards, and comparison with other state governance systems.

View presentation here: [AOE CTE Presentation 2/17](#)

Enrollment

- Overall decline since 2022

Enrollment by program

- Highest
 - Architecture & Construction
 - transportation , distribution & logistics.
 - Health sciences
 - Arts, AV tech, & communication
- Lowest
 - Sales, marketing, services
 - Finance
 - IT
 - Education & Training

Waitlists

- Only 5 out of 19 do not have any students on waitlist
- More than half have over 15 students on waitlist
- Highest number of students on waitlist are Essex (37), Stafford (71), Northwest Tech (80)

Instructor Salaries

- Vermont has CTE mean salary that is slightly higher than national mean salary (not average)
- Vermont has higher wages than ME & NH, but much lower than MA and NY
- There is much variance in salaries across the state as they are locally determined
- Salaries are often lower than what instructors could earn in the private market

System Issues

- Financial disincentive for sending schools
- Unequal instructor pay to industry pay
- Economies of scale create equity challenges in opportunities
- Scheduling and crediting misalignment with sending schools

Education Quality Standards (EQS)

- Emphasized AOE's proposition of consistent quality and crediting standards

Governance

- Much of the discussion was debate about the efficacy of the newly proposed governance structure vs. retaining local control in addressing system and quality concerns.

- Only 3 state use region based governance (ME, NH, & VT)
- What the AOE is proposing is mixed regional/district

Other notes

- No data available on rejection

DOL Testimony

- Discussed the importance of CTE in preparing secondary aged students for highly needed jobs in the Vermont's labor market
 - Discussed that CTE and Adult Ed plays a key role because small companies (<20 employees) do not have the capacity or resources to train employees.
 - CTE can fill this gap by providing short term trainings to adult workers
 - Adult CTE provides more skills and credentials than Adult Basic Ed
-

Wednesday 2/18

Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, & General Affairs

S. 327 - An act relating to economic development

Rik Sehgal, Legislative Counsel, Office of Legislative Counsel

Linda Rossi, State Director, Vermont Small Business Development Center

Emma Paradis, Common Good Vermont Co-Director, United Way of Northwest Vermont

Summary: A significant portion of the hearing centered on testimony regarding funding for the Vermont Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and a first-time funding request for the nonprofit sector to mitigate federal funding uncertainty. The Committee is focusing on a more consolidated, study driven approach to business growth while considering fiscal constraints that make first time funding challenging.

SBDC

- Linda Rossi testified on the need for a state funding increase to \$833,000 to meet a one-to-one federal match requirement.
 - In 11 years, state base funding increased by only \$31,000.
 - Last year, SBDC served 445 individual Vermont business owners across 148 towns, helping them secure \$9.7 million in new capital and create/retain over 200 jobs.

Common Good Vermont

- Emma Paradis requested \$295,000 in one-time and \$267,000 base funding to provide assistance for nonprofits facing federal budget cuts
 - The non-profit sector employs a significant amount of Vermont's workers but lacks a way to coordinate responses to federal funding uncertainty.

S.327 Redraft

- The committee consolidated sections 7 and 8 into a Business Growth and Development Study to be conducted by the Department of Economic Development.
 - The purpose of study is to identify resources, clearly define the four stages of business development, and identify gaps in capital accessibility and succession.

Thursday 2/19

Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, & General Affairs

S. 173 - An act relating to workers' compensation and the Vermont Labor Relations Board

Sophie Zdatny, Legislative Counsel, Office of Legislative Counsel - Invited

Dirk Anderson, Director of Workers' Compensation and Safety, Department of Labor

Kelly Massicotte, Attorney, Vermont Association for Justice

Jamie Feehan, Government Relations Director, Primmer

Summary: S.173 eliminates mandatory screening process for vocational rehab (VR) services and creates a working group to meet over the summer and develop recommendations to improve the vocation rehabilitation system using 7 guiding questions.

Committee Sentiment on S.173

- Some hesitation from Senator Chittenden for removing the screening process entirely. Is it safe(cost effective) to assume that everyone needs VR?
- **Specific concern for the house to address: Will removing the screening process actually save money in the system or will it lead more people to use more expensive VR services then they need?**
 - Counter argument: Full elimination of screening decreases ambiguity in how much VR may be necessary and ultimately ends up preventing people from getting services they need.

- Not enough people are getting VR who need it. That is a bigger issue than what may be caused by the removal of the process.
- Screening can be a “stall tactic” to prevent VR services.
- Overall committee support for removing screening completely.

S. 230 - An act relating to flexible working arrangements

Sophie Zdatny, Legislative Counsel, Office of Legislative Counsel

Charlie Gliserman, Director of Policy, Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence

Megan Sullivan, Vice President of Government Affairs, Vermont Chamber of Commerce

Emily Adams, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office

Summary: S.230 adds full-time teachers to Family and Medical Leave Act, repealing a provision allowing mandatory retirement for tenured faculty at age 70, and aligning the definition of crime victim to other statutes.

Committee Sentiment on S.230

- The committee will not be moving ahead with mandating flexible overtime for all employers.
- Some concern from the Committee regarding self-attestation of being the qualification for crime victim status.
 - Some conflict in the committee here noting that false self-attestation is unlikely and there are a low number of these cases anyway.
- Seeking further input from employers on this debate. Will discuss next Thursday.

