Justification to Repeal the Renewable Energy Standard

Whereas, prior to the adoption of laws that mandated subsidies for solar developers, Vermont Energy Planning required, among other things, "specific strategies for reducing electric rates to the greatest extent possible in Vermont over the most immediate six-year period, for the next succeeding six-year period, and long-term sustainable strategies for achieving and maintaining the lowest possible electric rates over the full 20-year planning horizon consistent with the goal of maintaining a financially stable electric utility industry in Vermont;

And whereas, this law is still in place;

And whereas, the recent Renewable Energy Standard (Act 179), which requires utilities to either generate or purchase and retire sufficient Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to cover 100% of all electrical energy consumed by 2035 so as to be counted as "renewable" according to the Vermont RES definition, and the purchase of those credits gets passed on to the consumers;

And whereas in 2023 alone \$15M of RECs were purchased on the market to reclassify non-renewable sourced energy consumed in VT and that cost was passed on to the consumers;

And whereas the RES Tier 2 requires utility companies to accept net-metering systems and retire the associated RECs.

And whereas according to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), "net-metering remains one of the highest-cost renewable resources. Based on data collected from each utility, the cost of net-metering in 2021 was more than \$49 million higher than the market value of the products provided, resulting in an inequitable cost-shift from participating net-metering customers to nonparticipating customers who tend to be the Vermonters who can least afford it;

And whereas, if the utilities fail to achieve 100% renewable energy compliance they must pay a non-compliance penalty that is double the cost per MW of the wholesale electricity that could be obtained from the grid and the current Alternative Compliance Payment, which are passed on to consumers.

And whereas, in January 2025, Vermont's electric rates were 50% higher than the median rate in the US. Vermont is competitive with the other New England states because they all have the same kind of RES laws that Vermont has, which is driving up their prices and we're all on the same ISO-NE grid. All 6 New England states are in the top 10 electric rate states;

And whereas, as part of their own Comprehensive Energy Plan, the Dept of Public Service Community Engagement found that Vermonters prioritized affordability and reliability over renewable energy, thereby reinforcing Vermonters' desire to adhere to the least cost requirement of the law;

And whereas, the Renewable Energy Standard has prioritized high cost renewable energy over more affordable sources;

And whereas, Vermonters, as federal taxpayers, contribute a proportional per capita share of the annual federal expenditures for climate change mitigation, which in 2024 exceeded \$24 billion. Spending more for state level programs makes Vermonters the victims of an inequitable system where they are required to bear more of the burden for climate change mitigation than their fellow US citizens in states that do not impose such programs;

And whereas, the Department of Public Service (DPS) argued against a "100% Renewable Energy Standard" in favor of a "100% Clean Energy Standard" that allowed inclusion of very large Canadian hydro power and nuclear power;

And whereas, the DPS Commissioner (Chris Recchia) stated that renewable energy policies were not about emissions reductions, saying "I disagree with the characterization that the reason we're doing this is to try and improve global warming.... primarily why we're doing it is to have stable energy pricing and really secure energy resources that are renewable in our state." (VT Watchdog, 10/23/15);

And whereas, the Renewable Energy Standard requires 100% of electricity to be generated with solar, wind or existing hydro sources or purchase Renewable Energy Credits to offset that which isn't. It is physically impossible to supply all energy with solar and wind due to the absence of solar energy at night, the sporadic nature of wind energy, and, the speculative future availability of cost-effective grid scale storage to regulate the intermittent nature of solar and wind generation. Wind turbines in VT have a capacity factor of 35%, meaning a turbine is expected to produce only 35% of its nameplate capacity on average over time, but it achieves that by generating varying amounts of electricity - from zero at times of no wind to 100% when wind is optimal. Solar panels only work during the day when the sun is shining and have an annual capacity factor of 15%, generating more on sunny days and less on cloudy days but nothing for long periods of no sun every day;

And whereas, battery technology is currently both prohibitively expensive and unreliable. A significant excess of wind, solar or both is needed to charge batteries. To satisfy Vermont's average 600MW electrical demand for 1 day of overcast calm weather would require a bank of 144,000 Tesla 100Kwh batteries at \$14,500 each costing a total of \$2.1B. And that doesn't come close to getting us through a Vermont winter. That's just for one day and doesn't include the infrastructure to connect them to the grid.

And whereas, a Gas-Fired Electric Plant: Using a modern combined cycle gas turbine (CCGT) design, would cost in the range of \$700M to \$1.2B for a 900 MW facility, about a ¹/₃ of the cost of one day's worth of batteries. This would easily and quickly satisfy all of Vermont's energy needs at relatively low emission rates and low fuel cost when wind and solar are absent and easily throttle back when they are. Gas-fired plants have the significant advantage of rapid construction, lower capital intensity, and proven reliability, which is why they continue to empower human progress in a cost-effective way

And whereas, according to Dave Blittersdorf of All-Earth Renewables, to meet the requirements of the Renewable Energy Standard would require installing 6000 MW of solar and 2000 MW of wind generation in Vermont. This would blanket between 30,000 and 90,000 acres of Vermont landscape depending on the type and size of panels. The 2000 MW of wind turbines on mountain ridges, assuming 3 MW turbines spaced at 1/3 of a mile apart would cover 222 miles of otherwise pristine Vermont Green Mountain ridgelines.

And whereas, the Department of Public Service (DPS) argued at the time against policies that were politically motivated;

And whereas, the 100% Renewable Energy Standard (Act 179) was passed without bipartisan support and over the veto of the Governor;

And whereas, legislators who have championed these bills acknowledge that nothing Vermont does will make a difference to either the global climate or to Vermont's weather patterns. When the then co-chair of House Energy and Technology reported S.5, the Clean Heat Standard to the House she said the following, "We have heard folks say that stopping all of Vermont's emissions would do nothing to change the weather patterns that we are seeing with climate change. With apologies to my environmental friends, I mostly agree.";

And whereas, departing Dept of Public Service Commissioner June Tierney, in her farewell address to the Climate Council said the following, "With all due respect, as someone who lost her home in Irene, I think the emphasis of this council is completely misdirected. We need to be thinking about how we use our resources and we should be directing those at resiliency in my opinion and also frankly in recovery because we can think large thoughts about remission reductions.....our emissions at the end of the day and our reductions of them may be morally just and therefore compelling but it is a compulsion to focus on them when the immediate needs of keeping people safe, directly knowing that we've got storms coming, are being sidelined and neglected in order to pursue those measures. And by that I mean every cent that goes into policies that are directed toward [CO2] reductions when we need to be directing every cent towards hardening our systems and helping people to survive here. I would urge this council to rethink where it's putting its intellectual capital.... I cannot overemphasize how wrong I think what it is we are doing, those are my parting words to the council.";

And whereas, there is no mistaking the 2024 election results and voters' demand for affordability and an end to programs that have high costs but no benefit. Such is the case with the Renewable Energy Standard;

And lastly whereas, the solar company, SunCommon, that was created to take advantage of the subsidies provided by these laws, and in fact received the largest subsidy in the state, was sold by its founders for \$40 million, and is now in bankruptcy with whistleblower allegations of defrauding taxpayers, exemplifies the reality that the few wealthy are benefiting from this legislation at the expense of the rest of us.