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VERMONT
CONSERVATION
VOTERS



**Testimony to House Committee on
Energy & Digital Infrastructure
April 1, 2025**

**Dan Fingas, Vermont Conservation Voters
Lauren Hierl, Vermont Natural Resources Council**



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The Environmental Common Agenda is a project of Vermont Conservation Voters (VCV).

VCV is the non-partisan political action arm of Vermont's environmental community. Since 1982, our mission has been to defend and strengthen the laws that safeguard our environment. We work to elect environmentally responsible candidates. We then hold legislators accountable for the decisions they make affecting our air, water, land, wildlife, communities, and health.

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MISSION

Through research, education, collaboration and advocacy, VNRC protects and enhances Vermont's natural environments, vibrant communities, productive working landscapes, rural character and unique sense of place, and prepares the state for future challenges and opportunities.



Vermont's 2025 Environmental Common Agenda

**Your guide to this year's top
legislative priorities for the environment**

2025 Environmental Common Agenda Partners



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Vermont's 2025 Environmental Common Agenda

We are calling on Vermont lawmakers to:

- ✓ Watchdog and invest in **successful implementation of the historic climate and environmental laws** passed in recent years, and oppose any efforts to weaken environmental protections.
- ✓ **Build climate resilience by better protecting our lands and waters**, by better regulating farm pollution and chloride, and **better protecting our biodiversity and endangered species**.
- ✓ **Invest in affordable housing** that is centered on smart growth principles.
- ✓ **Cut climate pollution** and ensure an **accessible, affordable transition to clean energy**:
 - **Fund Vermont's electric vehicle incentives** and **public transit** programs.
 - Identify a regulatory approach that **helps all Vermonters transition to clean heating systems**.
 - **Make solar energy more accessible** for Vermonters.
- ✓ Foster healthy communities and safeguard our democracy:
 - Protect public health by **reducing people's exposure to toxic PFAS chemicals** and **reduce plastic pollution**.
 - Advance policies and programs that **support our local farms** and ensure **all Vermonters are food secure**.
 - **Safeguard Vermont's democracy** by passing a state Voting Rights Act, ranked choice voting, and banning corporate contributions.

For more information on clean energy initiatives, contact these experts at partner organizations:

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Build Climate Resilience by Protecting the Health of Our Waters and Lands

There has been significant progress in recent years to build climate resilience and conserve critical habitats and natural resources in Vermont with the passage of the Flood Safety Act (Act 121) and legislation to adopt a goal of conserving 30% of our lands by 2030 and 50% by 2050 (Act 59). We must ensure these laws are implemented in an effective and timely manner.

- As we fall behind on meeting our clean water targets, how we regulate our farms is an important factor. Under the current system, both the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (AAFV) regulate water pollution on farms. We are calling on lawmakers to shift clear authority to ANR to properly regulate water pollution on farms
- We are calling on lawmakers to pass a Chloride Reduction Program that will require municipalities to employ practices that will reduce the amount of salt used on our roads.
- We are calling on lawmakers to make strategic improvements to our endangered species law to enhance the overall ability of species to thrive in our state, and to examine ways to boost the recovery of listed species and prevent other species from declining.

Build Climate Resilience by Protecting the Health of Our Waters and Lands

Proposed legislative solutions:

- ✓ **Ensure clean and healthy lakes, rivers, ponds and streams** by improving the regulation of water pollution on farms, and reducing chloride pollution.
- ✓ **Better protect biodiversity** by funding existing conservation programs and making strategic updates to Vermont's Threatened and Endangered Species Law.

Support Housing and Conservation Policies Centered in Smart Growth Principles

- With last biennium's updates to Act 250, Vermont has made huge strides toward building more affordable, climate resilient housing for current and future Vermonters. Through this smart growth approach, we can simultaneously protect our vital farms, forests, and waters.
- It is imperative that Vermont remains committed to the progress made with the passage of the HOME Act (Act 47) in 2023 and the Act 250 land use reform in 2024 (Act 181). We must give these laws time to be implemented effectively, and we must allow towns to comply with the new zoning and planning requirements. We are already seeing successes coming from these smart growth housing bills.



Support Housing and Conservation Policies Centered in Smart Growth Principles

Proposed legislative solutions:

- ✓ **Maintain the balanced approach** achieved in last year's Act 250 and land use modernization law (Act 181) and the 2023 HOME Act (Act 47).
- ✓ **Promote housing that is affordable for all** by investing in multi-unit, mixed-use, and infill development located in well-planned, walkable areas.
- ✓ **Fully fund** the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board at statutory levels, increase funding and expand eligibility for Downtown and Village Center tax credits, and increase support for the Land Access and Opportunity Board, Regional Planning Commissions, and Natural Resources Conservation Districts.
- ✓ **Pass a rental registry** to ensure a healthy and safe housing stock for Vermont renters and support weatherization and energy efficiency efforts across the state.

Safeguard Vermonters' Health and Democracy

Proposed legislative solutions:

- ✓ Further restrict consumer products containing harmful PFAS “forever” chemicals.
- ✓ Create a climate impact recovery fund for farms and ensure full funding of Vermont’s local food security programs: Crop Cash and Farm Share.
- ✓ Ensure a healthy democracy by advancing Ranked Choice Voting, banning corporate contributions in campaigns, and passing a Voting Rights Act for Vermont.

Continue to Advance Equitable and Affordable Climate Solutions

- Currently, many Vermonters spend a disproportionate amount of their income on heating, transportation, and electricity. Fossil fuels like oil, gas, and propane are expensive and part of a volatile global market. Clean energy can be produced locally, and is an affordable and healthier solution for our communities.
- In 2020, President Trump formally withdrew the United States from the international Paris Agreement on climate change. At the time, Governor Scott affirmed our commitment to climate action, and the legislature enacted the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA). As the impacts of the climate crisis continue to grow, and the incoming federal administration pledges to roll back progress, we cannot back down from these commitments.
- We have the opportunity to help all Vermonters — particularly those with low to moderate incomes — transition to affordable and accessible clean energy solutions. By transitioning to clean energy, we can build our energy independence, improve public health, and create valuable local jobs that will benefit Vermonters and our environment.

Continue to Advance Equitable and Affordable Climate Solutions

Proposed legislative solutions:

- ✓ **Maintain our commitment to the Global Warming Solutions Act.**
- ✓ **Fund Clean Transportation programs**, including public transit, bike and pedestrian programs, and electric vehicle incentives.
- ✓ **Help all Vermonters access clean and affordable heating solutions** by advancing a regulatory framework.
- ✓ **Increase Vermonters' access to solar energy** by reauthorizing the Standard Offer Program.



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