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H.679

Introduced by Representatives Waszazak of Barre City and Galfetti of Barre
Town

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Internal security and public safety; highways; conservation and
development; all-hazards; emergency response; floods

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the
Division of Emergency Management to provide financial assistance to flood-
impacted communities, establish a Voluntary Buyout Program and
Homeowner Assistance Program for flood-prone or flood-impacted properties,
and provide technical and grant application assistance to municipalities
through two new liaison positions added to the Division. This bill also
proposes to authorize the Agency of Transportation to use the Municipal
Mitigation Assistance Program to assist rural and flood-prone municipalities
with infrastructure upgrades and require the Agency to provide technical and
design assistance for certain infrastructure projects. This bill also requires the
Agency of Natural Resources to establish programs to implement and improve
stream flow and river corridor naturalization projects.

20 An act relating to emergency management in flood-prone municipalities

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

2 Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 3b is added to read:

3 § 3b. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR IMPACTED MUNICIPALITIES

4 (a) A municipality that has been impacted by an all-hazard flooding event
5 shall be eligible for financial assistance from the Division of Emergency
6 Management to cover expenses incurred due to the all-hazard while awaiting
7 reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, including:

8 (1) emergency response costs;

9 (2) temporary housing and shelter services; and

10 (3) local infrastructure repairs that are necessary to maintain public
11 safety.

12 (b) A municipality that has been impacted by an all-hazard flooding event
13 shall be eligible for State funding to cover all of the local match requirements
14 required by federal law or the Federal Emergency Management Agency for
15 flood recovery and assistance.

16 Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 52 is added to read:

17 § 52. FLOOD-PRONE PROPERTIES; ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

18 (a) Voluntary Buyout Program. The Division of Emergency Management
19 and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall establish
20 and maintain the Voluntary Buyout Program for flood-prone properties. The
21 Program shall allow a municipality, at the request of the owner of a flood-

1 prone property, to apply for funding to cover the purchase price of the
2 property. The purchase price shall be the full fair market value of the flood-
3 prone property.

4 (b) Homeowner Assistance Program. The Division of Emergency
5 Management and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development
6 shall establish and maintain the Homeowner Assistance Program to provide
7 financial support to the owners of residential properties for:

8 (1) construction projects to elevate a residential building in flood-prone
9 areas to mitigate the risk of future damage;

10 (2) relocation to other permanent housing in response to flood damage;
11 and

12 (3) the rebuilding of a residential building using flood-resilient materials
13 or designs, including floodproof foundations and water-resistant construction.

14 Sec. 3. 19 V.S.A. § 306 is amended to read:

15 § 306. APPROPRIATION; STATE AID FOR TOWN HIGHWAYS

16 * * *

17 (i) Municipal Mitigation Assistance Program.

18 (1) The Agency shall administer the Municipal Mitigation Assistance
19 Program. Through the Program, the Agency shall:

1 (a) Design of stormwater management systems. The Agency shall provide
2 technical assistance to municipalities for the design of upgrades for stormwater
3 management systems affecting town highways, including the design of larger
4 culverts, reinforced ditches, drainage systems, and any other stormwater
5 management system that is capable of managing increased water flow due to
6 severe weather events.

7 (b) Technical assistance for specialized improvements. The Agency shall
8 provide technical assistance to municipalities for specialized flood resiliency
9 projects, including the alteration of bridges in flood-prone areas and the
10 removal of dams that pose a significant risk to surrounding communities.

11 (c) Technical assistance for town highway improvements. The Agency
12 shall offer technical assistance to municipalities for:

13 (1) roadwork and infrastructure adaptations for severe weather events;
14 and

15 (2) identifying and applying for federal, State, and regional grants to
16 support local infrastructure projects.

17 (d) Asset Management System. The Agency shall create and maintain the
18 Asset Management System to track:

19 (1) availability of equipment that may be used to respond to an all-
20 hazard flood event, including vehicles, water pumps, and sandbags;

1 (2) equipment operators and personnel who are trained for disaster
2 management and response; and

3 (3) locations of critical resources for efficient deployment of those
4 resources during an emergency.

5 (e) Provision of flood response fleet vehicles. The Agency shall procure
6 and maintain a fleet of heavy machinery, including vector trucks, necessary to
7 assist municipalities with debris removal from flood-impacted areas and the
8 maintenance of stormwater and flood mitigation systems to prevent future
9 damage. The fleet of heavy machinery shall be stored and maintained
10 regionally throughout the State.

11 Sec. 5. 10 V.S.A. § 1007 is added to read:

12 § 1007. AGENCY DUTIES; FLOOD RESILIENCY AND STREAM FLOW
13 PROJECTS

14 The Agency of Natural Resources shall establish a program to implement
15 and improve stream flow projects in response to flood risks, including:

16 (1) the clearing debris from surface waters to prevent the blockage of
17 waterways, flood plains, or other flood resiliency systems;

18 (2) the restoration of degraded flood-retention systems and reservoirs to
19 their original specifications;

- 1 (3) the alteration of rivers or river beds to mitigate flood risk; and
2 (4) the permitting of alternative, cost-effective flood mitigation solutions
3 to allow for expedited project implementation.

4 Sec. 6. 10 V.S.A. § 1429 is added to read:

5 § 1429. AGENCY DUTIES; FLOOD RESILIENCY AND RIVER
6 CORRIDOR NATURALIZATION PROJECTS

7 The Agency of Natural Resources shall establish a program to designate
8 areas at risk of severe flooding and create floodways within portions of those
9 designated areas to mitigate the damage caused by severe flooding. Through
10 the program, the Agency shall also support riverbank naturalization projects to
11 enhance ecological resilience, reduce erosion, and improve flood mitigation
12 within designated areas.

13 Sec. 7. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; POSITIONS;
14 APPROPRIATION

15 (a) The following positions are created in the Division of Emergency
16 Management:

17 (1) one full-time, exempt Municipal Grant Liaison; and

18 (2) one full-time, exempt Flood Mitigation Technician.

19 (b) The Municipal Grant Liaison shall be dedicated to grant research, grant
20 applications support, coordination between municipal corporations and the
21 Federal Emergency Management Agency, and direct assistance to municipal

1 corporations for the acquisition of grants and other funding sources for flood
2 relief and recovery efforts. The Flood Mitigation Technician shall be
3 dedicated to providing or supporting engineering analyses for flood mitigation
4 projects, oversight of municipal flood remediation and recovery projects, and
5 managing technical assistance to municipal corporations for flood recovery.

6 Sec. 8. APPROPRIATIONS

7 In fiscal year 2027, the following sums are appropriated to the Department
8 of Public Safety from the General Fund:

9 (1) \$225,000.00 to support the two positions created in Sec. 7 of this act;

10 and

11 (2) \$5,000,000.00 to be used by Vermont Emergency Management for
12 general flood recovery projects in Essex County and Orleans County, including
13 support for municipal recovery, infrastructure, or assistance of individuals.

14 Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATE

15 This act shall take effect on passage.