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S.85

Introduced by Senators Pearson, Balint, Mullin, Starr, and Westman

Referred to Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General
Affairs

Date: February 16, 2017

Subject: Commerce and trade; economic development; government operations

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to direct the
Secretary of State and government partners to design a system to simplify
interactions with small businesses and Vermonters starting new businesses.

An act relating to simplifying government for small businesses

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

~~Sec. 1. SIMPLIFYING GOVERNMENT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES~~

~~(a) The Secretary of State, in collaboration with the Department of Labor,
the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Department of
Taxes, and other stakeholders, shall design a system that:~~

~~(1) enhances the State's website to simplify registration and offer a clear
compilation of State permitting rules;~~

~~(2) simplifies the mechanism for making payments to the State by
allowing a person to pay amounts he or she owes to the State for taxes, fees, or~~

1 ~~other charges to a single recipient within government;~~

2 ~~(3) simplifies annual filing requirements by allowing a person to make a~~
3 ~~single filing to a single recipient within government and simply to check a box~~
4 ~~if nothing substantive has changed from the prior year; and~~

5 ~~(4) provides more direct support to small businesses, whether by~~
6 ~~designating an existing position or creating a new position within either the~~
7 ~~Office of the Secretary of State or another government entity, to offer technical~~
8 ~~guidance, information, and other support to persons who are forming or~~
9 ~~operating a small business.~~

10 ~~(b) The Secretary of State shall submit his or her proposal to the General~~
11 ~~Assembly on or before December 15, 2017.~~

12 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

13 ~~This act shall take effect on passage.~~

~~Sec. 1. SIMPLIFYING GOVERNMENT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES~~

~~*(a) The Secretary of State, in collaboration with the Department of Labor,*~~
~~*the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Department of*~~
~~*Taxes, the Agency of Digital Services, and other stakeholders, shall review and*~~
~~*consider the necessary procedural and substantive steps and shall submit to*~~
~~*the General Assembly on or before December 15, 2018, a design proposal,*~~
~~*including a timeline, for an easily navigable portal for businesses,*~~
~~*entrepreneurs, and citizens to access information about starting and operating*~~
~~*a business in Vermont, with an emphasis on small business, and to enable*~~
~~*registration with all required State entities with a single login without*~~
~~*duplicating data entry.*~~

~~*(b) The Secretary shall consider and integrate to the extent feasible*~~
~~*features that:*~~

~~*(1) enhance the State's website to simplify registration and offer a clear*~~
~~*compilation of State permitting rules;*~~

(2) simplify the mechanism for making payments to the State, by allowing a person to pay amounts he or she owes to the State for taxes, fees, or other charges, to a single recipient within government;

(3) simplify annual filing requirements by allowing a person to make a single filing to a single recipient within government and simply to check a box if nothing substantive has changed from the prior year; and

(4) provide mentoring, assistance with navigating the process, and more direct support to small businesses, whether by designating an existing position or creating a new position within either the Office of the Secretary of State or another government entity, and to offer technical guidance, information, and other support to persons who are forming or operating a small business;

(5) after registration, guide the user through secondary requirements and send follow-up e-mail with links to additional services, frequently asked questions, and a point of contact to discuss questions or explore any assistance needed;

(6) provide guidance and links to State, partner organization, and federal programs and initiatives;

(7) provide links to other Vermont-based businesses of interest; and

(8) create a tool set for ongoing communication and updates, including digital channels such as e-mail, social media, and other communications.

Sec. 2. 11 V.S.A. § 1625a is added to read:

§ 1625a. ONE-STOP WEB PORTAL SURCHARGE

(a) In addition to the fee imposed on a business organization at the time of filing its annual report pursuant to the applicable section of this title or Titles IIA-IIC of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, the Secretary of State shall collect a surcharge in the amount of \$2.00, which the Secretary shall maintain in a segregated account and use for the purpose of developing and implementing a one-stop navigable portal for businesses, entrepreneurs, and citizens to access information about starting a business in Vermont and to provide ongoing support to businesses interfacing with State government.

(b) The Secretary shall focus the services available pursuant to this section primarily on businesses with fewer than 20 employees.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

Sec. 1. SIMPLIFYING GOVERNMENT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

(a) The Secretary of State shall serve as the chair of a steering committee,

composed of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, and the Secretary of Digital Services or their designees.

(b) The Secretary of State, in collaboration with the steering committee, and in collaboration with other State agencies and departments and interested stakeholders as necessary, shall:

(1) review and consider the necessary procedural and substantive steps to enhance the Secretary of State's one-stop business portal for businesses, entrepreneurs, and citizens to provide information about starting and operating a business in Vermont; and

(2) submit on or before December 15, 2018:

(A) a design proposal that includes a project scope, timeline, roadmap, and cost projections; and

(B) any statutory or regulatory changes needed to implement the proposal.

(c) The steering committee shall evaluate the cost and efficacy, and integrate into the current one-stop portal to the extent feasible, features that:

(1) enhance State websites to simplify registrations and provide a clear compilation of other State business requirements, including permits and licenses;

(2) simplify the mechanism for making payments to the State by allowing a person to pay amounts he or she owes to the State for taxes, fees, or other charges to a single recipient within State government;

(3) simplify annual filing requirements by allowing a person to make a single filing to a single recipient within State government and check a box if nothing substantive has changed from the prior year;

(4) provide guidance, assistance with navigation, and other support to persons who are forming or operating a small business;

(5) after registration, provide information about additional and ongoing State requirements and a point of contact to discuss questions or explore any assistance needed;

(6) provide guidance and information about State and federal programs and initiatives, as well as State partner organizations and Vermont-based businesses of interest; and

(7) map communication channels for project updates, including digital channels such as e-mail, social media, and other communications.

(d) State agencies and departments shall provide assistance to the steering committee upon its request.

(e) The steering committee shall focus its review on providing services through the one-stop business portal primarily for the benefit of businesses with 20 or fewer employees.

(f) The Agency of Digital Services shall assign a project manager or business analyst to report directly to the Secretary of State to assist with the implementation of this act through June 30, 2019 for the purpose of developing and implementing a one-stop navigable portal for businesses, entrepreneurs, and citizens to access information about starting a business in Vermont, and to provide ongoing support to businesses interfacing with State government.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on passage, except that Sec. 1(f) shall take effect on July 1, 2018.