

February 2023 Climate Legislation Summary
By Richard Butz, VT IPL Board Member

Our *Great Little State* legislature is continuing to work on important climate change legislation that will enable us to edge closer to sustainability. Here is a summary of some of what's on the table this session. We'll provide updates on what you can do to help get these bills across the finish line.

Important Climate Requests of Our Representatives

- Significantly increase the amount of sustainable energy, particularly solar and wind, that we produce in Vermont and the New England mix. And we need to increase energy storage.
- Keep electric rates affordable for all Vermonters with particular emphasis on supporting low income and marginalized people. As we electrify the increased demand will add pressure on prices.
- Additional large hydropower, biofuels, biomass, and so-called renewable natural gas have no place in our energy mix. They are expensive to produce, add significant carbon and methane emissions, and harm people in marginalized and indigenous communities.
- Biofuels can displace food crops globally, raising prices and affecting availability for stressed populations, leading to widespread hunger and even starvation.

Specific Bills to Watch and about which to Contact Your Legislators

Note: titles may change in final drafts.

A Renewable Energy Standard (RES) that:

- requires that all new energy comes from solar and wind produced in Vermont & New England;
- does not depend on any new Hydro Quebec power. As HQ hydropower is maxed out, any new energy will come from Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) that are actually produced by fossil fuels;
- does not rely on REC's that are actually exchanged for fossil fuels shipped to Vermont.

H.242 Thermal Networks Act

- provides a way to implement and scale geothermal and other thermal energy systems that are affordable, safe, healthy, reliable, resilient, and secure;
- encourages utilities, businesses, and co-ops to become network geothermal installers, providing secure jobs for gas and oil heating workers;

S.5 The Affordable Heat Act that:

- incentivizes weatherization and installation of electric heat pumps and geothermal systems;
- depends on accurate lifecycle accounting - all aspects of carbon emissions are counted from drilling to burner tip and all along the way;
- progressively reduces dependence on liquid biofuels, biomass, or so-called renewable natural gas.