

Press Release

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, January 12, 2022

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First-Ever Vermont Rural Omnibus Bill Introduced Tri-Partisan Legislators Representing the Rural Caucus Jointly Sponsor Bill to Support Rural Economic Development

Montpelier, VT - The Vermont House of Representatives Rural Economic Development Working Group (ReDWG), also known as the Rural Caucus, will hold a press conference on Thursday, January 13th at noon to discuss the first-ever Rural Economic Development Omnibus Bill [H.581](#) to be introduced in the House with tri-partisan support.

The historic omnibus bill was created from testimony gathered in the field over the Summer and Fall as Rural Caucus members traveled the state learning about the various aspects of Vermont's forest economy from local practitioners. Additional proposals received from a November public hearing and member experiences were also included.

Working lands are central to Vermont's identity. Vermont is the 4th most forested state with 4.5 million acres of forest covering a whopping 75 percent of the landscape. The bill reflects the priorities of Vermonters who work the land and seeks to build resilience in the face of global climate change, digitalization of the economy and demographic shifts. The bill proposes practical solutions that find broad support across party lines in the Statehouse.

In order to support existing and potential forest-based businesses that are working to sustainably manage Vermont's forestland, the bill recommends the legislature establish the Vermont Forest Future program to stabilize and strengthen Vermont's forest economy over 10 years, proposes a program to support municipal fuel switching including modern wood heat, updates transportation regulations related to forestry, modernizes Act 250 for forest-based enterprises, recreational trails, master permitting for rural villages and towns, clarifies accessory on farm business exemptions, promote residential development and wastewater and sewer in Village Centers. These practical changes will make a difference to many communities across Vermont.

Sponsors of the bill:

Matt Birong (D), Erin McGuire Brady (D), Elizabeth Burrows (D), Sara Coffey (D), Peter Conlon (D), Martha Feltus (R), Leslie Goldman (D), James Gregoire (R), James Harrison (R), Stephanie Jerome (D), Charlie Kimbell (D), Paul Lefebvre (I), Logan Nicoll (D), Terry Norris (I), Daniel Noyes (D), Kelly Pajala (I), Henry Pearl (D), Lucy Rogers (D), Carl Rosenquist (R), Patrick

Seymour (R), Laura Sibilia (I), Katherine Sims (D), Gabrielle Stebbins (D), Heather Surprenant (P), Kirk White (D/P), Theresa Wood (D), David Yacovone (D), Mike Yantachka (D)

About the Rural Economic Working Group

The Rural Economic Working Group (REDWnG) is a Tri-partisan caucus made up of over 50 members of the Vermont House of Representatives, who share a goal of advancing policy that strengthens and supports Vermont's rural communities & economy.

Over the years, the group has worked to support initiatives to expand access to affordable broadband, ensure equitable funding for Vermont's rural schools, and invest in Vermont's farm and forest economies. The group values civil discourse, local wisdom, and working across party lines for a better future for Vermont. This year, the Vermont Council on Rural Development is providing some basic administrative support for the caucus, given the group's non-partisan mission of supporting Vermont's rural communities. Learn more at:

<https://sites.google.com/vtrural.org/redwng/>

Press Conference 1/13/22 ZOOM Details

Topic: REDWnG Omnibus Bill Press Conference

Time: Jan 13, 2022 12:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://legislature-vermont-gov.zoom.us/j/96311180580?pwd=MIA2OEp0WEk2ajJ3WVZzL3N1ZytXQT09>

Meeting ID: 963 1118 0580

Passcode: 968336

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