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H.292

Introduced by Representatives Cina of Burlington, Colburn of Burlington,
Cordes of Lincoln, Hooper of Randolph, Masland of Thetford,
Mulvaney-Stanak of Burlington, Nicoll of Ludlow, Patt of
Worcester, Sheldon of Middlebury, Small of Winooski,
Surprenant of Barnard, Toleno of Brattleboro, Vyhovsky of
Essex, White of Bethel, and White of Hartford

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Government; economic development; climate change; regenerative
economy

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the
State to develop a plan for a regenerative economy by 2024.

An act relating to a regenerative economy

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

Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to build a regenerative
economy. A regenerative economy is an economic system that works to
regenerate natural and human resources. The world is facing climate
emergencies, mass extinction, and ecological collapse as a consequence of

1 human economic activity over the past 400 years. These activities did not
2 account for the full impact of the economy on the environment and on society.
3 In order to survive these changes, Vermont must build resiliency and create a
4 roadmap through a just transition from an extractive economy to a new
5 economy that repairs and restores the Earth.

6 (b) In developing a regenerative economy, Vermont will engage people in
7 their local communities to solve problems and find ways to combine solutions
8 for existing statutory goals, such as universal recycling, greenhouse gas
9 reduction, and wastewater management. Present and future economic
10 development should always account for social equity and environmental
11 protection and the ecological and social well-being of all people and all life.

12 (c) A regenerative economy will transition away from practices that engage
13 in extraction of natural resources and will instead advance ecological
14 restoration and protect biodiversity by both protecting and regenerating natural
15 resources. The dynamics of the workforce and the workplace will shift from
16 exploitation to cooperation as human potential is nurtured and human
17 resources are regenerated. By re-localizing most production and consumption,
18 an economy will be built that can withstand and adapt to environmental, social,
19 and technological changes.

20 (d) Economic control should be rooted in local communities, and people
21 should have increased power over the decisions that affect their lives. The

1 regenerative economy should retain and restore cultures and traditions, while
2 recognizing that some cultural practices have been harmful and may need to
3 adapt for the greater good. There will not be economic justice without racial
4 justice and social equity, and the new economy must recognize and rectify the
5 intersection of systemized oppressions. Vermont must build the foundation of
6 new economic and social systems that create economic opportunity and high
7 quality of life for all people, that build public assets and the commons, and that
8 empower people to exercise self-determination and freedom. All can live well
9 in balance with one another.

10 Sec. 2. 1 V.S.A. chapter 24 is added to read:

11 CHAPTER 24. REGENERATIVE ECONOMY PLAN

12 § 901. REGENERATIVE ECONOMY

13 The purpose of this chapter is to facilitate Vermont's transition to a
14 regenerative economy. A regenerative economy is an economic system that
15 works to regenerate natural and human resources. Vermont shall achieve a
16 90 percent regenerative economy on or before December 31, 2044. In order to
17 build a regenerative economy by 2044, Vermont needs a Regenerative
18 Economy Roadmap. This Roadmap shall be built from the ground up by
19 People's Assemblies and will be based on regional and State regenerative
20 economy plans. Local communities need to assess and regularly monitor their
21 strengths, needs, challenges, and goals. The State shall assist local

1 communities in the coordination of plans and will appropriate resources in
2 ways that support regenerative economy plans and the Regenerative Economy
3 Roadmap. All State investments shall be considered in relation to the
4 Regenerative Economy Roadmap, and funding streams should be adjusted over
5 time to achieve a just transition to a new economy based on the Roadmap.

6 § 902. REGIONAL REGENERATIVE ECONOMY PLANS

7 (a) The State shall be divided into 11 regions based on the geographic areas
8 of the regional planning commissions. Each region shall create a regenerative
9 economy plan. Each region shall form a People’s Assembly to lead the
10 drafting of the plan.

11 (b) Each of the 11 regional planning commissions shall assist their
12 respective region by facilitating the People’s Assembly. The regional planning
13 commission shall use a robust public process in the People’s Assembly,
14 engaging all aspects of local communities, including businesses, advocates,
15 activists, nonprofits, government officials, health and human services
16 organizations, education groups, and others.

17 (c) The plan shall:

18 (1) assess the strengths, weaknesses, needs, and resources of the region;

19 (2) rectify the impact of systemic oppression and create racial and social
20 equity in the local and state economy by empowering and centering historically

1 marginalized racial, ethnic, and social groups, including Black, Indigenous,
2 and other People of Color, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities;

3 (3) create incentives for the development of regenerative agriculture that
4 engages and empowers farmers in building healthy soils and integrating
5 solutions for reducing carbon emissions, creating zero waste, and cleaning up
6 waterways;

7 (4) cultivate food justice and universal access to healthy local food by
8 addressing food production so that Vermont will be able to feed the State year-
9 round through increasing productivity of existing land, eliminating food waste,
10 promoting the recycling of food, and developing indoor growing facilities;

11 (5) prevent waste from being generated in every sector of the economy;

12 (6) incentivize sustainable design through materials management
13 systems that create products in ways that allow the return of component
14 materials back into the manufacturing stream once their useful life is over with
15 a preference for highest and best uses;

16 (7) minimize reliance on waste disposal, landfilling, and incineration
17 and improve waste management plans;

18 (8) reduce energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and other
19 adverse environmental impacts;

- 1 (9) encourage local, publicly owned energy generation and associated
2 waste containment with plans to transition from fossil fuels to renewable
3 energy sources;
- 4 (10) support the achievement of existing statutory goals regarding
5 environmental protection;
- 6 (11) guide local and State agencies to make all policy and purchase
7 decisions through the lens of its effect on reaching our 90 by 50 State
8 Comprehensive Energy Plan goals;
- 9 (12) move beyond the Universal Recycling Law;
- 10 (13) build a circular economy by providing economic and other
11 incentives for the colocation of businesses and manufacturers in designated
12 areas to share resources, reduce waste, and allow more productive use of waste
13 and by-products;
- 14 (14) encourage the adoption of biologically inspired production
15 processes and materials;
- 16 (15) develop land use policy that utilizes old sites first before creating
17 new ones;
- 18 (16) restore ecosystems whenever possible;
- 19 (17) minimize the waste of human resources and potential by increasing
20 opportunities for meaningful employment; providing flexible pathways for

1 education, training, and employment; and identifying underutilized segments
2 of the workforce;

3 (18) consider ways to improve population health and provide universal
4 access to health care and wellness support, including a healthy physical,
5 mental, emotional, and social environment;

6 (19) create universal childcare options that maximize child development
7 and are financially and physically accessible to all families;

8 (20) support universal eldercare options that maximize quality of life for
9 people as they age and that are financially and physically accessible for all
10 families;

11 (21) support a robust, lifelong public education system, with
12 opportunities for retraining and reskilling that respond to ongoing workforce
13 and workers' needs;

14 (22) assess ongoing workforce development and education needs for the
15 region and explore ways to guarantee jobs for all who are willing and able to
16 work in the region;

17 (23) upgrade and weatherize all existing housing stock before building
18 new units, use all available housing stock before building new units, use land
19 more efficiently while protecting ecosystems, prevent waste in housing
20 infrastructure, and build systems of housing to the highest environmental

1 standards that ensure access to housing that is affordable based on income
2 level;

3 (24) develop transportation options with minimum harm and maximum
4 benefit to the environment and to persons;

5 (25) demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to rapid social, ecological,
6 and technological changes;

7 (26) prepare for the impact of climate and other ecological emergencies
8 through review of existing disaster planning and through development of
9 greater local resilience;

10 (27) suggest priorities for State spending and investment of State
11 resources into a regenerative economy and recommend ways to move towards
12 participatory budgeting on the local, regional, and State levels;

13 (28) explore strategies for Government agencies at all levels to divest
14 their holdings of fossil fuel-related investments;

15 (29) identify possible revenue streams and ways to fund the transition to
16 a regenerative economy, including public banking options;

17 (30) create possible incentives to increase productivity, efficiency, and
18 resilience of the local and State economy;

19 (31) recommend clear benchmarks to measure progress, with deadlines
20 for various steps; and

1 (32) take into account existing plans, like Regional Energy Plans and
2 Hazard Mitigation Plans, and consider ways to maximize existing federal
3 benefits and subsidies to build local resilience and independence.

4 (d) The plan shall identify how the goals will be met on schedule, including
5 30 percent by 2030, 60 percent by 2037, and 90 percent by 2044.

6 (e) The plan may be amended at any meeting that has been properly noticed
7 upon a majority vote of Assembly members.

8 (f) The plan shall expire every year and either be readopted or amended.

9 § 903. PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

10 (a) Each of the 11 regions shall form a People's Assembly. The People's
11 Assembly shall be open to anyone in the region who wants to participate and
12 shall be grounded in the principles of direct democracy. Technology shall be
13 used to make the meetings as inclusive as possible. Amenities such as food
14 and childcare shall be offered, and scheduling shall include options for
15 participation by those with different work schedules. The local regional
16 planning commission shall staff the People's Assembly and facilitate and lead
17 each meeting in a way that centers on the people in the region, serving as
18 professional support for a community-driven process. Membership of the
19 Assembly shall be open to all residents of the region. The following shall
20 participate as non-voting advisor to the People's Assembly:

21 (1) a representative from local solid waste districts in the regions;

1 (2) a representative from the regional development corporation in the
2 region; and

3 (3) a representative from each municipality in the region.

4 (b) Each People’s Assembly shall hold public meetings in order to develop
5 the regenerative economy plan for the region. Notice of each meeting shall be
6 posted for two weeks before the meeting.

7 (c) The Assembly shall provide notice of each meeting to each of the
8 following: the local District Environmental Commission, the local water
9 districts, the local municipal energy planning committees, business owners in
10 the region, school boards in the region, faith communities in the region,
11 nonprofit organizations in the region, and community groups in the region.

12 (d) The Assembly shall meet at least nine times before December 31, 2022
13 and at least once per year starting in 2023.

14 (e) The Assembly shall post drafts of the plan to be inspected and reviewed
15 by the public on the website of the local regional planning commission.

16 (f) The Assembly shall engage in the planning process under section 904 of
17 this title.

18 (g) The Assembly shall adopt its own rules for conducting meetings, that
19 shall meet the following criteria:

20 (1) ensure that all voices are heard and that historically marginalized
21 people have power;

1 (2) maximize accessibility and provide accommodations to prevent
2 barriers to participation;

3 (3) use principles of participatory decision making and budgeting to the
4 greatest extent possible; and

5 (4) the final vote on the plan shall include at least two weeks' public
6 notice and shall allow for in-person and remote voting over the course of
7 several days.

8 § 904. STATE AGENCY REGENERATIVE ECONOMY PLANS

9 (a) Every State agency shall create a regenerative economy plan. The plan
10 shall address the same issues as the regional regenerative economy plans as
11 required under subsection 902(c) of this title.

12 (b) Each agency shall hold at least two public hearings on the plan.

13 (c) On or before January 15, 2022, each agency shall submit a draft plan to
14 the General Assembly for review.

15 § 905. REGENERATIVE ECONOMY COUNCIL

16 (a) There is created the Regenerative Economy Council. The Council shall
17 be responsible for creating the Vermont Regenerative Economy Roadmap, as
18 established under section 906 of this title.

19 (b) The chair of the Council shall be the Lieutenant Governor or designee.

20 The Council shall consist of 34 members as follows:

21 (1) The Secretary of Administration or designee.

- 1 (2) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets or designee.
- 2 (3) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or
3 designee.
- 4 (4) The Secretary of Digital Services or designee.
- 5 (5) The Secretary of Education or designee.
- 6 (6) The Secretary of Human Services or designee.
- 7 (7) The Secretary of Natural Resources or designee.
- 8 (8) The Secretary of Transportation or designee.
- 9 (9) One representative from each of the 11 People’s Assemblies.
- 10 (10) Five members appointed by each the Governor, the Speaker of the
11 House, and President Pro Tempore of the Senate. In making these
12 appointments, the Governor, the Speaker, and the President Pro Tempore shall
13 ensure that the membership be diverse and include members from all regions
14 of the State, members with various cultural and economic backgrounds, and
15 members with experience in the following areas: energy, technology,
16 environmental advocacy, agriculture, natural resources, housing, workforce
17 development, labor, and human rights. Members shall be appointed for four-
18 year terms. Any vacancy occurring in the membership of the Council shall be
19 filled by the appointing entity for the unexpired portion of the term.

1 (c) The Council shall monitor the regional and agency planning processes.
2 The Council shall review all regenerative economy plans prepared in
3 accordance with sections 902 and 904 of this title.

4 (d) The Council may appoint legal counsel and administrative personnel, as
5 it finds necessary in carrying out its duties, unless the Governor shall otherwise
6 provide.

7 (e) On or before December 31, 2022, the Council shall review all of the
8 State agency plans.

9 (f) The Council shall provide support to the People's Assemblies and the
10 State agencies in the development of the regenerative economy plans.

11 (g) The Council shall request funding from the General Assembly to
12 support the planning efforts.

13 § 906. REGENERATIVE ECONOMY ROADMAP

14 (a) The Regenerative Economy Roadmap shall be created by the
15 Regenerative Economy Council. The Roadmap shall be a 20-year plan and it
16 shall guide all State investment so that the State obtains a 90 percent
17 regenerative economy by 2044.

18 (b) The Roadmap shall address the same criteria as the regenerative
19 economy plans as established in subsection 902(c) of this title.

20 (c) The Roadmap shall be consistent with all of the regional and State
21 agency regenerative economy plans.

1 (d) All appropriations made by the General Assembly shall be consistent
2 with the Roadmap. The General Assembly shall explore ways to move
3 towards processes of participatory budgeting and include the Peoples'
4 Assemblies and their ongoing reassessment of regional regenerative economy
5 plans.

6 § 907. ENFORCEMENT

7 (a) The Attorney General may investigate violations of this chapter. If the
8 Attorney General finds that a person has violated or is violating this chapter,
9 the Attorney General may bring an action in the Civil Division of the Superior
10 Court of Washington County or in the Civil Division of the Superior Court of
11 any county where venue lies.

12 (b) Any person aggrieved by a violation of this chapter may bring an action
13 in the Civil Division of the Superior Court of Washington County or in the
14 Civil Division of the Superior Court of the county in which the person resides
15 or has his or her personal place of business.

16 (c) An action brought pursuant to this section may seek injunctive relief,
17 punitive damages in the case of a willful violation, and reasonable costs and
18 attorney's fees.

19 § 908. REGENERATIVE ECONOMY GRANT PROGRAMS

20 (a) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall
21 establish the Circular Economy Grant Program. This Program shall provide

1 grants to encourage site sharing and the development of circular
2 manufacturing.

3 (b) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall
4 establish the Systems Transformation Grant Program. The Program shall
5 provide grants to State agencies to develop public and private partnerships to
6 solve Vermont's greatest social and ecological problems.

7 (c) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall
8 establish the Regenerative Economy Grant Program. This Program shall
9 provide grants to businesses that plan to address the regenerative economy
10 criteria established in subsection 902(c) of this title.

11 (d) On or before July 1, 2023, the Secretary of Commerce and Community
12 Development shall adopt procedures for the content of the grant application
13 and criteria for making awards for the grants established under this section.

14 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

15 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.