



State to Main

The Voice of Vermont Business



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In This Issue:

- [Additional Economic Relief Legislation Advances](#)
- [Senate Implements Major Changes to Act 250 Proposal](#)
- [Tax Options During Economic Downturn Reviewed](#)
- [Legislation Would Authorize "To Go" Liquor Sales Through 2022](#)
- [Vermont Chamber Joins New England States and Canada in Opposing Aluminum Tariff](#)
- [Stormwater General Permit \(GP\) 3-9050 Issued](#)
- [Resource Roundup](#)
- [In Case You Missed It](#)

Additional Economic Relief Legislation Advances

The House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development advanced draft [legislation](#) that would make available an additional \$100 million in economic relief grants for businesses impacted by COVID-19. If passed into law the legislation would provide \$88 million to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) for additional grants to be applied across several industries and \$12 million through ACCD to address industry specific issues. Within the \$12 million, \$5 million would go to Vermont ski area businesses to make necessary improvements to facilities to mitigate public health risks, \$4 million to the Department of Tourism and Marketing for the Restart Vermont Marketing Program, and \$3 million to be divided equally between the Community College of Vermont and the Vermont Technical Center to serve around 1,000 Vermonters impacted by the pandemic.

The legislation also expands eligibility for accessing ACCD economic relief grant funds by removing a specific qualifying loss threshold. Additionally, the legislation would raise the overall cap on grant funds a business can receive to \$300,000, or higher, if approved by the Joint Fiscal Committee. The Vermont Chamber has pushed for advancement of additional funds for existing relief programs and for a set-aside program that would serve industries most impacted by the pandemic. As the current session unfolds, the Vermont Chamber will continue advocating for meaningful relief to address the unprecedented hardship facing Vermont's business community.

Senate Implements Major Changes to Act 250 Proposal

The Senate Committee on Natural Resources stripped their Act 250 proposal of virtually any substantive changes other than provisions related to trail construction and forest fragmentation. The Committee's [proposal](#) advances no changes to criteria governing development in [designated downtowns](#). The Vermont Chamber and others in the economic development community supported previously included provisions that would

have removed designated downtowns from Act 250 jurisdiction in some instances. House committees are concurrently working on other legislation that could also end up serving as a vehicle for Act 250 reform. The Vermont Chamber will continue advocating on this issue, including by pushing for the reintroduction of designated downtown exemptions.

Tax Options During Economic Downturn Reviewed

The House Ways and Means Committee discussed taxation during economic downturns. The Committee considered new tax options, including taxation of software as a service. Witness Kim Rueben, Director of the State and Local Finance Initiative, Urban Institute, recommended the Committee consider imposing new taxes on services that replace products that were previously physically purchased but are now sourced through internet services. The Committee's Chair indicated they would continue to consider such options this session and during the 2021 Legislative Session. Rueben also recommended the Committee consider increasing top marginal tax rates on income tax and expanding Vermont's sales tax base. A representative from Moody's Analytics also presented options for [budgeting in the age of COVID-19](#). View the full conversation [here](#).

Legislation Would Authorize "To Go" Liquor Sales Through 2022

The Department of Liquor and Lottery proposed [legislation](#) that would permit the Board of Liquor and Lottery to authorize alcoholic drinks for "to go" sales through December of 2022. Gary Kessler, Deputy Commissioner of the Department, offered the legislation during testimony delivered to the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs. The Vermont Chamber has advocated for an extension of alcohol to go sales to help restaurants generate reliable revenue while COVID-19 related operating restrictions remain in place. If you have questions about alcohol policy, please contact Vermont Chamber Vice President of Tourism [Amy Spear](#).

Vermont Chamber Joins New England States and Canada in Opposing Aluminum Tariff

The Vermont Chamber joined New England states and Canada in expressing opposition to the Trump Administration's recent decision to reimpose a 10 percent tariff on Canadian aluminum. Chris Carrigan, Vermont Chamber Vice President of Business Development, made clear in remarks offered in a [joint statement](#) that the majority of Canadian companies source over half of their aerospace parts from the U.S. Carrigan also pointed out that the tariff on aluminum will add injury to an already impacted aerospace manufacturing industry suffering demand shock from a drastic decline in passenger traffic for commercial aviation due to the pandemic. If you have any questions or would like to express how this tariff will impact your business, please contact [Chris Carrigan](#).

Stormwater General Permit (GP) 3-9050 Issued

A [new general permit](#) will go into effect on December 1, 2020. The permit requires that landowners with more than three acres of impervious surfaces, including roofs, driveways, and parking lots, undertake projects to treat water runoff. In 2019 the Vermont Chamber provided public comment on the draft permit, expressing concern over the originally

proposed timetable and the financial burden compliance will place on small businesses. The Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) formal response to those concerns are available on the Department's [response summary page](#). The Department plans to offer technical and financial assistance to landowners to support engineering design and installation of stormwater projects by utilizing resources from the Clean Water Fund and the State Revolving Fund to offer cost-share to landowners.

Businesses that provided public comment or signed up under the Environmental Notices Bulletin (ENB) should receive a notice of issuance of the GP through the ENB. Applications for new development and permit renewal should continue to use GP 3-9015 and GP 3-9010 until December 1, 2020. DEC will update their website soon to include a "summary of changes" in the final GP 3-9050 relative to the draft GP and will develop a table of the schedule for submitting the required permit applications for "three-acre sites." DEC will also provide outreach letters to "three-acre sites" over the next few weeks. Technical questions related to applicability of GP 3-9050 to particular projects can be directed to the Stormwater Program [staff](#). Please contact Vermont Chamber Government Affairs Director [Charles Martin](#) with other questions or concerns related to the permit.

Resource Roundup

Enroll Your Business in Gift Card Program

We are encouraging Vermont businesses to enroll now in the new [Buy Local Vermont Gift Card Program](#) intended to increase sales for local businesses. #BuyLocalVermont is a program created by the State of Vermont that uses CARES Act funding to aid Vermont businesses and residents struggling in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2020 National Procurement Technical Assistance Centers Day Webinar

Businesses are [invited to join](#) government marketplace experts from around the country for a fun, interactive, and enlightening [event](#). Hosted by the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, participants will have a chance to test their knowledge of the federal government marketplace while hearing top tips from PTAC counselors across the country. Businesses with all levels of government contracting experience are welcome to participate in this free event.

Economic Recovery Grant Program

If you have not applied already, [Economic Recovery Grant](#) funds are available to Vermont businesses who can demonstrate a revenue decline of at least 50% in any one-month period from March 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020, when compared with the same month in 2019. Businesses with at least one W-2 employee, including those who are an owner, are encouraged to [apply](#).

In Case You Missed It

[Mail-In Ballots to Be Sent Out in Last 2 Weeks of September](#)

[Business Aid Bill Removes Minimum Loss Threshold](#)

[Open Spaces of Vermont, Oregon, Idaho Attract Relocators](#)



The Voice of Vermont Business

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In business since 1912, the Vermont Chamber of Commerce is a private, not-for-profit business organization with 1,500 members employing 45,000 people and representing all sectors of the state's economy. Our mission is to create an economic climate conducive to business growth and the preservation of the Vermont quality of life. Copyright ©2018 The Vermont Chamber of Commerce. All Rights Reserved.

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