



March 14, 2019

Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility (VBSR) is a non-profit, statewide business trade organization with a mission to advance business ethics that value multiple bottom lines- economic, social, and environmental.

We strive to help members set a high standard for protecting the natural, human and economic environments of the state's residents, while remaining profitable. Founded in 1991, VBSR has more than 700 members across Vermont.

Our Champion Members include The Alchemist, AllEarth Renewables, Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, Green Mountain Power, Magic Hat, Northfield Savings Bank, National Life Group, Seventh Generation, Villanti Printers, VSECU, and SunCommon.

Sec. 6 – Workforce training, weatherization

- Thermal emissions represent the second largest source of carbon emissions in Vermont – 42% of Vermont's energy use and is responsible for 35% of our greenhouse gas emissions.
- In 2007, the state of Vermont made a goal of weatherizing 20,000 homes by 2020. Current projections have Vermont falling 6,000 homes short of that goal.
- The Vermont Department of Health estimates that the 10-year benefit of weatherization, in health and fuel savings, is nearly three times greater

- than the initial investment per household.
- Efficiency supports the largest number of clean energy jobs in Vermont, with 10,600 jobs as of the end of 2017. Of those, 7,800 Vermonters are employed in weatherization and thermal efficiency.
- \$350,000 for existing training programs is a good first step, but those resources will still not be inadequate to meet Vermont's weatherization and renewable energy goals.
- Vermont needs a weatherization workforce-training program that matches the recommendation from the Governor's Climate Commission that we increase the pace of weatherization.

Sec. 8 - Workforce development opportunities for refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers

- VBSR supports forming a taskforce to advise the state of Vermont and the Vermont Legislature on the vital next steps to create workforce opportunities for new Americans, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- About 16,000 immigrants were part of the Vermont workforce in 2015, working in industries such as health care, manufacturing, food services, and retail.

- The number of working Vermonters has declined in recent years. Coupled with a tightening job market, this had led to some employers unable to fill available positions within their companies.
- There is an opportunity here for Vermont to boost the strength and size of our workforce by finding ways to reduce the barriers to employment for immigrants in our workforce.

Codify Vermont's 70% by 2025 education goals

- Achieving higher levels of education after high school (four-year degree or certification) is frequently linked to higher wages, better jobs, and increased lifetime earnings for workers.
- VBSR supports the Advance Vermont goal of 70% of working age Vermonters possessing a degree or credential of value by 2025.
- Helpful to codify this goal in statute – 42 other states have similar goals created through legislation or executive order.

Make Employer Student Debt Programs Tax-Free

- The average student graduating from college in Vermont in 2017 had about \$28,000 in loan debt.
- Growing number of employers offering to pay off student loan debt – programs similar to 401K programs.
- H.290, sponsored by Rep. Tom Stevens, would create a deduction on taxable income of up to \$5,000 for student loan debts paid for by an employer.

Continued funding for Internships

- Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility has operated the Vermont Intern Program since 2008. The Vermont Intern Program is funded in part by the Vermont Department of Labor's Workforce Education and Training Fund.
- Unlike other intern programs, all these positions are paid – allowing for increased access to this opportunity from workers of all backgrounds and experiences.
- It is the only statewide intern program, and its mission is: *to connect college students and recent graduates with employers in Vermont, support the development of high-quality internship opportunities, and cultivate an applicant pool and employer community that is prepared to meet the state's emerging workforce needs.*
- Over the last five years, VBSR via the Vermont Intern Program has placed more than 250 young workers in internships with Vermont employers.
- This is a critical tool that gives our future workforce the opportunity to learn and hone skills directly in the workplaces that could hire them permanently after completing their education.

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