

What's New with Jon

February 11, 2008

Dear Constituents:

My report for the week ending February 8, 2008 is as follows:

1. Energy Efficiency – I shall be voting for S.209, a successor to H.520, which was vetoed. My Committee, Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources, provided input for the hydropower portion of the bill.
2. Tires - My Committee is about done with the bill to charge 50¢ per new tire on sale to finance free tire drop offs so people have a free legal disposal option, and cleanups. We held the bill so that two absent members of the Committee could vote on it next week. I thought the testimony in opposition to the bill was weak. Car dealers oppose it because it will add \$2.50 to the sale price of a car – 1/10,000 of what I assume to be their average cost of \$25,000. Tire dealers oppose the bill because at least about 98% of the tires sold in Vermont are properly disposed of. Apparently, we are supposed to ignore the 6,000 (1%) to 12,000 (2%) that are littered along highways and in streams. Government, however, often addresses problems caused by a small share of our population. For example, less than 2% of our population murder, rape or rob banks in any year.
3. Riparian Buffers – Our Committee is also about done with this bill, which as now written would restrict development and land use, including lawn maintenance and tree cutting, within 50 feet of lakes, ponds, and larger streams (more than about 20 feet wide). Municipalities, such as Montpelier, will be free to adopt zoning ordinances allowing construction closer to streams to maintain their historic development pattern.
4. Budgets – This weekend I have been reviewing budgets for Fish and Wildlife and Environmental Conservation in preparation for testimony next

week. If we feel any changes should be made, we must recommend them to the Appropriations Committee.

5. Other Fish and Wildlife Bills – Last week, sponsors of miscellaneous bills presented them to our Committee. Based on Committee reaction, I think we will likely recommend that five moose hunting licenses be given to servicemen returning from war regions and that we will try to fund \$70,000 to finance removal of an old dam section below water in the Mississiquoi River. Apparently, the dam has a small hole in it through which most of the river water pours at high velocity. This is both unsafe for people and bad for fish migration. I doubt our Committee will recommend that hunters be required to wear blaze orange vests or that we will reauthorize the use of lead sinkers in rivers. Lead sinkers were banned because birds eat them, releasing lead through the digestive process.
6. PILOT – The PILOT bill that we submitted had two components—an increased appropriation of \$800,000 (Montpelier receives 10%) and a directive for a number of studies to merge the various PILOT programs and make them fairer. The bill has been in Appropriations. So far, it looks as though we will receive a \$750,000 increase in this year of tight budgets. In addition, there is now some movement to send the bill along to Government Operations, which is chaired by Donna Sweaney (D-Windsor), who supports PILOT. Last week, Pat McDonald (R-Berlin) was also reassigned to Government Operations to replace Cola Hudson who died. Pat also supports PILOT.
7. Current Use – Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources will also be the committee of jurisdiction to review the current use program. I expect to follow the recommendations of the Study Committee except that I may see if we can revise participation forms to gather data about how much land in the program is posted. At least two non-constituent Vermonters complained to me about reducing taxes based on current use as opposed to fair market value for posted land. I tried to investigate how widespread the problem might be only to discover that we do not collect this data, which apparently will be easy to do.
8. Tax Redistribution – There are three ways to distribute the about \$21 million now currently foregone by taxing capital gains at a reduced rate versus wages. First, we can keep offering this tax relief. Second, we can

reduce marginal tax rates for high income folks as suggested by the Governor. Third, as recommended by the Speaker, we can use the money to reduce property taxes by paying the State's share of new school construction, which is currently not funded, and by providing more income sensitivity school tax relief for middle income Vermonters (\$80,000 to \$120,000) who, because they are not now subject to income sensitivity pay a disproportionately large share of their income for school taxes. I favor the Speaker's proposal.

Very truly yours,

Jon Anderson

This message is intended to reflect my personal view of issues facing the Legislature. It is NOT intended to be a comprehensive or thorough discussion of any topic, just a few lines to stimulate thought. If you would like to be added to my subscriber list (or removed from it), please send an email to: janderson@vtlaw1.com. Please feel free to contact me if there is anything I can do to assist you in dealing with Vermont Government.