



Date: January 20, 2010
To: House Natural Resources & Energy Committee
From: Johanna Miller, Energy Program Co-Director & Outreach Director, VNRC

RE: H.97

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on H.97. This bill has the potential to take Vermont one more small but important step forward to help save energy and meet our greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. I am here today to express our general support for this bill and our interest in making certain it is as strong as possible.

For nearly 50 years, VNRC has worked to advance reasoned, forward-looking solutions to environmental and energy-related challenges. On energy issues, this includes our work as one of six members of the Governor's Climate Change Commission as well as our close work over the last few years with the growing number of town energy committees across Vermont. Last year at this time, there were fewer than 70 energy committees. Now, there are over 90 community energy groups.

Nearly all of you represent districts with active community energy committees. Likely, you have worked closely with your local community energy group on various projects. As you are undoubtedly aware, but what I'd like to reiterate, is that many of these groups are interested in what happens here under the Golden Dome; they are undertaking anti-idling campaigns in and of their own accord; and they are hungry to see initiatives like H.97 become law.

In fact, many of these groups are far ahead of state action on this issue in particular. Putney is just one example. Under the leadership of the energy committee there, the town now has an anti-idling policy that applies to both cars and trucks. Unfortunately, as leaders on that committee will tell you, the impact of this policy is falling short of their ambitious goals to save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Unlike what H.97 could and should do, Putney's anti-idling ordinance has no teeth; it lacks an enforcement mechanism and, as such, a true disincentive to change people's behavior. As well, because Vermont has no state policy, Putney is running into roadblocks, such as how and where they can post no-idling signs. Essentially, Putney's policy is largely an educational initiative. H.97 would help offer communities like Putney and many others the state-backed policy that would offer support – and strength – to their programs.



VNRC supports H.97 because it:

- **Will help reduce Vermont's fossil fuel consumption.** When a vehicle is left idling, it consumes an average of one gallon of gas each hour. If every driver of a motor vehicle in Vermont limited idling a motor vehicle to five minutes a day or less, the state would save millions of gallons of fuel.
 - Idling in modern day vehicles is virtually unnecessary. Some argue that on cold winter days cars and trucks need to warm up. In fact, modern day vehicles require no longer than 30 seconds to warm the vehicle sufficiently to run safely and efficiently.
- **Will help reduce Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the state's contributions to climate change.**
 - There is general scientific agreement that human-made emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, primarily from the combustion of fossil fuels, is the major cause of global climate change. Significantly reducing motor vehicle idling could help prevent thousands of tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.
- **Will help meet Vermont's statutory greenhouse gas reduction goals – 25 percent by 2012, 50 percent by 2028 and 75 percent by 2050.**
- **Will help curb polluting exhaust fumes that are damaging to public health by reducing air pollution and improving air quality.**

To realize these benefits and goals, I respectfully request members of this committee to pass H.97 with the following adjustments:

- Limit the exemptions in the bill. Creating too many exemptions will render this well-intentioned policy virtually irrelevant.

I would also respectfully request members of the committee to consider expanding the bill to all vehicles, not just large trucks. An anti-idling policy for large trucks is important. But a state-level policy for all automobiles would make a strong statement and begin to more substantively help meet Vermont's public health and environmental goals.

Vermont is an island, surrounded by five neighboring states which have all adopted state-level anti-idling ordinances of some sort. This bill would put Vermont on par with our peers on important energy-saving, awareness-raising, behavior-changing initiatives.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these issues and this important bill.

