

DEMOCRACY DISPATCH PODCAST

Episode 15: All About the Affordable Heat Act (w/ Rep. Gabrielle Stebbins)

INTRO

Welcome to the Democracy Dispatch podcast. I'm Justin Marsh, Political Outreach Director at Vermont Conservation Voters. This is your weekly scoop on legislative action as we work to push forward environmental policies for Vermont. Each Monday, we will take a look back at the week prior, preview the week ahead, and speak with legislators and advocates on topics affecting our air, water, open space, and quality of life.

On today's show, Lauren chats with Senator Anne Watson of Washington County for our deep dive conversation about work in Senate Natural Resources including the modernized bottle bill, the 30 by 30 land conservation bill, and the renewable energy standard. Later on, I speak with the co-chair of the Climate Caucus Solutions, Representative Gabrielle Stebbins for a full breakdown of the Affordable Heat Act, which passed the House last week on a vote of 98 to 46. But first, I'm joined by Lauren Hierl, Executive Director of Vermont Conservation Voters for the Session Shakedown segment, where we recap the week prior and look to the coming week of the session.

SESSION SHAKEDOWN

JUSTIN MARSH: This week, the biggest news was the House's passing of S5, the Affordable Heat Act. We have a full overview of that policy in our main segment later on, but next up it will head back to the Senate due to amendments made on the bill. On Wednesday, we worked with VPIRG and our friends of the podcast, Attorney General Charity Clark, Senator Ginny Lyons, and Representative Dane Whitman for a press conference to urge the House Human Services Committee to prioritize S25, a bill that would ban PFAS and other harmful chemicals from cosmetics, menstrual products, textiles, and athletic turf. Business representatives from Seventh Generation and Vermont Skin Care Company also joined. And so did you, Lauren. What were some of the takeaways?

LAUREN HIERL: It was a really great event hearing from both legislative leaders, the attorney general's perspective, and these business leaders on why it's so important to take this action to protect Vermonters from these harmful, unnecessary chemicals being used in our products. We had examples of the wide availability of products that don't contain these chemicals. And we really just heard the urgency of moving this bill as quickly as possible because delaying an extra year for action just means a longer time that we're bringing more of these harmful chemicals into our homes, being exposed to them, and ultimately contaminating our environment over the longer term. So great event and we'll continue pushing for action as quickly as possible.

JM: Yeah, let's hope. And then I also gave testimony on a ranked choice voting bill to the House Committee on Government Operations. It seems like they are wrapping up testimony and that may be voted out of committee this week or next. And then there's S100, the housing equity bill. How is that taking shape?

LH: That bill is continuing to get extensive testimony in the House Environment and Energy Committee. There was also a joint hearing between the General, the Housing and General Affairs Committee and the Environment and Energy Committee because both of those committees have different areas of jurisdiction in the bill. So there's different pieces of the bill that their committees are focused on. So they were able to kind of take a broader look at what the overall bill looks like and what that package looks like. So lots of work continuing, a lot of perspectives coming in, of course, to those committees to from the rural caucus, for example, making sure that the bill is going to help communities all over the state address housing with the different needs that different types of communities have. So lots of robust conversation happening in the House and hoping to see action on that bill within the next couple of weeks.

JM: And you spoke with Senator Ann Watson about work that her committee, the Senate Natural has been doing on the modernized bottle bill, the renewable energy standard, and the land conservation bill known as 30 by 30. Let's hear that conversation next.

DEEP DIVE

LAUREN HIERL: I am very excited to be here with Senator Anne Watson, who was in early on the podcast, but it's great to have you back so we can get a quick update on what your committee has been up to.

ANNE WATSON: Yeah, well, thank you. I'm psyched to give you an update.

LH: Excellent. So again, Senator Watson serves on the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee where a number of our priority bills are currently sitting. And so they are working on some of the bills that have moved from the House over to the Senate, as well as starting up a renewable energy conversation. So, Let's start with the 30 by 30 biodiversity bill, H126. Can you just tell us what has your committee been focused on with that bill and what is the status?

AW: Yeah, great. So just in case folks are not familiar, the bill aims to work towards conserving 30% of the land in Vermont by 2030, and then sets the goal of 50% of the land to be conserved by 2050. And what are the, so just in general, I think people are. are interested in this idea, on board with it, a lot of our conversation has been focused around the role of aquatics in that conservation effort. And so thankfully, it sounds like a lot of the players that have been around the table have come to some consensus about language to include conservation of aquatic habitats as a part of the bill. And so we're... I think a lot closer to some final language, but I expect to be voting that out pretty soon. So, and one of the main drivers for that is that we saw that from the data that freshwater species have seen something like an 80% decline in population, which is just, you know, like we need to work towards conservation to help. preserve those habitats and preserve those populations.

LH: Absolutely. Well it's great that it sounds like there's language that can acknowledge and really build into how we're assessing this huge biodiversity goal and inventory that our critical water resources are part of that process. Great. All right so anticipating a vote on that bill soon.

AW: Oh actually probably tomorrow.

LH: Oh, probably tomorrow. So we're sitting here on Thursday April 20th. Excellent. So hopefully, you've moved out soon. Another bill you all have been working on is the modernized bottle bill. What is the latest with that?

AW: Yeah, great. So we've taken a lot of testimony from a variety of stakeholders. And yeah, I think we're also pretty close to a vote on that as well. We had some discussion today about just a couple of small points that I think we're gonna have some minor tweaks to the bill, but again, expect to vote that out pretty soon, probably early next week is my guess. And the, yeah, just so folks know, the couple of tweaks that we talked about were some provisions for small wineries who serve as the manufacturer, the... distributor and the retailer of their product. And so especially when somebody is all three, the demands can be pretty tough. And so I wanna make sure that they are taking care of, at least in terms of being exempted from having to accept back the bottles, but they would still participate financially in the system. So. People could still return, or I should say, redeem those bottles. So from the public's perspective, it will function exactly the same as any other winery, but from their perspective, they have a little bit more flexibility. And then the other aspect was about a requirement around education. So if the redeemable rates are not what we hope that they are, if they're not, meeting certain benchmarks over time that, so in the bill currently, is an incentive for people to redeem more by saying that instead of five cents, it would be ten cents. And it increases that redeemable rate to help motivate folks to do more, to redeem those bottles. But in addition to that, we're also looking at adding, perhaps in parallel, just education, maybe some of the barriers to folks doing the redeeming is more around education, maybe it's about accessibility, so just broadening the options that could happen simultaneously to increase the rates of return.

LH: Makes a lot of sense. So again, this bill would expand the... range of beverages covered under the bottle bill and set up a producer responsibility organization to help manage the redemption system. So those are core things that are staying the same and great to hear some of these improvements that you all are pursuing in the Senate from what the House passed. And so it sounds like we're anticipating a vote on that soon as well.

AW: Yep.

LH: And then lastly, just wanted a quick update. One of the things that had been on the environmental common agenda of priorities was looking at updating our renewable energy standards. This bill did not make a crossover, so we weren't sure what was gonna happen, but your committee has been taking up this conversation and it would be great to just hear what you anticipate moving and is this something that you think we can get through this year? Or are we kind of back on our heels because we missed the crossover.

AW: Yeah, that's a great question. So where we're at with the renewable energy standard right now is, especially coming out of conversation today, it sounds like we are mostly moving in the direction of a study. And I know sometimes people get like, oh, it's just a study. But I actually think in this situation, it is probably the most appropriate step that we can take right now. updating our renewable energy standard law, it's a big deal. And there are a lot of questions and aspects to consider. And so there's some data that would be useful for us to make informed decisions. And so this bill is being basically boiled down to a study that would hopefully help give us that data. And yeah, so especially considering that that's the scope or scale of what we're talking about. One possibility is that we could attach it to something else that is moving. Another possibility is that we still are holding out hope and faith that a bill may come to us about renewable energy standard from the House. So there's still some options that that we think may be on the table.

LH: Great. Well, glad that that conversation got going. And thank you for all the work you all are doing in the committee to move forward these issues. And it sounds really encouraging how much progress is being made and that these bills seem on track for action this year. So thanks for joining us.

AW: Yeah, thank you for having me.

MAIN INTERVIEW

JUSTIN MARSH: I am joined now with one of the co-chairs of the Climate Solutions Caucus, Representative Gabrielle Stebbins of Burlington. Senator Becca White of Windsor is the other co-chair, and she was unable to join us. She's still on the Senate floor. But we are fresh from the vote on the House floor on S5, the Affordable Heat Act, which passed on a strong 98 to 46 vote. The purpose of this conversation is really to serve as an overarching explanation of the bill, which can be considered quite complex at times. We're hopeful that this is a source of information for Vermonters who have likely been hearing about this bill and one of the legislators who have worked tirelessly on this, who better to help explain? So, I'm going to use my own self as an example. I live in a really old three-bedroom farmhouse like many Vermonters in rural Vermont. And I have an oil furnace and two heat pumps, one in my bedroom and one in my living room. How will the Affordable Heat Act impact someone like me?

GABRIELLE STEBBINS: So, you may actually not notice anything. Hopefully you will. But you may not actually notice anything, because the Affordable Heat Act is a lot like the Renewable Energy Standard, which a lot of Vermonters don't really even think about when they wake up in the morning, because it's not really meant for like, it's a market-driven. And what that means is it's really focused on the businesses and the folks who are selling, like for example, VGS, Vermont Gas Systems, and our fuel dealers, and perhaps our farmers if they want to end up starting to sell renewable natural gas from their farm systems. the upstream of the energy world, that's who's really going to be playing in this market program. So as someone who lives in a

farmhouse with two heat pumps and oil, what hopefully you would notice is exactly what people from Vermont have noticed with the renewable energy standard, which is you might get some outreach or maybe your fuel dealer will say... Hey, Justin, you know, actually, we're expanding our offerings. We can now actually help you save money on how much it costs to heat your home. We're offering you weatherization. We're offering you some biofuels if you want to reduce the emissions from your oil system. And here's how you can do it. And if you don't want to do it, that's OK, too. And so really, ultimately, what this program is supposed to do Vermonters, more choices. And it's not supposed to feel like a huge heavy lift for the end use Vermonter. It's really upstream market design. A lot like if people think about 1980s and 1990s when we had huge concern about acid rain. It's not like the average homeowner or the person just going to work as a teacher or as a doctor or as a construction worker was really active in reducing acid rain. They weren't, because it's a market upstream program. And that's what this program is. And it's also why it is complicated, because the folks who actually are going to be doing this work are not the yous and the mes of Vermont.

JM: Got it. Yeah, and I will just say, this year, this winter, I made a conscious effort to use my heat pumps more. And I went through all my bills this last winter and all the bills from the winter before, and I tallied how much I spent on oil in the 2021, 2022 winter and how much I spent in 2022, 2023. And how you do. The comparison, I doubled my electricity bill, but I saved so much on oil that the overall cost savings was about \$650. And that was just using existing infrastructure inside of my house. I had this like idea that the heat pump shouldn't be used outside of the shoulder seasons. And I think that was just a misconception of mine and that I wouldn't be warm enough, but I was. And you know, obviously I still used oil. I still burned oil. I switched to a 25% biofuel in the process by switching a fuel provider. And so yeah, so I think, you know, just that in itself, the bill hasn't even been enacted. It still has a lot of ways to go, but I've already made some changes just within my own household, and I wanted to share that.

GS: That's awesome. I'm so glad to hear that, because that is exactly what this bill is supposed to do. And it's interesting you talk about the shoulder season, because depending on the comfort level of the person who installs the heat pumps in your system. you might get someone to say, look, this is really only for fall and spring. And you might get someone to say, hey, this'll work to five degrees. You know, the manufacturers like Mitsubishi and Deiken and yes, I am a geek. I can name like all of them. The manufacturers, like when they test this equipment, you know, in a laboratory setting, they're getting equipment that can go down to like negative five, negative 10. The reality is, you know, in the field, A lot of people, including myself and my husband, we will turn on our oil system when it gets to like zero and sometimes five, it kind of depends on how we feel. But again, that sort of goes back to whoever installs your system might give you different guidance and really like there is phenomenal savings to be had by heating with really efficient cold climate heat pumps.

JM: Yeah, I was pleasantly surprised. Yeah. So what is the timeline for this program?

GS: So first of all, I just want to say there have been people who have called this bill a study, and I've been really upfront that it's not a study. It really is designing the program from start to

finish, but the program can't actually be implemented. It cannot be offered until 2025 when all the regulations, all the rules that the energy and the equity and the economic experts who design the program based off of the legislative guidance and direction. When those experts have come up with their program design details, all of that comes back to the legislature in 2025. So it is not just a study. I mean, it is standing it up. The timeline is a little bit kind of the way that this bill is different from the renewable energy standard, it's the renewable energy standard and also like net metering. A lot of folks have solar on their roof and they're familiar with net metering. The way that program, those program policy structures work is the legislature drafts you know what they are conceiving and what they want and what the benchmark measures are so we can see if we're actually performing effectively in the law. Then it goes to the experts to design the regs and the rules. Most of the time, what happens at that point is then the rules go before the legislative committee on administrative rules. It's a select group of legislators who review the rules that are drafted. And they say whether or not they're meeting the intent of the law. And that would be the only checkpoint. The difference in this bill, and it is because there has been so much concern about, wow, this is a different structure. So the difference in this bill is we're telling all the experts, do that year and a half, expert analysis, research, program design, and then come back to the legislature for that final vote to actually flip the switch and say, okay, program is on. So we're talking basically about a year and a half. bill moves forward, the start date for it, for all the initial first task begins in July of 2023. And there are like eight steps, maybe 12 that occur between July 2023 and then January 2025, when the detailed rules and regulations would come before the legislature. And then the legislature has to vote to approve actually implementing the program. So it's about a year and a half.

JM: Okay. And there was a lot of talk even before the vote, the House Minority Leader, Representative Patty McCoy made multiple references to a carbon tax. And it was again reiterated on the floor yesterday. As have the fuel dealers as well. They've really got this sort of idea into a lot of Vermonters heads. Is there anywhere in the bill that mentions a tax and or where does this come from?

GS: I think this comes from a misunderstanding. I'd like to say it comes from a misunderstanding. It is definitely not a carbon tax. And actually, the chair of Ways and Means got up yesterday on the House floor and said, to be clear, this is not a tax. It's not a tax. It's a market structure. It is essentially a program that says Hey, if you offer, to fuel dealers, if you offer these services to your customers, like that person coming to you and saying, hey, Justin, you wanna weatherize your home more? If you offer these services, then you can get a credit for those services. And where there could be a price is the emissions that come from the fossil fuels. that a fuel dealer imports into Vermont, the emissions based off of like the gallons of oil or propane, the emissions that are estimated to come from or determined, calculated to come from those gallons of oil or propane or kerosene, those emissions are given basically a dollar value. And that is also part of what this next year and a half is supposed to do is dig into what is that dollar value. Once you figure out what that dollar value is, then you can actually start to figure out, OK, so what's the plus side? So if a fuel dealer offers weatherization to Justin, what's the plus side? What is the cost savings there? What's that credit? And it's based off of what the cost savings is by reducing how much fossil fuel usage is occurring. not sure that was as simple

as it could have been. And is that reflected to the consumer, or is that something that the fuel dealers are keeping track of and this credit system? So is that going to be passed down to the consumer? So I mean, yeah, this is where you see the concern from fuel dealers and the concern from the head of the minority party about this being a quote unquote tax. is yeah, presumably there might be some increase. Again, that's why we have this full legislative vote to approve or not approve or change the program come 2025, because there has been so much concern because we know Vermonters are having such a hard time. Heating with oil and two heat pumps, I definitely felt the pinch when I called my fuel dealer and I said, can you come fill up our tank? and it was \$2 more from the previous year. I didn't get any notice that it was increasing. I just felt it and experienced it. With this program, the intent is really to dig into the numbers, figure out what that number might be, and then legislate your votes on it. And if it's deemed to be overall a net savings for Vermonters, then we'll move forward with it. The analysis that's occurred so far has actually found that If we implement like a clean heat standard by 2030, for homeowners that participate, it would be about a \$7,500 savings. So per what you just said, you know, 650 bucks. That being said, we know that some Vermonters are not gonna participate. And the real concern is about the Vermonters who can least afford to see any increase. So there is so much language in here. I think there are like nine or 10 reports. There's a whole report on consequences. There are focus points on designing programs that meet renter needs, that meet the needs of manufactured homeowners, that I think it's 32%. So it's 16% of all of the activities that go on in this bill, if it's weatherization or if it's helping someone switch to biofuels or whatever. 16% of all of that work has to go to low-income Vermonters, and another 16% has to go to low- and moderate-income Vermonters. So next year and a half, we'll figure out what those details look like. I will say, in Oregon, there is a low-carbon fuel standard. And it's not an apples-to-apples comparison, because that's based on transportation. And we're talking how people use fossil fuels for heating their home or cooking. So it's not apples to apples, but the price increase they saw was six cents per gallon. Now, what they saw in terms of savings went down to like 40 and 50 cents. So that's sort of the bookends that I'm expecting to see from this analysis over the next year and a half. And honestly, I do feel like as a policymaker, it's my responsibility. to do something about the \$2 that people have seen over the last year. We have no control over what happens outside of Vermont. What we do have control over is making sure that we try to get Vermonters off of the roller coaster of unregulated heating fuel. And personally, I feel like I'm shirking my responsibility if I don't. do something about this. We've been studying this since 2006. In 2012, I spent an entire year on the Thermal Efficiency Task Force. A year. I mean, I remember sitting through meetings in the seasons. I had my boots on in January and then I had like sunglasses in spring and I remember wearing like, you know, the little spring dress in like July. An entire year. That was 2012. Does anyone know what we did with that? Nope, we did nothing. That's not true. I mean, we've done a lot of weatherization work. We, you know, Efficiency Vermont and a lot of our utilities offer, you know, heat pump incentives and weatherization assistance. But, you know, really deep change. We haven't been able to get anything over the finish line. And there have been a lot of proposals. And the reason why this one. Has a chance is because, again, it's it's focused up higher as a market approach.

JM: You mentioned weatherization, and that's an important clean heat measure, which is so crucial with Vermont's aging housing stock in particular. What funding and programs is Vermont

supporting to help people weatherize? And how would Vermonters access those resources? And is there elements of that in this bill?

GS: Yeah. And there are also there's also very clear language that, you know, all of these incentives and rebates and opportunities are supposed to be stacked. So, you know, part of the reason why this bill is so critical right now is because we have millions and billions of federal dollars from the Inflation Reduction Act, from ARPA, from the IJJA, and I'm sorry, I'm only using acronyms, but to be honest, I can't even remember what half of these really mean. I remember Inflation Reduction Act because that just passed. But like, for example, we had 67 million from ARPA. Go to the Public Service Department. And that included 35 million for moderate income weatherization projects and another 20 million for electric upgrades for low and moderate income households because we all know if you have knobbing to wiring, like not only is that a fire safety and a hazard and it should be addressed, but if you're thinking about a heat pump that definitely needs to be addressed. So like 20 million there. We have another 5 million to install heat pump hot water heaters for low and moderate income Vermonters. And you mentioned workforce training and how do we actually do this work? There's 3 million in the IJJA for workforce training. And we're still just waiting frankly, I think for the IRA, the Inflation Reduction Act, some of those final regs and rules are still coming through. So really. Yes, we're going to keep using the ongoing weatherization dollars that we've always had. We'll still have the electric utility incentives. We'll still have the ongoing efficiency incentives through Efficiency Vermont or Vermont Gas or Burlington Electric. What I'm really excited about actually, there are two other programs that a lot of Vermonters don't know about because they're new, but a year and a half ago, the legislature voted to approve Vermont Housing Financing Agency or authority. to offer an on-bill loan program. So basically, it goes on your utility bill. And so if you decide to weatherize your home, maybe you don't have \$4,000. A lot of people don't have \$4,000, just right there to weatherize your home. You can reach out to VHFA and learn about how that \$4,000 can actually be applied to your electricity bill or your heating bill and electricity bill. And what that does is... basically you're just still paying your utility bill every month. And if you leave your property, that loan, that debt doesn't go with you. It stays with the property because that value stays with the property. And not only that, you're paying it over a much longer time frame because that's how long the value of weatherization is. Yeah, you have to pay \$4,000 upfront, but you don't get those... you don't get the savings upfront. You get the savings over like, you know, three, four, five, six years. So to put it on your utility bill is just such a better alignment of how to pay for it and what those savings are. So that's a fantastic program and I really hope people reach out and find out about it. It's called the WRAP, get it? Like WRAP, your house? Weatherization Repayment Assistance Program. And if you Google VHFA, you'll see it. Another program that I think is really important because... Most of our lower and moderate income and working Vermonters are, they're so swamped as it is. The last thing that they're going to be doing is like, oh, hey, I think I'll wait on hold and like get a weatherization provider here to like do a blower door test on my house and figure out how leaky it is. And then maybe I'll have like three heat pump installers come in to give me three different quotes. And, you know, yeah, maybe I should have an electrician come in and see too about my knob and tube wiring. Like Someone who's working three jobs and has two kids, that is not what they're doing. So another program that I absolutely, I am just so glad it's there. And one of the things I'm gonna be

focusing on now is figuring out how to boost it and make sure that there's more awareness about it is one of our statewide resources. It's actually a Montpelier area, Washington County based resource. It's called Capstone, but they offer a program called [greensavingsmart.org](https://www.greensavingsmart.org). [Greensavingsmart.org](https://www.greensavingsmart.org). And they basically have a financial energy coach who can look at your finances and say, wow, you're paying this much on kerosene and then you're paying this much on electricity. And you have like a 35 year old, you know, whatever you're using, boiler or furnace, like. Let's look at, let's crunch some numbers. Let's find out what it would cost to change this. Let's figure out what your financing options are. Okay, you don't have a lot of credit history. Let's figure out what we can do, or maybe you don't have, maybe you don't have good credit. Like, how can we put these pieces together so that you can afford to live in Vermont and heat your home, and you don't have to choose between heating your home or paying for your meds or eating.

JM: And that program that you just mentioned, you said it was Washington County residents or Washington County area?

GS: No, it's statewide. They actually have someone statewide. They have like eight different people. It's overall like overseen by the Washington County Capstone Agency.

JM: Awesome, great. And how might the Affordable Heat Act impact renters if at all?

GS: So that's why we called out the, that's why we called out that program design really has to focus on renters. And we also say there's another place in the bill where we highlight renters who pay their own energy bills. Because there's this thing in the energy industry called the split incentive, which has been mind boggling all the energy experts for like 40 decades, which is a home. The owner of the building is the one who would have to make the investments in the building. And they own the equipment that's heating the building. but it's the renter who's paying to heat the building. So there's the incentive to actually act and do something is split. And that's why it's called the split incentive. It is a really challenging issue. There are some ways that different communities are starting to tackle this in Burlington. We have a rental thermal ordinance that requires now that we're actually looking at what it's costing to heat buildings for renters and starting to like dig into, okay, you've got to upgrade and to code, et cetera. In this bill, it does say specifically, we have to design the energy experts over the next year and a half, have to design programs specifically geared towards renters. I'm not gonna tell you that that's gonna be perfect, which is one of the reasons again, why I'm really interested to see this language come back to me in January, 2025, if I'm so lucky to be reelected. So from here, the bill will go back to the Senate because there was some amendments made and then it will likely, if they agree, go to the governor's desk where we are anticipating a veto because he is the most veto friendly governor in Vermont history. And then we will be working on a veto override. If that comes through in June during the veto session, it's ready to be. start, you know, the date July 1st, 2023, that's just a few weeks after the veto session.

JM: Yes, indeed. So things will start moving quickly then.

GS: Yes.

JM: Okay. Is there anything else that you would want Vermonters to know about this program and how it will work or why you're supporting it?

GS: I would love them to know that we have built in so many pieces to address affordability, to address working landscapes. For example, we have language in here to really focus on people who are making our maple syrup. I mean, I go through like a gallon of maple syrup probably once every three weeks, which is ridiculous. But I shifted off sugar and went to maple syrup. You know, we've heard a lot of concerns from farmers who are driving tractors. So we added language in that says this very much does not apply to transportation fuel. We have added in language so that... we actually come back and look at whether or not there are consequences related to offering biofuels. There have been a lot of concerns about what does this mean in terms of opening the door for biofuels and renewable natural gas. Because there are a lot of environmentalists who are deeply concerned about looking at the history of ethanol and whether or not that's a wise choice related to the fact that really we should be using food for food first. And we've seen concerns in third world nations about deforestation for palm oil. So there are a lot of safety brackets in this as well that say you have to have a net declining emissions if you're gonna shift to biofuels from 2025 to 2050. So there are a lot of pieces there that I guess I just want Vermonters to know that we have heard. So many of these concerns, we're very fully aware that there are a lot of people who are still concerned. I stand by my concern that we've studied this for almost two decades and we just keep throwing up our hands and saying, oh well, and that's just not good enough. And lastly, there is a whole public input process to this. So there will be notifications about meetings. They are going to be offered in different languages. They're going to be translation services. So if you still want to learn more, or if you want to weigh in, or if you want to tighten up the rules or the regulations, you are invited to do so over the next year and a half, and then also when it comes back to the legislature in 2025.

JM: Amazing. Well, thank you for your time. First of all, all the work that you've done, I know in the weeks leading up to this vote, you've been educating legislators who aren't in the committee of jurisdiction like you are to let them know all of this information so that they can justify their reasoning for supporting it. And of course, just taking the time to be focusing so much on this critical climate bill and for being a champion for climate solutions. And yeah, thank you so much.

GS: Thank you so much.

CLIMATE STAT OF THE WEEK & OUTRO

Now it's time for our climate stat of the week. 87.5%. That is the percentage of Vermonters who feel action should be taken to support sustainable development. In fact, 78.5% feel that redeveloping existing buildings and creating new housing in existing village centers and downtowns should be prioritized over creating new housing outside of existing village centers

and downtowns. This is according to results from the most recent Vermonter poll conducted by UVM's Center for Rural Studies.

I want to thank our guests, Representative Gabrielle Stebbins, Senator Anne Watson, and of course, Lauren Hierl for assisting me. If you enjoy this podcast, please subscribe and give us a rating wherever you listen to your podcasts. Be sure to follow us on social media. On Twitter, we are @VoteGreenVT, YouTube and Instagram @VTConservationVoters, and find us on Facebook as well. You can subscribe to our emails, see our legislative environmental scorecard, and learn more about our work and policies by visiting vermontconservationvoters.org. Have an idea for a story or want to provide feedback? Email me at jmarsh@vermontconservationvoters.org.

We'll be back next week as we begin our final three episodes of the session. Until next time, thanks for listening.