



EnergizeVermont.org

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With S.230 Veto, Shumlin Makes Good on Speaker's Promise

Legislative response will be instructive for voters

East Burke, Vermont— Governor Peter Shumlin, giving a gift to his benefactors in the energy industry, vetoed S.230: “An act relating to improving the siting of energy projects.” S.230 had overwhelming support in the Legislature, but observers reported that House Speaker Shap Smith, Representative Tony Klein, and Senator Christopher Bray had promised that no action would be taken on wind turbine noise during the session. It turned out that a Shumlin veto, justified by a handful of flimsy pretexts, was the only way to keep that promise.

S.230 would have required Vermont's Public Service Board to develop noise standards for wind turbines and the bill would have changed the way regional and municipal plans factored into energy siting decisions. Energize Vermont supported the bill only because of its turbine noise provision. Many House members cited the noise provision as the reason that the House passed the bill unanimously.

While neighbors of existing wind turbines would not have benefited from new noise standards, many were heartened by the Legislature's acknowledgement that turbine noise is a problem. Many were hopeful that the legislation could have brought Vermont into line with other states, like New Hampshire and Maine, which protect their citizens with strict turbine noise standards. It is the position of the Shumlin administration that turbine noise is not a problem and that neighbors who suffer from the effects of turbine operations have only their own bad attitudes to blame.¹

S.230's authors had hoped it would quell the Vermont Energy Rebellion, but the bill fell far short of the demands of the 150-plus rebellion towns that had called for energy development to comply with municipal siting standards.

The bill was followed closely by dozens of citizen lobbyists clad in green vests who witnessed first-hand how the deceptively-named Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG) worked hand-in-glove with energy lobbyists and the Shumlin administration to thwart every attempt to empower local government and curb the environmentally damaging development practices that Vermont energy policies

¹ On April 16, 2013, the Department of Health's William Irwin spoke about the effect of turbine noise on neighbors before the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee and said, “It's their [the neighbors'] attitude about the sound if you can change that, it may help.”

encourage. VPIRG has strong ties to the energy industry, having board members and contributors that benefit financially from the anything-goes energy development policies that it advocates for Vermont.

The citizens saw the power of the energy lobby when Senator Christopher Bray used untruthful wind industry talking points on the Senate floor to renounce a turbine noise monitoring amendment that bore his own name.

While Governor Shumlin was concocting the array of justifications for his veto, the wind lobby was hard at work directing its legislators in the development of “a fix” for S.230 that will reduce municipal influence over energy siting, weaken turbine noise standards, and provide more goodies to the industry.

The Legislature’s response to the governor’s veto will provide Vermonters with an instructive demonstration of character that will serve as a theme for the upcoming campaign season. How many legislators will have to explain why they voted against the bill after they voted for it?

The mission of ENERGIZE VERMONT is to educate and advocate for establishing renewable energy solutions that are in harmony with the irreplaceable character of Vermont, and that contribute to the well-being of all her people.

We achieve our mission by researching, collecting, and analyzing information from all sources; and disseminating it to the public, media, community leaders, legislators, and regulators for the purpose of ensuring informed decisions for long term stewardship of our communities.