
THIRD ACT VT

DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

“Even the strongest blizzards start with a single snowflake.”

—Sara Raasch

Hello Third Acters!

We hope you're keeping warm and well and enjoying the holiday season. We invite you to appreciate the actions you took, small and large, on behalf of the planet this year. What were your “single snowflakes” that contributed to the storm of climate action?

A warm welcome to those who've recently joined our working group and/or email list. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact our Volunteer Coordinator, John Woodland, at johnwoodlandr90@gmail.com or 406-529-4317.

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Take Action

Senior to Senior: Seniors Helping High School Seniors Register to Vote

Election 2024 is just around the corner, and there's so much at stake! You can make a difference by joining Third Act National and The Civics Center on this initiative. Learn more and preview the resources available to schools on [The Civics Center website](#).

Third Act VT is collaborating with the League of Women Voters Vermont ([LWVVT](#)), which is also involved in high school voter registration. Here is the [Google spreadsheet of all VT schools](#). Check the spreadsheet for any schools near you that have not already been approached. Claim your school(s) by putting your name in the "contacted by" column.

Please email Suzie McCoy with questions: SuzieMcCoy1@gmail.com. She is happy to share a one-page flyer she created to use when contacting schools. We need Third Act VT support from around the state!

Legislative Team Update

As the legislative session approaches, the picture is coming a bit more into focus. It's clear that it will be a very active one for the climate. We know of several bills already in play, others that are in the drafting stage, and yet others we expect to see. Each is listed below with a brief synopsis and status report.

It is extremely exciting to see the Vermont legislature be so proactive on climate legislation. They will need our support to overcome the resistance and obstructionism of the Scott administration.

The Third Act VT legislative team continues to prepare for the session. Each team member has chosen a bill they will focus on. We hope to begin drafting positions soon. As we draft positions, we will share them with the membership for feedback.

We have also begun a series of webinars to educate members on the bills. We held the first one on divestment a few weeks ago. The second was on Friday, December 15, on the Renewable Energy Standard. Others are in the works about the other bills, working with your legislator, and the current status of energy and the climate crisis in Vermont.

If you are interested in working on legislation, please contact me, Patrick Flood, at pflood001@aol.com.

The bills:

Divestment You will find a detailed report on the divestment bill (S.42) on the next page of this newsletter. Suffice it to say that there is still work to do to get a veto-proof vote out of the House. The first step is to get the strongest "yes" vote possible out of the Government Operations and General Affairs Committee. The Third Act VT Divestment Action Team is hard at work contacting legislators, working with State Treasurer Mike Pieciak, and monitoring the report on divestment options that the legislature mandated.

Renewable Energy Standard The Renewable Energy Standard (RES) is the vehicle by which the state determines where our electricity comes from and how much of it must come from renewable sources. Where our electricity comes from has a major impact on emissions. The anticipated legislation is likely to require a significant increase in the portion coming from renewables (up to 100%) and what portion needs to come from specifically in-state renewable sources. It is likely to be the centerpiece of climate legislation this year. Initial reports indicate that the work group established by the legislature to come up with recommendations for legislation was unable to reach consensus. Third Acters can play an important role in advocating for an effective and progressive new RES.

Make Big Oil Pay VPIRG is leading the charge on legislation that would require the state to charge the large fossil fuel companies for all the damage they have caused and will cause as a result of lying to the public about the dangers of fossil fuels. Details are murky, but we expect to see a bill by the end of the year.

Geothermal Networks This bill was introduced last year. It basically sets up a regulatory system to permit geothermal networks. It seems like a no-brainer to take advantage of geothermal heat in order to heat buildings. Reportedly, a number of municipalities are ready to move forward with such plans, but they need the bill to pass.

Rate Payer Protection As Vermont moves to electrify everything to get off fossil fuels, there is a worry that electricity rates will increase, which would impact poor and moderate-income people the most. There should be legislation that establishes a way to limit rate increases for that population. Such a bill was introduced last year and hopefully will get attention this year.

Resilience After the flooding last summer, there is strong interest in legislation to make our infrastructure and buildings more resilient. However, we have not seen any draft legislation yet. We hear there may be four to five bills in the works.

Transportation Similarly, we hear there will be legislation to address transportation and climate issues, but no bill has been released yet.

Divestment Action Team Update

Bill McKibben let Third Act Vt's Beth Sachs know that he had spoken to Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA). Representative Mike Mrowicki, a member of VIA who sits on the House Committee on Government Operations, told Bill that Mike McCarthy (chair of that committee) had asked him to champion S.42, the fossil fuel divestment bill.

Third Act VT member David McColgin, Vermont State Treasurer Mike Pieciak, and Vermont Pension Investment Committee (VPIC) Chair Tom Golonka met with Sarah Bernstein of Meketa Investment Group. She agreed to focus the divestment study on bill S.42. David sent an email to the VPIC commissioners explaining the new and proposed amendments to bill S.42. (Bernstein's October 2023 report to the VPIC hadn't included key points and amendments of bill S.42 that she had agreed to address in a previous meeting with David McColgin, Mike Pieciak, and Tom Golonka.)

Donna Fialkoff, Steve Crofter, Dina Dubois, and Mari Miceli are creating a sign-on letter that Vermont State Employees' Retirement System members may use to indicate their support for S.42. After signatures are collected, we will send the letter to the House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee.

Learn more about bill S.42, find sample letters, and explore resources on our [website](#).

If you, a family member, or a friend is in the Vermont State Employees' Retirement System, please contact Mari Miceli at mari_miceli58@yahoo.com. The team would be happy to help.

If your Representative is on House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee, please ask them to support S.42. Find your Representative [here](#). If you'd like to meet them, contact Mari Miceli. The committee members are:

Rep. Michael McCarthy, Chair
Rep. Matthew Birong, Vice Chair
Rep. Mark Higley, Ranking Member
Rep. Lucy Boyden, Clerk
Rep. Seth Chase
Rep. Lisa Hango

Rep. Philip Jay Hooper
Rep. Robert Hooper
Rep. Michael Morgan
Rep. Michael Mrowicki
Rep. Kate Nugent
Rep. Chea Waters Evans

Windham Regional Third Act Update

The Windham Regional Third Act group held a productive meeting on Thursday, December 7, at the Brattleboro Coop. In attendance were Barbara Thibeault, John Field, John Woodland, and Richard Evers. A couple of projects were discussed, and some folks left with plans to take some steps toward making them a reality. Barbara is particularly interested in Senior to Senior, and others indicated they would help gather teacher contact information for this project. John Field said he would try to get us some promotional materials about [green credit cards](#), with the idea of tabling in support of Third Act's [Banking on Our Future](#) campaign. We will make this a recruiting event.

We also talked about the December 9 Legislative Town Hall at Brooks Memorial Library in Brattleboro. Third Act Vermont had a great turnout for this event. Present were Michael Bosworth, John Woodland, Barbara Thibeault, Richard Evers, and Joyce Marcel, who was wearing her reporter hat. We made sure our representatives knew we were there and our areas of interest. Legislators present were Wendy Harrison, Nader Hashim, Emilie Kornheiser, and Tristan Toleno. Representative Mollie Burke usually attends this event but had a family emergency.

The topics that received the most attention at the Town Hall were the housing and related workforce challenges. There was some discussion of transportation in this context, as well. Third Acters at the meeting made sure our legislators knew we were interested in the Divestment Bill, the Renewable Energy Standard, forest carbon, and transportation, among other topics. On transportation, we were told there was an omnibus bill coming.

These meetings are held monthly, although the date for January seems a little unsure right now. Keep your eye on local announcements and information emails from us. A good turnout has an impact.

Third Act Vermont Handout

This is the latest [TA VT handout](#) in PDF form. Feel free to print it and share it with friends, distribute it at community events, post it on grocery store bulletin boards, etc.

Print it on 8.5 by 11-inch paper on both sides. You may have good luck with a local print shop that can print the sheets double-sided, then cut them into four quarters. We recommend using light card stock, not plain paper. You may want to print 10 sheets and cut them into quarters, which gives you 40 handouts and should be relatively inexpensive. If you have any questions, please contact Jud at judlawrie@mindspring.com.

Next Statewide Meeting

Please join us for our next statewide meeting on Thursday, December 21, from 4:30 to 6:00. At the start of the meeting, we'll introduce Third Act for everyone new to the Vermont Working Group. During the main meeting we will focus on the Renewable Energy Standard, the changes we anticipate, and the likely obstacles. We'll also give members an opportunity to ask questions. Here is the meeting [link](#).

Meeting ID: 852 7447 9615

Passcode: 136173

Happening Elsewhere

This is supported by Third Act VT but is not one of our events. We thought you might be interested.

Vermonters Together: Building A Better Future

MARCH AND RALLY

Saturday, January 27, 2024, noon to 2 p.m.

Meet at Montpelier City Hall to march to the Statehouse

In an increasingly divided world, there is a need for Vermonters to come together across issues, for the people and the planet, calling on our decision-makers to work with us for a better future.

We can no longer accept the undue influence of corporate interests in shaping our future. We can no longer afford business and politics as usual. The problems we are working to solve are interconnected, and we need our politicians to address root causes and work for systemic change.

Vermont needs a strong democracy, with responsible leadership based on science-based data and independent expert advice. The voice and needs of the people should be reflected in all our policies, with investments in our communities, farmers, and land; the provision of safe, warm, and affordable housing; and 100% low-emissions affordable renewable energy for all. We are bigger than what divides us. No more corporate schemes, forgotten people, prisons, and wars. Together we can create a just and thriving future in balance with our planet.

We will rally in the streets of Montpelier to call on the Vermont legislature and the governor to prioritize the needs of the people and our collective future. Together we will stretch beyond what is comfortable and embrace the imagination, courage, and boldness required of all of us at this time.

Fill out this [form](#) to sign on to this effort, sharing details about your goals if you feel called.

We invite everyone to contribute color, art, joy, and resolve that inspires and reminds us how strong we are when we work together. Examples could include:

- Large scale art project: Have each of Vermont's 14 counties create a section of a "quilt" in their county outline which representatives bring to the rally on 1/26 to "stitch" together
- Renewable Energy Standard reform postcard stating a key ask to be delivered to the governor
- Original songs: "The Waters Are Rising"
- Extend the impact of the rally in the run-up to the event and post rally through talking circles and taking the art project "on the road"
- Logistics: carpool and provide transportation to the rally
- Combine the press conference on 1/9/24 with state rep meetings; offer food in the statehouse cafeteria from Vermont farmers
- Events of the day are being co-created by all the organizations involved.

We call to all justice and peace organizations in Vermont to join together and raise our collective voices to make ourselves heard. The statehouse is the "People's House," so let's

make sure the legislature listens to the needs of the people. Will you join us?

Participating organizations can take the rally theme and develop their own examples, actions, and asks of the legislature. Please email vanessa@350vt.org if you are interested in joining the organizing meetings. All are welcome.

Organizations endorsing the march and rally as of November 29, 2023, are: 350VT, Climate Action Collective (UVM and St Mike's Students), Migrant Justice, Third Act VT, Standing Trees, StopVTBiomass, Peace and Justice Center, Vermont Peace/Antiwar Coalition, Rights and Democracy, and FreeHer.

Thank you for being a member of Third Act Vermont!